

Bringing Memory Forward:  
Teachers' Engagements with Constructions of "Difference" in Teacher Literature Circles

by

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## ABSTRACT

“Bringing Memory Forward: Teachers’ Engagements with Constructions of “Difference” in Teacher Literature Circles” explores ways in which teachers can recognize and address their constructions of “difference” individually and collectively. The study invited practicing teachers to discuss multicultural children’s and young adult literature in monthly book clubs, write a literacy autobiography and engage in monthly interviews. Four literature circles were formed from the eighteen elementary and secondary teachers who elected to join; one circle was composed entirely of Aboriginal teachers. In all, twenty-one circles and seventy-two interviews occurred between January and June 2003. Departing from related studies, the dissertation combined and gave equal weight to the literature circle, literacy autobiography and the interviews instead of focusing solely on the literature discussion. This equal weighting was necessary because the primary purpose of the research was to find ways to involve teachers in reflecting on their constructions of “difference” such that the teachers would engage in that reflection for themselves. All three elements of the study worked together to “bring memory forward.” In the literature circle, teachers discussed children’s and young literature. The selections for the literature circle arose out of the teachers’ writing and discussion of their literacy autobiographies such that literature familiar to teachers was juxtaposed with literature that was less familiar. In the interviews, teachers reflected on the relationship between the literature discussion and their literacy autobiographies, with the researcher “reflecting back” to teachers’ their own words, prompting to elicit thinking and probing to encourage reflection on connections between literary response and lived experience.

The title of the dissertation, “Bringing Memory Forward,” draws attention to the role of teachers’ memories and histories in multicultural literacy teacher education. The study begins from the hypothesis that memory, imagination and action are connected. Memory is explored through teachers’ literacy history. Imagination is investigated

through teachers' constructions of "difference" embedded in literary response. Action is what can follow for teachers from an awareness and recognition of the significance of memory and imagination to individual and cultural formation.

Memory, imagination and action are admittedly broad concepts. In the study, they are made concrete through two related conceptualizations of the teacher: the teacher as learner and the teacher as "storied intellectual." As learners, teachers can become aware of their own "landscapes of learning" (Greene, 1978a) by asking questions such as: Where do my assumptions come from? Where can I go and who can I listen to in order to find out about perspectives other than my own? While teachers learn against the background of their own "landscapes," that landscape includes the teacher's broader role in society, which is to "transmit, critique and interpret" cultural knowledge (Mellouki & Gauthier, 2001, p. 1). The cultural knowledge most closely concerned with literacy is knowing which stories are important to tell. As the mediators of cultural knowledge, inservice teachers need to be in the forefront of societal changes. This conclusion challenges the current focus on preservice education. Moreover, initiatives at the school level are more likely to come from practicing teachers. However, if teachers feel as if they are being told what needs to be done or how to interact with one another or with texts, they will be less than forthcoming in their commitment. This study represents a departure from other studies and approaches in the area of multicultural literacy education by specifying which learning strategies and approaches teachers drew on in identifying their constructions of "difference," which settings supported their learning and why, and the role of the researcher in furthering teachers' learning processes. The study has implications for professional teacher development as well as preservice teacher education. It also contributes to scholarly literature in education on the role of memory in learning.



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*Dedication*

To Fiona and Thomas,

thank you

for your patience and ingenuity when Mom was busy at work

## ABBREVIATIONS

LC1—Literature Circle #1

LC2—Literature Circle #2

LC3—Literature Circle #3

LC4—Literature Circle #4

1.3.2—Teacher Interview

The 1 stands for which literature group the teacher was a member of (LC1- ).

The 3 means that the teacher constituted the third member of that group.

The 2 means that this interview was the second interview held with this teacher.

## PREFACE

I am told that five months is not an unusually long period in which to recruit participants for a study; the eighteen teachers in this study joined between September 2002 and January 2003. A significant part of the recruitment phrase was devoted to explaining the project to principals. As principals continually pointed out, I was asking a lot of teachers at this particular time of cutbacks to education, a lack of government support for teachers and a general mood of pessimism. “Precisely what are you asking teachers to do?” the principals wanted to know.

My goal was for several teachers to come together once a month to discuss children’s or young adult literature, in other words, to join a book club. The reading of texts would take place directly in these “literature circles” and a brief written component would be involved; as they read, teachers would jot down observations, feelings and questions in a journal. The first circle would begin with the writing of individual literacy autobiographies. The selection of the literature for the groups would arise out of literature with which teachers were already familiar and I would supply less familiar titles. The purpose of the literature circles was to create a situation in which teachers, collectively and individually, would reflect on how they create themselves through social constructions embedded in literary response and teaching, specifically, to think about what stands out as “difference” and in that context, what passes notice and why. To encourage teachers to think about the connections among their literacy history, habitual reading choices and the literature they selected for teaching, another component of the study, and the only one that was

separate from the monthly meetings, was a brief monthly interview with each teacher, one that used prompts culled from teachers' own words.

The first phase of the project, then, involved gaining entry to schools, in which I became more intimately acquainted with school "gatekeepers" (principals and program coordinators) than with teachers themselves, with whom I only spoke directly once they had actually accepted the study's invitation. Once the eighteen teachers joined and became four distinct book clubs, the question became: what next? For the study, even though it had a blueprint of sorts, was always intended to take shape through teachers' participation in the circles. What conditions would be created such that teachers would want to stay, in the context of circles that would confront teachers with difficult questions: of who they conceived themselves to be in relation to others, who those "others" were and are, and how their ideas and experiences on these matters had been shaped historically? This was one of the central questions that the study addressed, of how to create a context for learning in which teachers could come to their own learning on the subject of social constructions, but through interactions with one another, the researcher and the literature. Teachers' commitment needed to be intellectual and emotional as well as social. The study began from the teacher as learner, however within a context that supported change. Beginning with the learner does not, Freire (1994) clarifies, mean "flutter[ing] spellbound around the knowledge of educands [viz. learners] like moths around a lamp bulb"; instead, "starting out means setting off down the road, getting going, shifting from one point to another, not sticking, or staying" (p. 70; emphasis in the original). What, then, would keep teachers committed and together through the multiple other obligations of

writing report cards, organizing assemblies and performances, coaching sports teams, and the long month of June in which teachers and students alike become restless, itching for the summer holidays?

Learning often begins with a state of confusion or uncertainty. My own feelings of uncertainty at whether the groups would be drawn together in time were compounded by some teachers' declarations, openly or privately, of not knowing whether they could commit to the entire project. Lack of time was the main worry. Some wanted to "test the waters" to see if the circles would prove useful. There were never any assurances that anyone would stay, and anxiety on my part that if one left, others would decide to leave, too. The following narrative, which is based on my recruitment field notes and reflections on those notes, recounts those feelings of uncertainty:

#### A Recruitment Story

*It was a touch-and-go process of getting a group of teachers together. The composition of the groups kept shifting, with teachers that I thought were a definite "go" not coming through, and then I would be knocked off my feet by a call from a principal asking, "When's the first meeting? I've got someone here who's interested. Could you contact them?" For every loss, there was a gain. But I never knew from one moment to the next who would be coming for sure. Some teachers joined well into January when the circles were already underway. At least one teacher had only found out about the circles through the circuitous route of the teacher association newsletter, which had come out in December, and yet I had approached her school early in the fall. Once I introduced the study to a principal or school, I couldn't know*

*by what byways and thoroughfares information was transmitted or halted. Neither could I be privy to that world since teachers' participation needed to be completely voluntary.*

*Through September then October and into November, I had learned to live with a certain degree of uncertainty. I wasn't going to count my chickens until they hatched, as my mother would say. Kathryn Anderson talks about how everyday sayings and practices from childhood come back to you in doing research with people; how her own "rural manners" learned on the farm and around the kitchen table entered into her research process (Anderson & Jack, 1991, pp. 13-14).*

*Finally the day came on which one literature group was to have its first meeting. We were just going to talk about the study and go over the letter of consent. When no one was in the appointed room at 3:30, I felt a sliver of coldness inch up my spine but I pushed it away. I walked around the school, knocking on doors, "Remember our meeting is today?" "Oh right, I'll be right there," one teacher in the middle of doing something on the computer reassured me. Another teacher had called me a day or two before the meeting and said, "I can come but I need to go to another meeting so I may be called out." One teacher had left me a phone message a few days before and I called her back earlier in the week. "I'm not sure if I want to join," she said. "Could I convince you otherwise?" I asked her. "Probably," she said. She came. The day of the first meeting, as I walked the hallways, someone unconnected to the study confided to me in a conspiratorial whisper, "I don't think so-and-so's coming." I closed my ears.*

*One teacher stopped me, calling me into the doorway of her classroom. "I'm not sure if I can join. I'm very interested in multicultural literature, but I just don't know if I can make it. I don't want to disappoint you by joining and then not being able to commit. I have a lot of my plate right now." I had passed this teacher on her way out of school the other day as I was dropping something off, and she had shot me a furtive glance and a quick "Hello, I've got to get somewhere." I could read her passing expression of guilt. One part saying "No" and the other part not wanting to say "No," at least not yet. Teachers who had definitely decided not to participate tended to be more direct, stopping to look me in the eye and say: "Thanks for the invitation, but no, not right now." The teachers who wanted to come but were feeling overextended by teaching duties or unsure as to what the project would require them to do, were more tentative. Desire struggled with good sense, as in an internal dialogue: "Don't you have enough on your plate? Can you really afford to take on one more thing? Are you mad? Yes, but it would be exciting and different!" These teachers who felt at their wit's end, with little energy remaining to focus on new things, though, often found themselves contributing to the circles in ways that would surprise all of us. Chinks of light; potential openings.*

*"Why don't you come and see? If you don't think it would work, then you don't have to stay," I suggested, feeling at the crossroads myself and wanting to be casual and leave the choice up to the teacher. She came and stayed with the circles to the end.*

*All of the teachers who joined, stayed. But I didn't know that in the beginning; and neither, I think, did they. Some weren't sure if they would come. Others may have*

*felt more confident in deciding to come, but couldn't predict if others would stay and the circles would continue. It was a precarious enterprise right from the start. But in that lay its strength. The fact that the circles didn't have to happen. But they did.*

Nafisi (2003) led weekly literature discussion groups in her home with a small group of women in Tehran and experienced similar doubts albeit in a different context. In Tehran, such gatherings were prohibited and the women were taking an enormous risk in participating. But another part of her uncertainty was simply wondering: Would they come? Would they continue to come? As Nafisi (2003) recalled: "I suddenly panicked. What if it doesn't work? What if they won't come?" (p. 12).

Burbules (1993) identifies three "rules" in "the dialogue game." The idea of a "dialogue game" is based on Wittgenstein (1958), who claimed that language should "suit our purposes, not vice versa" (p. 55, emphasis in the original). Understanding how games work is tied up with our experiences of playing particular games (Chess, Sorry, the "dress up" games that young children invent) so "a degree of uncertainty and indefiniteness is inevitable, and often desirable" to allow for us to immerse ourselves completely (p. 55). If the outcome were known, what would be the purpose of playing? Burbules turns to Gadamer (1975/1988) for the idea of play as an experience of being caught up in something such that "whatever the game, this is the moment we play for" (Burbules, 1993, pp. 51-2). Burbules also draws on Huizinga's (1950) thoughts on play and particularly his idea of a "play community" in which the "mutual goal" is "to make play happen" (p. 53). As in a game, dialogue needs have rules in place otherwise the "game" will stop. The three rules Burbules has identified

are: 1) participation; 2) commitment; and 3) reciprocity (p. 79). Participation entails voluntary engagement (p. 80). Commitment involves “a willingness to stay with the process even when its outcomes are uncertain” (p. 81). Reciprocity means being willing to enter into relationship with others to the point of being able “to see authority called into question” (p. 82), especially one’s own. Burbules’ framing of dialogue as a game rooted in uncertainty yet governed by enough rules to keep the game in motion is a useful one for describing how it felt to bring disparate teachers into a common enterprise that was in large part to be defined in the context of the circles. The literature circles took on the character of a “social experiment” (Greene, 1965a) in that the outcome was contingent on the process.

Hannah Arendt (1958) was also very interested in the energy released when individuals come together with a common purpose but without an agenda that determines how interactions will unfold. However, it would be disingenuous to argue that in such a gathering, outcomes could be completely unpredictable. Arendt (1958), after all, had looked to the Greek polis for her conception of politics and acknowledged that this form of public discussion was only open to free men. Women were excluded, as were slaves. Similarly, in the literature circles within this study, the socially constructed identities of the teachers participating in the circles constrained the conversations. The group of Aboriginal teachers focused on those topics of greatest concern to Aboriginal educators, specifically, identity formation and colonization. The white groups of teachers often struggled to see differently a relationship that had been an integral part of their growing up in Europe or Canada, in

which whiteness was at the centre and “difference” at the margins. Outcomes, then, are never completely free and indeterminate.

Establishing a context in which individuals are free to learn and grow is important, though. Nafisi’s (2003) group explored the theme of the relation between fiction and reality through the discussion of specific works of literature, but against a political background in which women were not free: “We were not looking for blueprints, for an easy solution, but we did hope to find a link between the open spaces the novels provided and the closed ones we were confined to” (p. 19). Nafisi’s literature group obviously had a different kind of urgency than our own, however the teacher literature circles, which likewise focused on literary engagement, also took place against the background of a political climate increasingly felt as restrictive and debilitating to teachers’ conceptions of themselves as educators: more students, less in-class support, fewer teacher-librarians, stretched resources, little or no time for professional development let alone teacher reflection.

What was vital to the circles, then, was precisely that they occurred within a context in which they were less, rather than more, likely to happen and that when they did come together, they kept going, thus showing teachers that they could form links of teacher reflection among themselves. The circles had a chimerical, shimmering character, as in the Bloomsbury Group’s image of a “phantom table,” and this character was especially discernible at the end when it came time to disperse. The phantom table, unlike a “real” table, is the one perceived, or created through perceptions (Banfield, 2000). Virginia Woolf, a participant in the Bloomsbury Group, describes in her novel, The Waves, how it can feel when many perspectives

come together . . . to make one thing, not enduring—for what endures?—but seen by many eyes simultaneously. There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many-petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves—a whole flower to which every eye brings its contribution. (Woolf, 1931/1959, p. 127 cited in Banfield, 2000, p. 120)

Teachers' perceptions, along with that of the researcher, kept the circles going. What is created can be likened to a fiction, in that the only thing that sustains it is the belief of the participants that the experience is worth sustaining. By the end of the study, teachers were reluctant to disperse. They had come to look forward to this time of companionship in which they could critically examine their own responses to literature through hearing others' perspectives.

Two recent examples of similar ideas or gatherings come to mind. One example comes from Margaret Wheatley's (2002) book on the importance of conversation. The other comes from the literature discussions that Nafisi (2003) held in her home in Tehran, to which I have already alluded.

#### Example 1: Participating in a Conversation in the Form of a Circle

Wheatley (2002) maintains "human beings have always sat in circles and councils to do their best thinking, and to develop strong and trusting relationships" (p. 9). When conversation takes place within a circle, it can constitute a forum in which people "talk about things that matter" and through this talk, "the world begins to change" (p. 9). The "literature circles" in the study banked on teachers' familiarity with the use of literature circles (Routman, 2000) or reading discussion groups

(Atwell, 1998). But the circles were also informed by my own participation in healing and sharing circles used as pedagogical tools within Aboriginal communities and classrooms. As in those circles, the teachers and I began with a “check-in” of passing a rock or eagle feather and saying how we were feeling. One of its purposes is to pause and reflect on what we have been feeling and why, as well as recognize others’ experiences and feelings. Against the context of a world experienced as complex, fragmented and caught up in rapid change, Wheatley (2002) wants to encourage people to “slow down the conversation to a pace that encourages thinking” (p. 9). “Resist[ing] the temptation to foreclose on what ... experience may have to teach” has also been called “slow knowing” (Claxton, 1997, p. 192; cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 123). It is a fallacy, Claxton (1997) says, “to suppose that the faster things are changing, the faster and more earnestly one has to think” (p. 214; cited in Fullan, 2001, p. 122). When we have more time to think and talk about what we are thinking and experiencing, we become “more wise and courageous actors in the world,” says Wheatley (2002, p. 9).

Complexity was one of the reasons that the literature circle project attracted the participating teachers’ attention. Several teachers admitted to feeling confused or overwhelmed by how to approach multicultural issues in the classroom, or how to go about finding multicultural or Aboriginal children’s or young adult literature. In our first interview after the initial circle, one teacher said how “grateful” she was:

I went into the meeting feeling very low and going through the journal writing

and the discussion, I went home talking about it ... It was just what I needed.

It's just what I need this year, something new and different, and tied into literature and teaching. (2.1.1; 28.01.03)

Several teachers also came to value the "extra" time for reflection provided through the monthly interviews. When my own schedule became so hectic that from morning to night, it felt as if I barely had time to catch my breath, the circles and interviews were the only times during the week when I felt time stopped to allow for listening and reflecting.

Most teachers came to the study seeking an opportunity to feel excited about reading books and learning new things. Greene (1978) points to how society's conceptions of the teacher's role as expert obscure the fact that teachers are also learners, whose own learning (like those of their students) is taking place against a "landscape of learning": "To be in touch with our landscapes is to be conscious of our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways in which we encounter our world" (p. 2). Most teachers came to the circle feeling a certain loss of agency, which was articulated in various ways by different teachers: no time to reflect, hectic schedules, lack of confidence in their own effectiveness as teachers especially in cross-cultural situations, unsure as to how their identity influenced classroom and curriculum, feelings of guilt at not having the time or energy to read, guilt at not reading the "right things" (viz. multicultural literature) or not knowing where to find such literature and a deep sense of frustration with the educational system and its marginalizing of students, especially students of colour and Aboriginal students. The notion of the teacher as a learner is tied to learning at one's own pace and in one's one way

(“teacher reflection”), while being exposed to the different perspectives coming from other teachers as well as from the literary texts. Teachers wanted to know: “How do I learn this?” or “How do I continue to learn this?” or yet again, “How can my colleagues and I learn together?” in the context of “difference” and literature.

#### Example 2: Participating in a Circle Focused on Literature Discussion

Literacy memoirs are becoming a popular sub-genre within memoirs (see Bodger, 2002; Spufford, 2002), but Nafisi’s (2003) “memoir in books” strikes a different note, partly because of her emphasis on a communal (rather than individual) learning process. In their weekly literature discussions, Nafisi and her students appeared to one another not as the political regime wanted them to but as they themselves were in their individual creativity, life histories and responses to literature. Nafisi’s “book club” was a carefully-selected group of female students drawn from her former university classes on English Literature; only females participated because of the oppression of women in Iranian society, and only those women who Nafisi felt could be trusted. All of the women’s names in the book were pseudonyms to conceal their identity and their identities carefully disguised to avoid detection. Even though they were a select group, Nafisi took pride in the fact that the group was mixed ideologically (p. 10) and that the women represented individuals who were neither close nor who would have likely chosen one another as friends (p. 18). The literature group, though social in nature, was not a select social group. The memoir, which is divided into four parts (“Lolita”, “Gatsby,” “James,” “Austen”), narrates events that happened in the lives of Nafisi, her family, friends and students during Iran from the 1970’s to the 1990’s. Nafisi connects her intellectual and

political struggles with wrestling with a particular author, book or character.

Although Nafisi is the main character in the book, her struggles with the “fictions” woven by a regime that regulated her everyday life happened through literature discussion in the classroom as well as in home.

The four literature circles of which the teachers in my study were a part differ considerably from the political circumstances and motivation of the literature group in Nafisi’s book. But there are significant similarities. In both, individuals’ memories of the literature read together in the literature circle discussion became tied to events happening in their own lives, professionally and personally. Why do we read literature? In what ways do we approach the literature that we read, and why in these ways? Who am I in relation to this book? Why might this book be important to me? In what other ways or through which other perspectives could we be reading this story? Why do we read some literature with a critical lens and other literature for its own sake? These are questions that motivated our own circles as well as those of Nafisi’s (2003). One teacher, Barry, concluded that “reading is not just about entertaining but about sharing lives and sharing ideas” and that a place should exist to “expose” children to “some of these other reasons to have literature in the world” (2.3.4; 03.06.03. All teachers’ names are fictitious). “Like what?” I asked. He thought back to his father, who had not disallowed the reading of fiction, but could not see any purpose in it when factual information was readily available in more reliable forms. Barry asked rhetorically, echoing his father: “Why would you want to read something that didn’t really happen when there are so many real lives out there, real

things that happen that we don't have to be telling stories, telling lies, about them?"

He explained,

At the time, I don't think I articulated it. And I don't know how much of it I understood at the time. But I did have a sense that these [books] were kind of getting into the minds. That fiction gets into the mind of somebody else, even if there's somebody [real] in our culture. They are still presenting something that is a model of something that is similar to the world and in a way, saying something about the way people are trapped with each other or with the world around them. (2.3.4; 03.06.03)

Through the writing and telling of their literacy autobiographies and participating in the literature discussions, teachers began to "bring memory forward."

## INTRODUCTION

Virginia Woolf's (1978) first memory is of herself as a very young child in a state between dreaming and waking attuned to the sounds surrounding her in the nursery: waves breaking, the blind swishing back and forth, a scraping acorn caught in the blind. "If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills—then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory" (p. 75). Gendlin (1966) uses the phrase "carrying forward" for how explication changes an event by placing it in a new context: "to explicate is always a further process of experiencing" (p. 132). The title of this dissertation, "Bringing Memory Forward," identifies the significance of memory in individual formation and in particular, within the learning process that is the subject of this dissertation: teachers' learning in the context of multicultural literacy education.

Violet Harris (1999) has encouraged teachers to ask themselves this question when sharing literature with children in their classrooms: "Am I aware of the multiple meanings and responses to a text?" (p. 150). That texts have multiple meanings is a commonplace of literary criticism, going back to Empson's (1965) Seven Types of Ambiguity. But what does it mean to cultivate such an awareness within the context of multicultural literacy education?

Since the Civil Rights movement in the sixties, people have become more aware of the ways in which society and its institutions have excluded multiple perspectives on the basis of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, in short, any "difference" from a perceived norm. Within schools, "multiculturalism" has become the by-word for inclusionary practices. For teachers, both preservice and practicing,

this has meant courses or professional development in cross-cultural or intercultural awareness, all underlined by the expectation that teachers recognize and address diversity by drawing on curricular materials, seeking out “multicultural” literature, being sensitive to the histories that their students bring to the classroom and most recently, by acknowledging and addressing “white privilege.” In educational research on multicultural teacher education, white teachers are reported to be resistant to changing their practices to address “difference” (Carson & Johnston, 2000; Chávez & O’Donnell, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Roman, 1993; Rosenberg, 1997; Sleeter & Grant, 1987). Research has found that white teachers see themselves as cultureless or raceless because of their privileged place in society, which they take for granted as a given; “difference” is only in “the Other” (Cochran-Smith, 2000; McIntyre, 2002).

“Teaching . . . has to deal not so much with lack of knowledge as with resistances to knowledge,” Felman (1982) muses (p. 30; emphasis in the original). One of the predominant approaches to teacher resistance has been to confront it directly. Pre-service teachers, for example, are increasingly required to reflect critically on their subject positions within society (Cochran-Smith, 2000; McIntyre, 2002). With inservice teachers, the “softer” approach has been used of incorporating “diversity” into curricula, lesson planning and book selection. Banks (1994) has criticized the “add-on” style in which these supplements are introduced into school and classroom while critical theorists have critiqued multicultural education in schools as a “facile pedagogy of tolerance where the white teachers learn how to ‘handle’ the ‘other’” (Macedo, 1998, p. xx).

One of the purposes of this study was to explore this teacher resistance but in a way that was more learner-centred than teacher-centred. This project began from the observation that white teacher resistance was not only a political and social problem but a pedagogical one. These observations were based on my own experience as a white educator and researcher as well as my experiences as a white teacher in an Aboriginal community, in which I had become a “participant-observer” of my own constructions as well as those of other white teachers (Wilson, 2002).

The phrase “bringing memory forward” addresses the lack of attention that has been accorded to teachers’ memories and histories in multicultural literacy teacher education. Western schooling has been deeply influenced by the progressive movement, which supports the myth of the individual, or what Taylor (1989) has called the “leaving home story.” In order to become an individual, a person has to turn their back on the present so as to create the future. With its emphasis on improvement, education is part of that forward-looking gaze. Rarely do we practice looking back as a way of understanding where we have come from and where we can go. The project described in this study has a wider mandate, then, than a focus only on white teachers although because of my own identity as a white educator, it begins from there.

With inservice teachers, I explore the kinds of spaces that teachers can create to recognize and address their constructions of “difference.” I ask how teachers can take up this challenge themselves. If teachers feel as if they are being told what needs to be done or how to interact with one another or with texts, they will be less than forthcoming in their commitment. The way in which the creation of spaces is

approached in this study is through a focus on the teacher as both learner and “storied intellectual.” The teacher is a learner in wrestling with the role of memory, history, imagination and story in forming constructions that have become their own through long usage. The teacher is also a “storied intellectual” in being a part of the culture that produces constructions of “difference.”

The study is divided into three broad areas: memory, imagination and action. Memory is explored through teachers’ literacy history. Imagination is investigated through teachers’ constructions of “difference.” Action is what can follow from an awareness and recognition of the significance of memory and imagination to individual and cultural formation, as well as the processes of learning that are initiated through participation in the study.

#### Research Questions

The research questions that this dissertation investigates are both pedagogical and scholarly. One set of research questions connects a research interest in memory, imagination and action in the context of “difference” with a pedagogical conviction that these three things are tied together in teachers’ learning:

##### Research Questions:

- *What does learning “of difference” involve?*
- *What is the role of the teacher as learner and of the researcher in this learning process?*
- *What roles do narrative and memory play and are they connected to one another?*
- *How does the past connect to the present?*

Another group of questions attends to the setting in which that learning takes place and the outcomes of the process:

Research Questions:

- *What conditions support teachers' explorations of their constructions of "difference", including constructions embedded in the literature they choose to use with their students?*
- *What relationships exist between individual and group contexts for teacher learning?*
- *Will "teacher action" be one of the outcomes of teachers' participation in the study? If so, how do teachers know? How does the researcher know?*

Central to both sets of questions was a conviction that the teacher needed to be involved in a meaningful way in the learning process of addressing issues of diversity in literacy education.

#### Brief Synopsis of the Study

The study invited practicing teachers to participate in monthly book clubs that would involve the discussion of multicultural children's and young adult literature. The purpose of the study was to involve teachers in exploring their constructions of "difference" as manifested in the stories that they commonly use in teaching as well as those that stood out in their literacy histories. Teachers were invited to explore these constructions by way of a monthly literature circle, a monthly interview and the writing of a brief literacy autobiography in the literature circle. Four literature circles were formed from the eighteen elementary and secondary teachers who volunteered to participate. The circles took place from January to June 2003.

The literature circle involved the discussion of children's and young adult literature read in the circle. The researcher selected the literature based on teacher discussions of the literacy autobiographies. The teachers composed these autobiographies during the first meeting in response to prompts that elicited those memories that stood out in a teacher's literacy history, such as: "Which stories do you remember best from childhood? What is it that you remember about them?; Do you recall feeling dissatisfied with any of the books you read in or out of school? If so, why?" (see Appendix I). Teachers within each group reviewed the summarized data from the autobiographies and generated observations on commonalities as well as what they thought had been missing from their experiences. Based on those observations, they indicated directions they wanted to explore in their communal reading of literature.

The literature circles juxtaposed literature familiar to teachers with titles that were unfamiliar or related to areas they wanted to investigate further. By unfamiliar, I mean literature that had not appeared in their literacy history; for example, teachers had encountered few titles within multicultural literature and what they had read was predominantly written by white authors. For most teachers, this pattern extended into their personal reading choices. For teachers who were familiar with multicultural or alternative literature, many areas existed that they had not yet explored.

As they read books or excerpts within the circles, teachers also kept a triple-entry journal, in which they recorded the author, title and date, their response to the book, and questions or comments based on what struck them from the conversation. The monthly interview provided teachers with another opportunity to reflect on the

literature, literature circle and previous interviews. Each interview began with the same prompt: “What have you been thinking about?” or “What have you been noticing?” The researcher gave the teacher back the transcript before the next literature circle for their own reflection.

### Theoretical Framework

Memory, imagination and action are the three ideas that I reiterate throughout the study. The study began from a hypothesis that these three areas were interconnected in the area of multicultural literacy teacher education. Although these ideas come from my readings in political theory, literary criticism and mediaeval and Renaissance thought on memory, they found support in education in the writings of Maxine Greene, whose ideas on teacher education and “difference” gravitate around the same three ideas. In this dissertation, I explore the postulate that teacher awareness of the construction of “difference” begins with, as well as becomes rooted in, teachers’ memory and knowledge of their own “landscapes” (Green, 1978a). A teacher’s landscape is the starting-point for learning. The landscape is also the background against which learning takes place. Drawing on Merleau Ponty’s (1964) language of primordial or prereflective landscapes (Greene, 1995, p. 73), Greene (1978a) explains that “landscapes” refer to those “personal histories” or “lived lives” in which individuals feel “grounded” (p. 2). Greene depicts the individual as spread out over a space extending outside of the boundaries of a self to include other selves and communities. For Greene, the individual is a social construct (Morris, 1998; Barone, 1998). “Landscape” also has a temporal equivalent in Greene’s writings and that is as “memory.” Greene (1978b) says that “we identify ourselves by means of

memory” and memory helps us “compose the stories of our lives” (p. 33). Reclaiming our own stories and memories involves recognizing our own “standpoints”:

“Looking back, recapturing their stories, teachers can recover their own standpoints on the social world” (Greene, 1978b, p. 33). Within my memory, “landscape” has a specific association with the Canadian imagination and literary criticism through the writings of Frye (1957) and Atwood (1972) and the reading of Canadian literature. This landscape is actual in being tied to the geography, history and politics of a certain nation, as well as imaginary in being influenced by a cultural narrative or “imagined community” (Hall, 1992) constructed out of a preoccupation with landscape as “Other.” This imaginative background was what I brought with me as an elementary teacher to an Aboriginal community (Wilson, 2002).

Memory, imagination and action are admittedly broad, even unwieldy, concepts. They are made more concrete in this study, though, through two related conceptualizations of the teacher: the teacher as learner and the teacher as “storied intellectual.” From her early writing, Greene (1973, 1978a, 1978b) argued that the teacher is a learner. Through an attitude of attentiveness or “wideawakeness” (Greene, 1995), the teacher becomes aware of the assumptions and history embedded in his or her teaching. The teacher examines those assumptions: Where do they come from? How are they translated into action? What other ideas or actions are possible that, because of my particular standpoint, I have not yet considered? Where can I go and who can I listen to in order to find out more about standpoints other than my own? Whose standpoints have been excluded and therefore need to be listened to more? Living in the world with others carries a social responsibility to raise such

questions. As learners, it is a burden that teachers need to take up freely or “choose,” which is one of the words that Greene uses most often. Thus, I have included in my study an overarching teacher action framework in which opportunities are created for teachers to take up learning voluntarily. As teachers, it is a responsibility that falls to them as human beings. The latter part of Greene’s argument leans heavily on the writings of Hannah Arendt (1958), who talks about the responsibility of human beings to the world, in which “world” means the discursive space shared in common among human beings: “Through speech and action, men [sic] distinguish themselves” (p. 176).

I have departed from Greene in emphasizing the teacher not as a human being among others but as a teacher with a specific role in society. The teacher is a “storied intellectual.” The notion of the teacher as an “intellectual” or “cultural worker” comes from Mellouki and Gauthier (2001), who rely on the writings of Giroux (1988) and French thinkers and sociologists. Teachers learn against the background of their own “landscapes” but that landscape includes the teacher’s broader role in society, which is to “transmit, critique and interpret” cultural knowledge (Mellouki & Gauthier, 2001, p. 1). The cultural knowledge most closely concerned with literacy is a storied knowledge. It is a knowledge of which stories teachers know are important to tell, and can be discerned through the stories children listen to, are read or read themselves in classrooms, libraries and personal collections. It is a literacy education whose routines revolve around story (read-aloud, journal-writing, literature circles) as well as the stories and approaches to story that are recommended or mandated by curricula or circulated among teachers in the form of ideas and professional resources.

Teachers also bring to teaching an understanding of life as a story, as events and experiences among which connections can be made and that can be turned into a story by answering the question: “What happened?” Despite their obscure location in the classroom, teachers are intellectuals. Teachers occupy this important role, Mellouki and Gauthier (2001) maintain, because of the significance of their work to the perpetuation, critique and interpretation of culture and society, even if the significance of that work goes unrecognized as compared with, for example, the intellectual illumination afforded by such figures as Camus, Sartre, Aron or Foucault (p. 23). Grumet (1988) has likened the classroom to the home in its domestic attention to detail and routine; the classroom has proverbially been associated with the obscured realm of “women’s work.” Both notions of the teacher as learner and “storied intellectual” are necessary so that teachers can become involved in the work of transmitting, interpreting and critiquing multicultural literacy education.

Engagement with literary texts provides the vehicle for engaging the teacher as learner and as storied intellectual. A literary text, for the purposes of the study, means a fictional story from childhood or early adolescence, namely, a picture book or novel. Literary engagement means reading and responding to childhood texts as an individual reader as well as within a social context. My notion of literary engagement was rooted in Rosenblatt’s writings; in 1938, her discussion of the social context of reader response, and in 1978, her shift to aesthetic literary engagement or the “lived through experience.” The focus on reading as an “experience” has carried forward into this study, however the literary or aesthetic experience represents only one possible mode of response.

Within my study, the literary text functions more as a prompt such that literary engagement becomes a shorthand way of saying “engagement with a text that prompts memories”: memories of childhood readings, of reading the book aloud to one’s students, of avoiding reading particular books, of prior reading instruction and receptiveness or resistance to that instruction. The memories do not—and I would argue, cannot—stop at “literary” memories. The reading of stories also prompts memories of what I call “everyday narratives”: the conditions under which reading took place, whether reading was encouraged in the home, whether certain books or genres were favoured and others discouraged, who did the favouring and discouraging, where teachers found the books that they read in childhood, which books they had tended to have access to, the relationship of their reading experiences to family, school, community, their experiences of growing up in particular families, schools or communities and the stories they witnessed, heard, participated in as well as felt in growing up. In several of the chapters, but especially chapter five, I talk about how as children, teachers often understood or sensed more than they understood at the time; these impressions, like Woolf’s of the acorn in the nursery, become part of a web of intertextual connections. In chapter two, I begin to outline the significance of intertextuality to an expanded view of reader response as memory. What teachers also remember, through literary response, are what I call “cultural narratives,” such as the construction of First Nations people within Canada, or what Francis (1992) has called the story of “the imaginary Indian.” I use Morrison’s (1992) argument of the “racialised narrative” to draw connections between literature and prevailing social mythologies. If, as Frye (1976) says, reading literature is like

participating in a waking dream, then “the forgetting of the dream is . . . itself part of the dream” (Lacan, 1978, 154; cited in Felman, 1982, p. 30); the suppression and non-vocalization of response is equally as important as its articulation. Because the study focuses on teacher constructions of “difference,” literature and reader response are also looked at constructions that mediate perceptions of “difference” (see chapter five).

Literature with which teachers were unfamiliar, which often included “multicultural literature,” represented unheard voices, such that the text also functioned as a dialogical partner. Hunt and Vipond (1992) concurred with Bakhtin (1986) that “concrete situation[s] of speech communication” (p. 84) are socially constructed, and that if “the reader or listener takes a text as an utterance,” the text then becomes “a move in a dialogue” (Hunt & Vipond, 1992, p. 85). If the text becomes repositioned in this dialogic way as neither determining response nor neutral in provoking response, then two criteria would become important in selecting texts. One is that the text bears a relationship to the teachers that is grounded in their own personal landscapes and literacy history. The other criterion is that some texts express a voice that would otherwise be absent from the discussion, if that voice were not already invited in. To apply this criterion entails distinguishing between “multicultural literature” and literature written by a “multicultural” author, and I address those questions in chapter five.

One of the questions asked in relation to the study was why the focus on literature or literary texts. What about popular culture, for instance, which would involve moving away from text as literary to text as semiotic. Such a shift would be

consistent with the direction in which this kind of research is moving, which is to look at the intertextual formations of “readers” and in which the idea of a “reader” is undergoing change (Callister & Burbules, 2000; Dyson, 2003; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). The focus on literary texts made sense in the context of this study because I was working with practicing teachers whose formation has depended to a large extent on the “literary” text (Willinsky, 1991).

Finally, the study operates on a distinction between the imagination and literature and literary engagement. Literature and literary engagement are considered as social constructions whereas the imagination (as I argue in chapter two) is a constructive power, one that consists in making connections among often disparate things. The “releasing of the imagination,” as Greene (1995) calls it, consists in the active participation of an agent in the world, including confronting already formed stories, so as to allow that release or openness to take place. In retrospect, the study resembles a tapestry, a syncretic weaving together of different, even contradictory, theoretical and methodological threads: phenomenology and hermeneutics (lived experience, including reader response as lived experience); social psychoanalysis (the focus on the unconscious and memory); indigenous epistemology (using the circle); critical theory (the relationship between power and discourse, or narrative), post-structuralism (“difference” as constructed), literary theory (intertextuality, reader response, and literature) and feminist theory (the focus on the everyday as “the given” (Grumet, 1981) as well as the privileging of “the personal” along with “public spaces”). This syncretism itself became the study’s method.

## Methodological Framework

### *Movement over Time: Methodology I, II, III*

The study is about finding ways to document movement over time. The document is organized in an unconventional fashion to foreground this movement. Three methodology sections are dispersed over the course of the study. In Methodology I, I think through suppressed features of the study before entering schools. Through this process, a three-fold distinction emerged between learner-centred, teacher-centred, and approach-centred pedagogies and in which I situate this study in relation to a learner-centred pedagogy, even though it contains elements of all three methodological approaches. Methodology II was written *in medeas res* when, after the teachers had written and discussed their literacy autobiographies, I was confronted with two pivotal questions: 1) How was I to select a finite number of titles for literature discussion? This question brought me back to the central role of the researcher within learner-centred approaches, and 2) Would teachers refer back to their literacy autobiographies, and could I ethically stand back to see if that would happen? Through the asking of this question, I created the phrase “bringing memory forward” to articulate the conditions under which I could create opportunities for teachers to engage with memory but in such a way that these engagements were completely voluntary. Methodology III consisted in reflecting back on the literature circles, interviews and literacy autobiography and deciding how to proceed with data analysis. My focus turned to looking for evidence of movement within teacher learning and renewing my commitment to representing that learning such that the representation would itself contribute to teachers’ learning (as opposed to detracting

from it, for example, by re-positioning the teachers as subjects whose learning processes were being studied). Through this process, learning was defined more definitively as a form of movement over time.

### *The Methodological Framework*

The literature circle, literacy autobiography and interview comprised the methodological framework for the study. Rather than the literature circles being the focus, and the other two functioning as ancillary sources to achieve data triangulation, all three are intended to help teachers make connections between their formative literacy experiences and current pedagogical practice. The three are not only interconnected conceptually. In the design of the study, the book selection for the literature circles arose out of the literacy autobiography, and both the interviews and the literature circles extended the “memory tapping” learning process initiated through the writing of the literacy autobiography.

In political theory and educational discourse, the “public space” garners considerable attention; it is the space in which people come together for a common purpose. The school constitutes such a space as does the classroom. Power relationships also affect the kind of public space that is created. Within the study, the literature circle comprised a public space and within that space, certain kinds of discourse happened around literature and the discussion of teachers’ literacy autobiographies. Much of the work in multicultural literacy education has focused on the public space of the classroom or, in the case of teacher book clubs, on the public space of the literature circle.

Rosenberg (1997) brings a feminist perspective to anti-racist education by arguing that the public space of the classroom has been over-privileged and that as teacher educators, we also need to attend to what she calls the “underground spaces” (p. 79). The argument against privileging one kind of public space, in which the dominant discourse prevails, has been made by other feminist scholars as well (Fraser, 1995). Rosenberg’s “underground spaces” correspond to the “confessional”-like spaces outside of the classroom to which students come to sort through questions that they are too embarrassed to raise publicly (p. 79). Rosenberg (1997) describes the subterfugal forms these underground discourses often took: “sinful confession; they speak in hushed, shameful tones of stories about racist families or their own ignorance or wonderings about others” (p. 79). The interview within my study acted as a counterweight to the literature circle, allowing teachers to discuss more freely in another space what they found difficult to broach in a more public forum. The literature circle discussion focused on achieving a common ground around a common text, in which the text acted as a dialogical partner (Hunt & Vipond, 1992). In the interviews, on the other hand, teachers were able to circle the literary text by venturing into connections to lived and teaching experience. I have deliberately avoided calling the interviews a “private” space because like Rosenberg, I want to make the argument that public discourse not only continues in these personal spaces but is constituted there, only differently.

The literacy autobiography straddles both kinds of spaces by addressing personal literacy history and submitting those narratives to scrutiny. The method here draws on Grumet’s (1981) notion of “excavation” (p. 122). Grumet (1991) says that

“we start with narrative” and we record those culturally-specific details that created the texture of our childhood lives (the “given”- p. 80). Then “we read what we have written,” we talk about it with others and through that personal to public process, “the specific[s]” of our tales are connected with “what is general” (p. 87). The literacy autobiographies were “owned” by the teachers in that the process of “bringing memory forward” was one that they themselves were in control of: through the tapping of memory, the discussion of their memories, the generalizing of patterns from the discussion, the reading of familiar literature in the literature circles and the re-reading of their literacy autobiographies in the final interview. All three methodologies, then, bear a relationship to “public” spaces without privileging one space as public (viz. the literature circle). The following section describes in turn the methodological background informed each of the three study elements.

### *Literature Circles*

As a classroom management strategy and pedagogical tool for engaging readers with texts, the origins of the literature circle lie in constructivist approaches to education, including the transactional theory of reader response (Rosenblatt, 1978), Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development” (King, 2001) and whole language approaches to reading and writing (Harste, Short & Burke, 1989). Harste, Short and Burke (1989) were the first to coin the term “literature circle” (King, 2001, p. 33). The literature circle represents a confluence of influences: on the value of expressive talk (Britton, 1970), the central role of the reader in constructing meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978) and the conviction that learning best occurs in social settings (Vygotsky, 1962). When conducted within classrooms, the literature circle constitutes

a public space largely continuous with whole class discussions led by the teacher (Lewis, 1995), however can become a “counter” public space (Fraser, 1995) when occurring on its margins, as in the literature circle Moller held outside of the classroom with four Grade 5 girls identified as reading below grade level and who came from backgrounds marginalized within the mainstream classroom (Moller & Allen, 2002). As “book clubs,” literature circles among adults and teachers have represented a voluntary coming together around a common text, in which the focus is on the social pleasure of reading and discussing books in the company of others (Marshall, Smagorinsky & Smith, 1995).

In these more informal contexts of teacher literature circles or book clubs (Addington, 2001), half of teachers’ total responses have tended to be personal (Flood, et al, 1994), where “personal” means references the teacher makes to life experiences or teaching (Addington, 2001). Researchers have drawn distinctions between whether personal references are prompted by the literary text or arise independently, either spontaneously or generated by others’ comments. Those comments closest to the literary text are cast in the stronger light. In a multicultural literature discussion group with teachers, Smith and Strickland (2001) were disturbed by the obtruding presence of teachers’ personal allusions, which distracted the group from focusing on what a close reading of the text could teach them about multiculturalism and ethical responsibility. It is not surprising this interpretation has emerged from the use of literature circles in research studies. Literature circles have been implicitly construed as public spaces, with a concomitant resistance to “the personal.” However, since personal response tends to crop up in spite of research

design (Strickland & White, 2001), particularly in informal contexts, it is only logical to examine connections between “personal” and “public” discourses, which is what I have done in this study.

The literature circles in my study departed from other research studies in being open to investigating the role of “the personal.” It also departed in two other ways. The circles focused on teachers’ on-line responses (“lived through experiences”) instead of asking teachers to read texts prior to each gathering. The reason was to allow teachers an opportunity to “capture” their interpretations, both to the texts and others’ interpretations. In order to record these responses, I introduced a triple-entry journal, an adaptation of Berthoff’s (1989) double-entry journal, which served as mnemonic device and data source for teacher reflection and interpretation. Teachers reread and reflected on their journal in the final interview. Secondly, the literature circles integrated a practice from Aboriginal pedagogy to create a reflective context that would encourage bonding, respect individual perspectives as well as acknowledge experiences, emotions and thoughts that teachers brought to the circle. We began with a brief check-in of how the teacher was feeling on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest. Teachers could choose whether they wanted to elaborate on their response. This part of the circle was not recorded and was intended to put teachers at ease as well as in a reflective mode.

### *Interviews*

The interviews drew on life history methodologies to elicit connections between teachers’ experiences of participating in the literature circle and their memories of teaching, literacy formation or life experiences. “Life history” means

different things to different scholars, as Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) discovered in interviewing scholars who have used life history methods. However, a common thread was the focus on the context (social, historical, political, cultural) of a single life. In an interview with the authors, Tierney explained: “When I undertake a life history, I try to understand how larger concepts (culture, society, time) get defined and worked out by one individual” (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 117). Munro maintained that the contextualizing of an individual life serves an ethical purpose: “Life history requires a historical, cultural, political, and social situatedness in order to avoid the romanticization of the individual” (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 117). Life history also presented teachers with opportunities to see how they may have resisted being shaped by contexts and environments.

### *Literacy Autobiography*

The literacy autobiography is being used increasingly as a source of data collection within studies featuring teacher book clubs, literature circles or literature discussion, and is usually one of the first tasks that the group undertakes. The trend towards using the literacy autobiography has been gathering momentum in part because of the autobiographical movement within curriculum studies, otherwise known as *currenre* (Pinar & Grumet, 1976). The link of literacy scholarship to that tradition, though, is still in the process of being formulated through exploring such concepts as: autobiography as personal narrative (Chambers, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Florio-Ruane, 2000; Jackson, 1995), teacher reflection (Brown, 1999; Wolf, Ballentine & Hill, 2000), women’s memoirs (Buss, 2002) and connections between the personal and the political from feminist perspectives (Grumet, 1981, 1991; Helle,

1991; Polkey, 2000). Grumet's (1981, 1991) work has been the most germane in offering a theoretical ground for the writing, discussion and analysis of the literacy autobiographies through her notion of "excavating" personal stories and then rereading them with "suspicion."

The autobiographical aspect of literacy autobiographies is usually intended to stir up the reader's "cauldron of stories" (Cairney, 1992, p. 502). A more immediate reason for why researchers include literacy autobiographies, though, is the literacy aspect, and in particular the reading-writing connection, an area of study that overlaps with teachers' memories of formative reading and writing experiences (Brandt, 1992; Brown, 1999; Edgerton, 1996) and, thus, with intertextuality as personal history (Cairney, 1990, 1992). Readerly and writerly perspectives can be perceived as two aspects of the same continuous action (Barthes, 1986; Cixous, 1991; Eco, 1984). Whereas in many studies, the literacy autobiography is left behind, becoming an interpretive tool for the researcher, in my study, the autobiography comprised another layer of narrative, one that the teachers connected to children's literature, their discussions of that literature and narratives emerging out of the interviews. Teachers re-read and re-interpreted their own literacy autobiographies.

### Description of the Study

#### *Recruitment*

Practicing teachers were recruited from the town of Riverton and surrounding municipalities between September and December 2002. I chose to work with inservice teachers because I was interested in those who were already teachers, that is, who occupied the cultural role of teacher as "storied intellectual." I wanted to

know what these experienced teachers brought by way of approaches and strategies when situated in a “teacher as learner” context. Much of the work in multicultural literacy teacher education has been with preservice teachers, with some divergent voices, most notably emerging from scholars interested in re-looking at the role of narrative in teacher education (for example, Doyle & Carter, 2003). A promising yet less explored avenue was to work with teachers who could build new relationships within or between schools while also be in positions to influence beginning teachers, whose practices tend to be deeply affected by their field experiences. Most of the teachers in the study had mentored student teachers.

Teachers from public, private and independent and elementary, middle or secondary schools were invited to participate. In all, twenty-four schools were approached. Initially, I sought out public, private and Aboriginal schools. My intention was to invite as wide a range of teachers within the kinds of schools represented in and around Riverton. By the end of the month, when only one public school had expressed an interest, I initiated a campaign of targeting numerous schools. Because of ethical guidelines of school boards and schools, my first encounter was always with the principal, with whom I often enjoyed a lengthy conversation about the study and presenting various children’s books, with the principal reiterating how my work would tie in with school goals of diversity and literacy. Some principals played key roles in presenting the study to their teachers or encouraging teachers to join after I had presented the study in a staff meeting. Other principals passed the information onto teachers through conventional means, and that was sufficient to arouse the teacher’s interest. Teachers called me directly when they

wanted to participate, although principals also served as intermediaries. From the point of entry into the principal's office, it often took up to six weeks before I would hear a definite response as to whether any teachers were interested in joining.

In addition to approaching schools directly, I used three other recruitment strategies: placing a notice in the local teachers' association newsletter, approaching the university's student teacher placement office for names of cooperating teachers who might be interested and presenting at a staff meeting of Aboriginal teachers. In retrospect, the following recruitment strategies were the most successful:

- a) targeting groups of neighbouring schools;
- b) bringing contemporary children's and young adult literature to pass around to teachers in a staff meeting, preceded by a talk on the study and a mini book talk;
- c) offering teachers choices as to what kind of group they wanted to form: within-school; neighbouring or other schools; Aboriginal teachers; across grades or focused on elementary or high school;
- d) soliciting the active support of the school's leader, the principal;
- e) continuous contact with the school, while respecting the time required to communicate information within the school and for teachers to choose whether to participate or not;
- f) a teacher contact within the school. If by chance I already knew a teacher within a school, or the teacher knew me, that previous contact usually helped the teacher to join or convince others to join.

I also collected data on reasons schools or teachers elected not to participate. Lack of time was the most common reason given. Principals frequently cited the current political climate, teacher distrust of the government and unwillingness to do more on the job than what was required. However, those teachers who wanted to join did so in spite of that climate. One teacher wanted to join but wanted to meet with teachers from her own school, of which there were only two; not enough to form a group. The process of recruiting teachers was like the seeking of community partners. Time, research and resources were expended to invite partners in; if, after intensive negotiation, one fell through, it was disappointing. By mid November, though, enough of a momentum had gathered that more teachers had volunteered to participate than I had anticipated; instead of the three groups I had expected to run, there were four and inquires were still coming my way in January and February.

### *Participants*

Of the eighteen teachers who participated, all were public school teachers. Most were elementary teachers; two of the eighteen worked with secondary students, although several of the elementary teachers had worked at one time in high schools. Two were paraprofessionals serving both primary and intermediate students. The sixteen teachers had teaching experience ranging from two to thirty years. Three of the eighteen teachers were male, one per group except LC3, which was all female. Throughout the study, Euro-Canadian means born in Canada and of European family origin, and European means born in Europe. All teachers were Canadian citizens. The following table summarizes data related to grade level taught and cultural background.

Table 1

*Participating Teachers by Grade Level Taught and Cultural Background (N=18)*

	Frequency	Percentage
Level Taught		
Primary (K-3)	6	33
Intermediate (Gr. 4-7)	8	45
Primary & Intermediate	2	11
Secondary school (Gr. 8-12)	2	11
Cultural background		
Aboriginal	6	33
Euro-Canadian	10	56
European	2	11

The literature groups ranged in size from three to six teachers. LC1 was composed of two Aboriginal and two non-Aboriginal teachers and was a mix of teachers instructing intermediate and secondary students. LC2 contained five teachers, four of Euro-Canadian origin, one of European origin. Two were primary teachers, one intermediate (the male teacher), another an administrator as well as an intermediate teacher and the other a school librarian who was also responsible for the Computer Lab. LC3 was a group composed entirely of Aboriginal teachers, ranging from Kindergarten to Grade 12 students; two of the four teachers were paraprofessionals involved in counseling or the work study program. LC4 was the

largest group, consisting of six teachers ranging widely in grade level, from Kindergarten to Grade 7, with the male teacher crossing both the primary and intermediate programs through teaching split classes. Two of the six teachers were intermediate teachers and school administrators. Five teachers were Euro-Canadian in origin, one of European origin.

#### *Location and Frequency of the Literature Circles and Interviews*

##### *Literature circles*

The literature circles, which were an hour and a half in length, were conducted once a month at one of the teacher's schools. By the third month, several teachers offered to host the literature circle at their school. In the final month, LC1 and LC3 teachers joined for the last meeting, although unfortunately two of the three teachers in LC1 could not attend at the last minute. The circles were held in the schools, most often in libraries but also in teachers' classrooms or parent rooms.

##### *Interviews*

Teachers negotiated with the researcher as to the best location and time for their interviews. Teachers were interviewed two to five times, with four and five being the most common number of interviews conducted with a teacher (6 teachers interviewed four times and 7 teachers interviewed five times). Three teachers were interviewed three times and two teachers only twice because of scheduling constraints due to their positions within the school. Most teachers were interviewed at school in their classrooms or offices. Some teachers were interviewed at my home or at a public place (park, restaurant, café). The majority of teachers were interviewed immediately after school, but a few arranged interviews at lunch hour or before

school. A couple of teachers preferred evening interviews. Interviews at the school were never entirely private because students, parents or teachers could come in to ask a question or retrieve something from the classroom. As long as the teacher felt comfortable, the interview continued. Despite the lack of privacy in schools, the interviews, wherever they occurred, did provide a sequestered moment within the day for teachers to pause and collect their thoughts on the study's influence on their thinking, reading and teaching. As I discuss in later chapters, the influence was negligible right in the beginning but by the third month, teachers anticipated my opening question and were ready to discuss what they had been thinking about or learning.

### *Gathering Data*

Two means of gathering data were used in the study: videotapes and audiotapes. I proposed that the literature circles be videotaped in case teachers wanted to use the videotaped data for professional development with other teachers once the study concluded. Video clips could be used as part of an ongoing professional development. Whether the videotapes will be used for that ongoing purpose remains an open question. Some teachers indicated that such a tape might prove useful, however the work of editing the clips would likely fall back on the researcher, who would need to preview the contents with each teacher and seek their written consent at that time. Teachers were asked in the very first session if they felt comfortable with videotape and audiotape. One teacher did not, so only a tape recorder was used in that group. As it was, the presence of videotape and audiotape in three of the four circles served other purposes as well. The videotape showed aspects

of the circle that would have been lost to memory if not recorded: facial expressions and other body language, especially between teachers; whether a teacher was moved to record something in their journal based on what another teacher was saying; when teachers were being quiet. I transcribed each literature circle using both the audio and visual records.

Over the course of the study, I conducted 72 interviews. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and then given back to the teacher prior to the following meeting, or as close as possible to that meeting, for their reflection. Whether teachers chose to reread their interviews was left to their individual reflection, primarily in the interests of recruitment. Some teachers indicated that they re-read their interviews upon receiving the transcripts. Others collected the transcripts but did not refer back to them. If the study's load had been too onerous, it would have been difficult to entice teachers to join. Just the fact of participating in the interview served the purpose of "reflecting back" to teachers their own ideas and words used in the literature circle. By using prompts and probes, the researcher played an essential role in "bringing forward" to teachers the contents of previous interviews (see chapter three).

As the researcher, I kept numerous files, some of which remained constant, others that changed in response to the needs of the study. The dissertation journal, literature circle field notes and interviews represented a constant source; the others were devised as the need arose. For my own reflection, I also benefited from separate discussions with two peer debriefers two to four times during the study; I will call the debriefers Gabrielle and Joan. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) put it, the role of the peer

debriefers is to “keep the inquirer ‘honest,’ exposing him [her] to searching questions” as well as provide a sounding board for testing out ideas and hypotheses (p. 308). The result of talking through the focus and purpose of my study with Gabrielle was chapter one, in which I distinguish between the different approaches I could have used and the one that I leaned most toward and why. On another occasion, with Joan, I discussed the struggles that I had with creating opportunities in which teachers could bring memory forward, which are the subject of chapter three. The encouragement of the peer debriefers was also invaluable during the recruitment phase. Because both peer debriefers work with teachers, their response to the study’s significance to teachers was important. Did they think that the study would be of value to teachers and if so, why? Based on my study, one of the peer debriefers began successfully experimenting with using literature circles to discuss issues in Aboriginal education. Since Gabrielle was an Aboriginal educator, we also discussed which pedagogical approaches worked best with teachers and debated about the role of history and memory in multicultural teacher education and whether the learning process was the same or different for Aboriginal as compared with White teachers. Joan provided an excellent sounding-board, right to the end, for any parts for which I still needed to provide a rationale, such as in what ways I wanted to frame the relevance of the composition of the groups to the literature discussion. This question is discussed in chapter seven.

*Dissertation journal, literature circle field notes and interviews*

In the dissertation journal, I addressed theoretical issues and dilemmas. For example, as I discuss in chapter three, a critical point in the study was reached when I

had to select the literature for each group. The literature circle field notes contained a combination of field notes, literature circle transcripts interrupted by my own retrospective questions and comments in bold or colour, summative lists of titles and themes based on the literacy autobiographies (which were printed and shared with teachers—see Appendix II), agendas for each literature circle (for organizational purposes; these were not distributed to teachers) and any materials that I wanted to share with the group. I followed a similar practice for the interviews. Most of the teachers interviewed (11 of the 18) wanted their transcripts sent electronically. The rest were printed out and delivered to the teacher's school. Once I had sent or downloaded the transcript, I reread the interview, interposing comments, questions and possible probes in bold or colour. These interpolated comments helped me identify materials for questions or probes as well as serving as a source of data of my preliminary analysis of the transcripts.

By the end of the study, teachers had also provided me with their literacy autobiographies and 3-way journals, which I copied and returned to them. The information in the autobiographies duplicates what teachers shared in the literature circle, which is why only one quote appears in the study. In their final interview, teachers elected to bring forward themselves those aspects of the triple-entry journal that stood out; this method of proceeding corresponded to the study's intent. Moreover, it would have been highly speculative on my part to interpret the often cryptic words and phrases that appeared in the journals.

*Recruitment journal, book resource lists, selection of the literature*

I kept field notes on the recruitment process. These notes served four purposes: documentation of the process, tracking school responses and the reasons given for negative replies, a seeking of creative ways to recruit teachers and a reflective journal to keep my focus when teacher recruitment was slow.

By the third or fourth circle, I had begun compiling annotated lists of the children's and young adult literature used in each literature circle along with other titles as resources (See Appendix IV). Since teachers asked me for supplementary materials, I began the practice of setting up a table of books organized by theme; the theme arose from the teachers' interests as well as my own infusion of books. I usually spent the first few minutes speaking to the books, passing them around or offering that teachers look at them. Teachers were always welcome to borrow books, which they kept for one to three weeks. Teachers could also take copies of the annotated book list, which was brief (1-3 pages). The lists were made available again to teachers in Fall 2003 in a study update sent to each participating school, with books to follow that the teachers had chosen for themselves and the school library. The titles teachers chose were drawn from these annotated lists.

*Selection of the Literature*

To assist me in tracking the literature selected for each literature group, I composed a table organized by literature circle and within each circle, by teacher. The table identified the titles that the teacher most often reiterated from their literacy autobiographies (which I later called "touchstones"; see chapter six). The table also reminded me of which themes the teacher wanted to pursue. Using the information

from this chart, I identified themes and books for each of the literature circles (March, April, May, June). Whatever I could not fit into a literature circle, I explored through the interviews. The chart was revised from month to month depending on the content of the interviews, the previous literature discussion and the availability of book titles. For a list of the books used in each circle, see Appendix V.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The literature circles constituted a semi-public setting. Teachers were advised of that fact in the recruitment process as well as in the first meeting. The first literature group session addressed ground rules around confidentiality. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the dissertation and depending on the context, I have used substituted pseudonyms with phrases like “one teacher said...” or omitted providing the interview or literature circle citation. Riverton, the town in which the teachers lived, is also a pseudonym. In describing their place of birth, I used names of countries and provinces, but no cities. If videotapes will be produced from any of the literature circles, teachers will need to be consulted as to the content before it is distributed within the group or within a school. Mode of distribution and who would control the distribution would also need to be agreed upon in advance in writing. Forms have already been drawn up for that purpose.

From my own point of view, the most important ethical issue has revolved around the interviews. Without the interviews, the learning that took place in the literature circles would have been impoverished, with each circle isolated by a different theme and never time enough to go back to the previous discussion. Only in re-reading the data after the study’s end was the significance of the interviews to the

study made clear. During the study, the interviews often took the form of a cloistered relationship between teacher and researcher in which teachers explored issues in greater depth than they did in the literature circles. The teachers knew that their interview data would comprise a part of the study. While personal details of the teacher's life and thinking were embedded within a focus on literacy and literary response, my major consideration in reporting interview data remained the semi-public nature of the study. I have therefore been careful in my selections from the interview data, bearing in mind the teacher's learning process, the possibility of their words being recognized by other participating teachers in their school and their comfort level in disclosing personal details. After writing the chapters, I also telephoned teachers to summarize the content of the chapters and reconfirm that I could use the interview data in the write-up.

Ethics figured prominently in my decisions on how to represent the data: What was it that was important to emphasize? Which audiences was I writing for? It was through asking these kinds of questions that the focus on the "teacher as learner" emerged. Key to my analysis was adopting an ethnomethodological approach of trying to understand teachers' learning processes and meanings based on their own words.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in three phases and was adapted from various approaches in qualitative research. In *Phase one* my focus was on transcribing and rereading the interview and literature circle data so as to reflect back to teachers their own words. *Phase two* corresponded to the selection of the literature in light of the

criterion of “bringing memory forward.” Unless the researcher created changing contexts for teachers to bring their literacy histories forward, the literacy autobiographies may have been left behind. *Phase three* occurred during and after the data collection. It began with a grounded theory approach of reading and re-reading the interview and literature circle data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and progressed into reexamining those themes in light of reading and rereading the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I collected notes on each interview, looking for evidence from each of the following six categories: 1) the influence of the literature circles on the teacher’s learning process, 2) indications of the teacher’s awareness or recognition, as signaled by phrases such as “I become aware of...” or “I realized that...”, 3) areas of potential contradiction among the teacher’s statements (Grumet, 1981, 1991) and in particular, teachers’ awareness of those interstices, 4) any teacher statements connected to “difference” in which the words like “difference,” “multicultural,” or “diversity” were mentioned or the teacher talked about “the Other”; 5) perceptions of the role of the researcher in their learning and the study and 6) recursive themes or phrases. In reading and re-reading the literature circle transcripts, I identified themes and compared and contrasted them to ones that I had already identified earlier, as in the constant comparison method coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The articulation of those themes was refined until they seemed to best represent that portion of the data.

Once the grounded theory part had been completed, I needed to decide on an interpretive approach for representing the findings and a rationale to support that approach. I have often come back to Geertz’s (1988) observation that scholars tend to

give scant thought to representation. Once the central questions have been wrestled with, researchers assume that the representation will take care of itself: "If the relation between observer and observed (rapport) can be managed, the relation between author and text (signature) will follow - it is thought - of itself" (Geertz, 1988, p. 10). This presumption is false, says Geertz. It overlooks the fact that writing is representation. So, as in the beginning, when I was designing a methodology and faced with the question, "How do I approach teachers?", the question came back to me before writing the final three chapters: "How do I represent the teachers, what they have learned and what I have learned?" The theoretical framework of the study, although it had been there all along, was not completely articulated until I answered this question. Once the focus on the teacher as learner was reaffirmed through reexamining my notes on the data, one chapter had to be written by looking at the data from the perspective of teachers' constructions of difference, or how teachers performed their knowledge of "differences." Another chapter had to be written from the perspective of the teacher as learner, of which learning processes or strategies teachers had relied on in confronting or encountering constructions of "difference." A final chapter needed to reflect on how the setting or context influenced teacher learning: the "public" context of the literature circle, the more "personal" context of the interview and the role of the researcher.

The data analysis used in this study therefore represents a composite drawn from several methodological approaches:

- a) ethnography: It is standard practice among ethnographers to re-read and interpret the data in an ongoing fashion during the data gathering phase for the

purposes of forming preliminary categories that can then be tested by looking at further data (Wolcott, 1994). One of the first themes to emerge was “bringing memory forward” and I remained conscious of that theme in organizing the circles, selecting the literature and choosing prompts;

- b) grounded theory: A grounded theory approach informed the inductive part of Phase Three, the reading and re-reading of the interviews and literature circle transcripts and field notes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). On the basis of this re-reading, categories were confirmed, refined or formed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
- c) ethnomethodology: An ethnomethodological approach consists in looking for the meaning of participants’ words based on what participants say and how they explain their own meaning. During the literature circles and interviews, I consistently asked teachers: “What do you mean?” or “Why do you think that?” Teachers were asked to reflect on their literacy memories (viz. their construction of those memories orally, in the literature circle discussion and through the writing and re-reading of their literacy autobiography) and how they constructed meaning in reading literature, listening to other teachers’ responses, jotting words and phrases in their triple-entry journal and thinking about and talking about “difference” in the confluences between the literature and their own literacy history. Teachers therefore had multiple opportunities to revisit and interpret their own words and their interpretations of others’ words. Ethnomethodology also depends on the researcher reserving or bracketing judgment by allowing the participant to articulate how they make

sense of things; Garfinkel and Sacks (1986), who are most closely associated with ethnomethodology, call this practice “ethnomethodological indifference” (p. 166). My own reason for using this strategy was to allow teachers time to process the influence of the literature circles and interviews on their ways of constructing “differences” in literacy and to articulate their own responses and questions (Claxton, 1997; Fuller, 2001).

- d) feminist: Grumet’s (1981, 1991) strategy of “excavation” consists of looking for interstices where the pieces do not quite meet. It is a feminist methodology in focusing on the examination of personal narratives; an interest in the social and political ramifications of “the personal” is associated with feminist theory (Lewis, 1993). Grumet’s (1988) work has traditionally focused on women and teaching. Grumet’s strategy of excavation informed the composing of probes for interviews, the creating of contexts for “bringing memory forward” and data analysis of the interviews and literature circle transcripts, particularly in looking for contradictions and teachers’ awareness of those contradictions.
- e) teacher action research: The notion of the “teacher as learner” is central to the theoretical framework of the study; this notion is tied to teacher action research by placing the teacher at the centre of whatever actions come about as a result of their learning (Baumann & Duffy-Hester, 2000; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Teachers were engaged in a research process, where the subject matter was themselves (their literacy history and responses in the context of “difference”) and in which teachers were encouraged to accept the responsibility for interpretation and action. Teacher action research informed

the data analysis by turning the focus of the study back onto the teacher as learner in drawing on, for example, an ethnomethodological approach to interpreting and framing the teachers' words.

Notably absent from this list is discourse analysis, which is one of the typical methods used in looking at teacher discourse in literature circles (Flood et al., 1997; Marshall, Smagorinsky & Smith, 1995). Researchers have followed in the footsteps of Flood et al (1997) and Marshall, Smagorinsky and Smith (1995) by creating and adapting coding categories that look at teacher reader response but with a privileging of responses that were textually supported and a consequent devaluation of responses that deviated from the text into "the personal." For the purposes of my study, the difficulty with such coding was that it would conceal teacher learning processes, both from myself as well as from teachers. Erickson (1986), speaking generally of coding practices, says that "what are claimed to be low-inference observational judgments are in fact highly inferential. Once the data are coded there is no way to retrieve the original behavioral evidence to test the validity of the inferences made about the behavior's meaning" (p. 132). A more promising avenue for documenting the role of the personal in reader response and examining it in a nonprejudicial manner came from research on intertextuality and reader response (Hartman, 1995). In a different context, the data from this research could be reanalyzed using Hartman's (1995) methods of analysis, with a focus on eliciting generalities on the role of "the personal" based on examining the biographies of individual teachers.

## Validity

In qualitative research, questions of “legitimation/validity” are best answered from within study design (Lather, 1993, p. 674). A central aspect of validity is the study’s faithfulness to its own precepts, which includes a putting into question of those precepts when the data resists or challenges them (Erickson, 1986; Ely et al., 1997). One of the means of accomplishing this end was through the several journals that I kept in which I documented the research process, especially the reflexivity afforded by the dissertation journal. Another way was through “member checks” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a recursive “checking in” with the participants in the interviews and literature circles on what difference the study was making, bringing data to the circles for teacher interpretation, providing the teachers with transcripts of their interviews, using prompts and probes to remind them of their own words and ideas and keeping in contact once the circles had ended.

Another area in which to determine validity is the degree to which the study succeeded in “freeing up the present for new forms of thought and practice” (Bennett, 1990, p. 277; cited in Lather, 1993, p. 676), a post-structural version of Lincoln and Guba’s “catalytic validity” (Pitman & Maxwell, 1992). To what extent the study reenergized the participants to take up their own action or acts of recognition has been addressed in the conclusion as well as in chapters five to seven, as I look for evidence of teacher learning. Central to the carrying out of the circles was also the researcher’s practice of “a tentativeness which leaves space for others to enter” (Lather, 1993, p. 683). In my study, this was crucial for the learner-centred focus of the study; chapters one, six and seven address this question.

### Limitations

The study looks at the construction of “difference” but “difference” is predominantly conceived as cultural and racial; this bias comes from my own living and teaching experiences, of growing up in Quebec among cultural, linguistic and religious differences and teaching in an Aboriginal community. The Canadian experience of “difference” is shaped in relation to Aboriginal peoples, although that thesis is not developed in this dissertation but only alluded to in passing and by way of Morrison’s (1992) argument (see chapter four). However, the study itself is based on an observation about the dominance of multicultural discourse to literacy education in Canada and the construction of “difference.” Part of the purpose of this study was to question that discourse as well as offer alternative ways of looking at “difference,” such as Morrison’s (1992) investigation of literature as “racialised.” Chapter five, which focuses on teachers’ constructions of “difference” and arises out of an examination of the data, also departs from a narrow focus on constructions of culture and race by suggesting that “difference” is embedded within multiple constructions. Because the study was based on teachers’ autobiographies, discussion and input, the literature selection also incorporated themes from gender and alternative families (gay and lesbian). Frequently, teachers overlapped questions of race or culture with gender, sexual orientation and class.

Even though the study takes place within a teacher action framework, it would only be possible to determine to what degree ideas took hold by conducting another study or extending the present one, in other words, by changing the study into a longitudinal design. This possibility was always acknowledged. It seemed ill-advised,

though, especially because of the “teacher as learner” emphasis, to tell teachers that they were expected to take action before they had participated in any learning together or individually. What appears to be a limitation, then, was a deliberate aspect of the design so as to leave open to teachers whether and in which direction to chart their own paths.

The study was also limited by what teachers themselves chose to “bring forward,” however this was also its strength, for in bringing forward something that they themselves had remembered or created, teachers’ commitment to learning was more deeply engaged.

The study overall remains limited by the locale in which it was conducted and the size of the sample. More studies would need to be conducted in other areas to support or disconfirm the ideas and outcomes of this study arising out of working with this particular group of eighteen teachers.

#### Distinctive Features of the Study

The study was marked by several distinctive features. It combined and gave equal weight to the literature circle, literacy autobiography and the interviews instead of using the latter two as data sources to achieve triangulation. This equal weighting became methodologically necessary because the primary purpose of the research was to find a way to involve teachers in reflecting themselves on their constructions of “difference.” Connected with this goal, the emphasis on the “teacher as learner” was also untypical. Studies involving teachers in critical multicultural literature discussion have tended to position the teacher or researcher as the expert. When tied to the notion of “teacher as a storied intellectual,” the “teacher as learner” became a useful

way to involve teachers as participants in becoming apprised of the cultural and literary narratives that have informed their construction of themselves and others and the implications of those formations for their practice.

Unusual was the focus on inservice teachers as opposed to prospective teachers. University practice has favoured the “front-loading” approach, “as if a teacher will never have a chance to get smarter later” once they have left the supportive environment of the university and entered the conservative domain of the schools (Doyle & Carter, 2003, p. 133). Yet practicing teachers become the role models and mentors for beginning teachers. Moreover, initiatives at the school level are not likely to come from novice teachers, whereas they may be actively desired by practicing teachers who are looking for opportunities to reflect on their experiences, particularly in the company of other teachers and in the presence of a mentor (the researcher) from whom they can also learn new things.

As I found in conducting a focused literature review (see: chapter one), few studies have carefully looked at the pedagogical role of the researcher in studies with practicing teachers. In what sense was I, as researcher, involved in the teachers’ learning? What role did I play in creating a context for learning? How was that context used by teachers and did the context change in response to the teachers’ conversations, interviews and “memory tapping” process? Distinctive to the study was the focus on the role of memory in learning, a role that has been overlooked in particular in multicultural literacy teacher education and yet forms an integral part of the tacit knowledge that practicing teachers bring to teaching. Some scholars have begun to look at the role of memory in literacy education (Ozick, 1989), especially

reader response (for example, Sumara, 2002). Key to eliciting tacit conceptions of “difference” was the juxtaposition of familiar with less familiar literature; the creation of selection criteria in relation to the teachers’ autobiographies has also not been done. Most studies have focused on introducing teachers to literature that the researcher assumes will be unfamiliar to teachers. With the inclusion of reading texts on-line in a social context, the focus of the interview could shift to the teacher’s reflection on the conversation as well as on the literature itself, thus sowing the seeds of an action research context: teachers’ reflecting on one another’s words and thus contributing to a sense of bonding, community and potentially, individual and/or collective action. The action research framework has not been typical of literature circle studies with teachers. The inclusion of regular interviews, which served teacher reflection, was thus also an added feature of the study. As I discuss in chapter seven, the interviews were central to the study. The teacher’s documenting of response and rereading of the literacy autobiography and triple-entry journal, the researcher’s juxtaposition of literature and the use of children’s and young adult literature rather than adult texts; all of these constituted distinctive features of study design that supported and explored the notions of teacher as learner and storied intellectual.

Following directly on the heels of the theoretical and methodological approach was the ethnomethodological lens on data analysis, which again diverged from the typical focus in the scholarly literature on using discourse analysis to examine teacher discourse within the “public space” of the circle. Finally, coming back to the significance of memory to learning, the circle itself became a context for “slow knowing” or involving teachers in meaningful ways in their learning, including

addressing of teacher resistance to confronting constructions of “difference.” The implicit drawing on Aboriginal epistemologies, through my own association and involvement with First Nations educators and communities, also constituted an unusual design feature. Other distinctive aspects that emerged through the conducting of the study are discussed in chapters five to seven and the Conclusion.

### Summary of the Chapters

*Chapter one* reviews the scholarly literature on literature-based approaches to multicultural teacher education from the perspective of methodological design as well as pedagogy. It groups the research literature into three predominant approaches to multicultural literacy teacher education: learner-centred, teacher-centred and approach-centred. Using examples from the scholarly literature, I examine the pedagogical and epistemological assumptions associated with each approach and their strengths and limitations.

*Chapter two* builds on chapter one by making a theoretical argument for a “teacher as learner” approach to multicultural teacher literacy education when such an argument is supplemented by the notion of the teacher as “storied intellectual.” The “teacher as learner” notion emphasizes the importance of teachers’ taking up their own learning in relation to their own literacy histories or “landscapes of learning” (Greene, 1978a). The notion of the “teacher as storied intellectual” supplements the “teacher as learner” by squarely situating the teacher within the social and political discourses of education, culture and society (Mellouki and Gauthier, 2001).

In *chapter three*, I look at the methodological issues involved in balancing in practice the two notions of the teacher as learner and the teacher as storied

intellectual. I describe the challenge in creating pedagogical contexts in which teachers can “bring memory forward” while respecting the teachers’ coming to that process in their own ways.

Chapters two and three are about the role of formation and memory in the teacher as learner and storied intellectual. *Chapters four and five* shift into an exploration of constructs of “difference.” In chapter four, I examine the narratives of everyday living, cultural narratives, curricula and literature within the Canadian discourse of multiculturalism. In chapter five, I look at how teachers construct “differences” against the background of literary and lived experiences and show how, for the teachers in the study, constructions of “difference” are entangled with discourses of literacy, lived experience, literary response, conceptions of story and childhood. I argue that these embedded contexts need to be taken into account in research and teaching on multicultural literacy teacher education.

*Chapters six and seven* focus on teacher action. Action is traditionally defined as what follows after an intervention. Instead, action in this study was more pertinently (in line with Freire’s notion of learning) what was begun or initiated. What evidence was there of teacher learning within the study, particularly of awareness of constructions of difference? How can that evidence be presented in such a way as to be useful to educational researchers, teacher educators and teachers? *Chapter six* looks at individual learning strategies and approaches that teachers used while *chapter seven* takes a step back to reconsider methodology. How did the contexts created for learning influence teachers? What impact did the literature circles have on teacher learning? How did teachers influence one another? What

about the interviews? What role did the researcher play? How did each of these contexts contribute to “bringing memory forward”?

## CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE-BASED PEDAGOGIES IN MULTICULTURAL LITERACY  
EDUCATION (METHODOLOGY I)

In recent studies involving literature-based pedagogies designed to sensitize teachers to multicultural issues in their classrooms, one of two approaches tends to be emphasized: teacher-centred or approach-centred. A third one, learner-centred, is beginning to be explored, and a possible version of what it might look like is the subject of this dissertation. All three approaches rely on discussion and dialogue among teachers in small group situations around a common text, such as in literature circles, book clubs or study groups. Rarely does one approach appear alone; elements of the other two are interwoven, but the emphasis tends to fall on one of the three aspects.

A learner-centred pedagogy focuses on the teacher as learner and reader, in which the teacher learns something about his/herself, and that knowledge becomes the basis for change. An autobiographical component is often involved, in which teachers bring forward their personal experiences for critical examination in the context of their literary responses. A teacher-centred pedagogy includes the researcher or teacher-educator as participant, yet relies on the researcher's astuteness to pose a question or make a comment that instigates thinking that the group might defer, avoid or miss an opportunity to engage in. The focus is on the learning that the group undertakes together, although it is expected that each individual also takes his/her own learning away from the experience. The researcher has a responsibility to intervene at opportune moments when the discussion, moving in a promising direction, needs a little nudge, as well as when participants become mired in

stalemate and the researcher can divert the discussion back to its subject matter, which is usually taken to mean engagement with the text. An approach-based pedagogy seeks to generate a curriculum, an approach, or a particular kind of engagement with texts that can be generalized across classroom situations. One pedagogical approach to multicultural texts that is currently gathering momentum and that will be reviewed here is “ethical criticism” (Smith & Strickland, 2001). Because all three approaches (learner, teacher and approach-centred) are connected with literature-based pedagogy and reader response theory, I review each of the three approaches in this chapter.

### Learner-Centred

#### *Description*

A learner-centred approach rests on the belief that teachers as learners construct their understanding in relation to their own “landscapes of learning” (Greene, 1978). Greene (1995) addresses the question of how learners know when meanings get moved and identifies several criteria: “break[ing] loose from anchorage” (p. 110), “nam[ing] what we see around us” (p. 111), “find[ing] our own lived worlds lacking because of what we recognize” (p. 111), “refus[ing]” (p. 111), “recognition of a master story” (p. 118) and “[being] moved to rewrite it” (p. 118). The distinguishing mark of these criteria is that they occur in relation to the learner, or subject. “Meaning is for the subject” (p. 58), says Greene, in which the subject is an “I” capable of taking action to transform self and thus, world.

The teacher’s task becomes to create situations within which such “movement” can take place: “The difficult task for the teacher is to devise situations

in which the young will move from the habitual and the ordinary and consciously undertake a search” (Greene, 1995, p. 24). This part is tricky. For although, “as teachers, we cannot predict the common world that may be in the making” nor can we pass judgment on or “justify one kind of community more than another” (Greene, 1995, p. 43), the teacher must nevertheless create conditions that allow for a world different from the present one to come into being. Yet even though this world needs to come from the learner, the teacher does not stand apart as an observer. There are no empty contexts, says Morrison (1992). The teacher helps create the context and therefore shapes, in some subtle way, the community that comes into being. For example, Greene (1995) says, “we can bring warmth into places where young persons come together...we can bring in the dialogues and laughter that threatens monologues and rigidity ... Our classrooms ought to be nurturing and thoughtful and just all at once” (p. 43). In this co-creation of context, the teacher is also a learner.

For Greene (1973), the “teacher as learner” is not a phase that teachers pass through in returning to university or re-examining their practice; it is an attitude that teachers bring to the work that they do in the classroom on a daily basis. A learner-centred pedagogy associates any learner with new beginnings, fresh perspectives and uncharted paths. Teachers tend to be associated with the opposite: received opinion, expert knowledge, belief in orderly conduct and adherence to rules and procedures. The film “Up the Downstaircase” illustrates this point well, with a young high school teacher beginning her first year of teaching English and filling out forms for non-events (those unconnected with student learning) and only belatedly being recognized for creating an environment conducive to students’ engaging with literature. Greene

(1995) addresses this contradiction by turning the image of the teacher into that of a learner, someone who contends with new things by experiencing “breaks with what has been established” (p. 109). Teachers need to “subvert” their “thoughtlessness and complacencies” (p. 143) in order to create “clearings” in classrooms. Attentiveness to how new things are learned is what prepares teachers for being able to recognize it in themselves and others.

The following two examples present experiments with learner-centred pedagogy. For ease of reading, the words “researcher” and “educator” will be used interchangeably, since the research cited involves researchers creating opportunities for participants’ learning. The researcher accomplishes this goal by adopting an unobtrusive role as does the instructor in the example provided of a teaching situation. The work that goes into “clearing spaces” is substantive. The task may involve the abdication of authority or a conscious shift in role as well as a monitoring of that role. An example of abdication comes from Berthoff (1989) and of shifting and monitoring from Florio-Ruane and deTar (1995, 2001).

*Example I: Abdication*

Berthoff (1989) proposes several pedagogical strategies to open up the possibilities for teaching and learning. One of those strategies is for the teacher to refrain from talk and avoid what Berthoff calls “a pedagogy of exhortation” (p. 15). The uneven relation between teacher and student talk has been well documented; teacher talk in the classroom significantly exceeds that of the student (Wells, 1986). Berthoff tells the following classroom story of how she got students to talk in her university classroom and therefore become participants in their own learning. She

copied a line from Walt Whitman on the blackboard and had the students form two groups and turn their chairs around so that the two groups faced one another.

“Realizing that I was not going to be able to resist posing questions, I took off my scarf and tied it around my mouth” (p. 63). Both teacher and students waited, in silence. “Suddenly” one student spoke and “instantly” there was a response from the other side, and then another comment “instantly” and so it went (p. 63).

The situation Berthoff (1989) creates is definitely problematic. The educator assumes that by giving over the class to the students, students will participate equally. As Lewis (1997) has studied in peer-led literature circles, power relations between students fill the vacuum left by the teacher. Also, Berthoff created the context for learning. She had the students set up their chairs in a debate-like situation, and supplied the common text (the quote on the board). Despite these objections, it is nevertheless important to notice that when the teacher refrained from asking questions and did so in such a manner that the students were left in no doubt that the floor was theirs, students began talking. They did so in a situation in which, in previous classes, they had refrained from participating or felt that, with the teacher doing the talking, they did not need to speak.

#### *Example II: Shifting and Monitoring Roles*

Florio-Ruane likewise experimented with exercising various degrees of restraint with the leadership role, ranging from being a participant researcher to becoming a co-participant (Florio-Ruane & deTar, 1995, 2001). The context was a teachers’ book club focused on autobiography; all of the participants were white preservice teachers and the six books were written by authors from various cultural

and racial locations who shared an “outsider” perspective (Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 1995, p. 14). Julie de Tar, one of the original participants in the book club, acted as both informant and researcher, bringing her “insider” perspective to Florio-Ruane’s “outsider” one (p. 19). Florio-Ruane requested de Tar’s assistance in data analysis because de Tar had contested Florio-Ruane’s initial impression of group collaboration. In analysing the tapes and transcripts together, Florio-Ruane and de Tar (1995) found that they tended to stop the tapes at “uncomfortable moments” (Erickson and Shultz, 1977 cited in Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 1995, p. 19) when a lull or silence in the conversation occurred. Florio-Ruane felt she could only understand how conversations could be sustained by becoming a co-participant; this move differs radically from Berthoff’s, in which as leader, she temporarily took herself out of the centre of action.

From this “turning point” in her study, then, Florio-Ruane left “the stance of a distanced analyst of conversation” so as to “enter the riskier place of a co-creator of it” (Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 1995, p. 19). Being a participant promised Florio-Ruane a less obtrusive role so that her own utterances as “Susan” could be equal in authority to those of the teacher participants. Like Berthoff’s move, the switch proves problematic. It is difficult for a researcher/educator to so completely be a participant as to leave behind the leadership role. The following discussion shows how she moved back and forth between roles, often unconsciously.

Florio-Ruane identified three phases and three transitions in the conversations. The transition to “debate” she called “topic finding” and was marked by group members arriving at Susan’s home; here, she acted as participant as well as a “host,”

someone who prepared dinner for the group (Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 1995, p. 24). This host role becomes important, subverting her participant role by allowing her to exercise leadership, but covertly through smoothing over disagreement.

Florio-Ruane called “reframing and repair” the transition to “scaffolded conversation” and identified it as a “troublesome” move linked with her desire (as participant? as researcher?) to maintain a common space (Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 1995, p. 26). The transition began with her trying to “break the debate-like pattern” (p. 26) and allow others, who remained silent, to enter the conversation. This is a common pedagogical move. The impasse in the teachers’ conversation occurred because of differences in privilege in their school experiences, and was a subject raised in the context of having read the part in African American author, Maya Angelou’s (1969), I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, in which the school principal announces in a graduation ceremony that the students at Central School will be getting the newest scientific laboratory equipment while Maya’s school would be getting a new basketball court (p. 174): “The man’s dead words fell like bricks around the auditorium . . . We were maids and farmers, handymen and washerwomen, and anything higher that we aspired to was farcical and presumptuous” (pp. 175-6). Peggy and Marcia had attended poverty-stricken schools like the one depicted by Angelou as well as those described by Kozol (1991) in Savage Inequalities, a book about gross inequalities among American public schools that Peggy had been reading. Misty and Nell attended public, privileged schools. Though admitting that the situation was unjust, the latter two teachers maintained they would not exchange their privileged education for a lesser one. The “transitional period of reframing and

repair” was “initiated by Susan” and fulfilled “a host-like, social etiquette function” (p. 29). Florio-Ruane re-framed the discussion by bringing it back to Angelou’s text to talk about the damaging effects of low expectations. Florio-Ruane was dissatisfied with this conversation, though, because the move allowed everyone “to weigh in without apparent risk of direct conflict” (p. 31) and an opportunity was missed, she felt, for the group to further explore relationships between experiences of “home and community” and of “the public world of formal education” (p. 31).

The third transition to “joint inquiry” happened through “scaffolded conversation” (Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 1995, p. 33). It was not Susan the host/researcher but Peggy who “initiates a cycle of ‘doubting’ that moves the participants, not into conflict with one another, but forward in the search for an adequate interpretation” (p. 34). Here Susan recorded her words as merely “floating” into the conversation (p. 33). Her contribution became part of an animated “believing” or “doubting game” (p. 33). The doubting emerged as each teacher as reader brought a distinctive perspective (as well as history and formation but embedded within literary response) to Angelou’s text. Other teachers’ views were heard and incorporated into a collective understanding. Florio-Ruane observes that while this kind of dialogic move is usually performed by the classroom teacher, in this context, “it is not the host-organizer alone, but various members of the group who push the group to think harder” (p. 34).

The situation, as Florio-Ruane has described it, approximates a learner-centred pedagogy in two ways: the receding of the educator’s or researcher’s overt role as leader, and the focus on a common object shared among the participants and to

which no privileged interpretation is attached. This opportunity only became possible when Florio-Ruane's role as host and social convener receded. In the event of outright conflict, though, would the hostess role have reasserted itself? Most likely. However, Florio-Ruane, like Berthoff (1989), notices what can happen during co-participation: "Participants left to their own devices can, indeed, conduct problem-oriented discussion of text interweaving personal response and critical reading" (Florio-Ruane & de Tar, 1995, p. 35).

### *Summary*

The events that Berthoff (1989) and Florio-Ruane and deTar (1995, 2001) describe rested on a distributive notion of power. This notion was not so much consciously carried out but simply happened as an effect of certain changes when power, responsibility and learning were shared. At least two things occurred differently that allowed this sharing to happen. One was the shift in the educator's position within the group and, for Florio-Ruane, the receding not only of her role as researcher (which she had earlier abdicated within the group, or tried to) but also that of host.

In both studies, the other thing that changed was the group's relationship with the text. In Florio-Ruane and de Tar (1995), Angelou's story became grist for the topic of fairness in school finances. The debate grew out of a conversation begun earlier in an Educational Theory course. Misty and Peggy, standing on opposite sides of the question, dominated the discussion. It is not surprising that the debate began to turn on incommensurate experiences, for Angelou's book (as autobiography) was based on experience, while Kozol's book (which Peggy was also reading) was also

based on students' and teachers' experiences, with Peggy finding points of connection with her own school experiences. No common text existed at this point between the participants; Angelou's book was not yet on the table for discussion. In the doubting phase, the text was on the table and conversational turns built on one another in relation to the text so as to advance the group's understanding of the graduation episode. Dialogue requires an object, maintains Freire: "the object to be known is put on the table between the two subjects of knowing. They meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 14; emphasis in the original). Freire also maintains that experiences, which are personal and distinctive, could not take the place of that common object (Freire & Macedo, 1995). In Berthoff (1989), the description is too scanty to say with assuredness what actually happened, but perhaps the students fastened on the quote, it being the only object "between" them in the absence of the educator's directions.

### Teacher-Centred

#### *Description*

A teacher-centred approach is distinguished by "the quality of the question" (p. 163), as Lewis (1999) so aptly puts it, borrowing the words of an elementary teacher whose classroom literature circles she studied. The teacher gauges the direction of student conversation and strategically inserts questions to interrupt and redirect the talk so as to encourage the group to probe further, entertain other possibilities or widen the discussion to include more participants. Even though literature circles have emerged from a learner-centred pedagogy (Harste, Short & Burke, 1989), in which the teacher's question scaffolds student responses, the

question has proved particularly amenable to teacher-centred approaches to the critical discussion of multiculturalism and multicultural literature, in which the teacher is the one who carries primary responsibility for the subject matter. The teacher brings a perspective on the subject matter that leans the conversation towards the goal of students' grappling with theories of social justice, critical pedagogy and critical self-examination.

Two studies provide examples of this teacher-centred approach in a multicultural context: Lewis' (2000) literature group with rural teachers, which is based on her earlier work (Lewis, 1997, 1999) and Cochran-Smith's (2000) class of preservice educators.

#### *Example 1*

The roots of Lewis' (2000) literature discussion group with rural teachers lie in her earlier work with Julia, a grade five/six teacher who regularly used literature discussion groups in her classroom. Lewis chose Julia because she was articulate about what she wanted students to learn from participating in literature discussions. In particular, Julia emphasized the importance of asking good questions in the context of students' listening to and building on one another's responses. Lewis wrote two articles about Julia's class. The first was an ethnographic study that focused on the relationship between peer-led literature discussions and Julia's pedagogical objectives. Were students engaging in the kind of talk that Julia hoped they would? In her return to Julia's classroom, Lewis (1999) concentrated on the role that Julia's questions played in encouraging students to probe their cultural assumptions. Some of the literature discussions in Julia's classrooms were peer-led, while others Julia led.

Lewis (1999) was particularly interested in how Julia “moved the discussions from the personal to the critical” (p. 164). The key pedagogical strategy Julia used to accomplish this move was through instigating doubt using questions.

In a discussion of War Comes to Willy Freeman (Collier & Collier, 1983) with one of her literature groups, Julia wanted the students to notice that, historically, being white in American society has conferred privilege. The following sequence seems barely distinguishable from the IRE [initiation-recitation-evaluation] pattern typical of teacher-directed classroom discourse (Cazden, 1988), as Julia encouraged Andy and James to connect whiteness with holding a position of status in society:

Julia: . . . Do you know why [you saw Colonel Ledyard and Mrs. Ivers as more powerful]?

Andy: Because they are white.

Julia: They are white. Um, what difference do you think that makes?

Andy: Maybe because he is a Captain.

Julia: Maybe because he is a Captain.

James: They make more money.

Julia: They have more money. He is a Captain. And you are right.

(Lewis, 1999, pp. 172-3)

In simply repeating Andy’s and James’ phrases back to them, Julia seemed to rely on a common learner-centred strategy of acknowledging student input (Clay, 1998).

When she closed the sequence by saying “And you are right”, it had the effect of making the learner-centred aspect look suspiciously controlled. She placed her stamp

of approval on the students' exchange. She repeated the student phrases because they confirmed the direction in which she wanted the conversation to proceed.

Julia's rhetorical hold over the conversation, which had been tightly controlled in this first instance, seemed to open up to student input when she created a scenario that focused critical attention on racial inequality and the question, "What difference does being white make?"

Julia: What other differences do you think being white makes? Let's say Colonel Ledyard's wife walks into a store. She wants to buy something. She doesn't have enough money to buy it and she says, "Oh, hold on to it for a minute, and I will go get some money." Do you think the store owner is going to do that?

Andy: Maybe.

Julia: Okay. Willie comes into the store. Do you think the store owner is just as likely to do that?

[They establish that the store owner might respond differently to Willy, and Julia asks Tyler to read from his journal. Julia makes a few comments on the journal before she is interrupted by Andy, who has a question.]

Andy: Um, if the store owner was black, would that / ?

Julia: Make a difference? What do you think? (Lewis, 1999, p. 173)

Nevertheless, the "quality of the question" determines the appropriate context for discussion. In her earlier study in Julia's classroom, Lewis (1997) had noted that in peer-led circles, students positioned themselves in relation to normative behaviors

implicitly established by Julia's democratic vision of teaching as well as by an already-established peer network based on social and economic class.

Julia's role in literature discussions is crucial and she is aware of this fact; her control of conversational exchange is deliberate. She uses questions that challenge students to think in way that they otherwise would not on their own. Julia grounded her pedagogy on a "feeling that . . . asking questions that you wouldn't automatically think of yourself is important" (Lewis, 1999, p. 168). She is conscious of her role as a leader, both as a teacher modeling acceptable questions and responses but also as an adult responsible for participating in the wider culture, which involves cultural critique. While Julia remarked to Lewis that she has had reservations about her degree of involvement in the literature discussions, she is more bothered by the idea of "repeatedly leaving students to discuss on their own" (Lewis, 1999, p. 175) and "abdicating" her own perceived adult role. For her, leaving students to discuss things is tantamount to letting them choose in a vacuum: "most of the adults in their [students'] life abdicate that role and say, 'You decide.' Well, decide over and against what?" (p. 175). The zone of proximal development involves the active participation of one who knows with those who are still learning.

Lewis (1999) finds herself supporting Julia's conception of the teacher's role, but wanting to extend it even further: "While I believe that Julia's probes and responses during literature discussions worked to develop a critical awareness in students, I did find myself wanting to enter this discussion to comment upon the systemic nature of inequality" (p. 174). Lewis argues that "as educators . . . we want students to read texts in certain ways because we hope to influence the sort of people

our students will become” (p. 187). Out of her studies in Julia’s classroom germinated the design and conceptual framework for Lewis’ (2000) own literature discussions with rural teachers, in which a particular context was created within which critical discussion of a certain kind could happen.

White rural teachers were involved in a literature circle discussing Curtis’ (1995) The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963. Whereas Lewis (1999) passed over the reasons for Julia’s decision to use War Comes to Willy Freeman, hazarding no comment as to whether this book featuring an African-American protagonist was written by an African-American author, in Lewis’ (2000) later study, it is important that the text on the table be a “culturally conscious” one (p. 261). “Culturally conscious” stories “deliberately set out to recreate a uniquely African-American experience, primarily for a Black audience” (Sims, 1983, p. 22; cited in Lewis, 2000, p. 261). Why would Lewis choose a book ostensibly written for a Black audience when the teachers are white? Lewis is trying to make a point, and her point is that Curtis’ book intentionally draws in the reader—specifically the white reader—so as to elicit his/her critical understanding of the “limits of identification” (p. 259). Curtis accomplishes this goal through the use of personal everyday details, such as Buster Brown shoes. Smith and Strickland (2001) have questioned whether the “personal identification” so strongly associated with reader response theory (through “the lived-through experience”—Rosenblatt, 1978) is useful for the study of multicultural literature and whether personal response instead obstructs critical understanding (pp. 162-3). Lewis’ (2000) study reaffirms the place of the personal in aesthetic/critical response. While one pedagogical move she uses to accomplish this is her choice of

text and the explicit rationale she offers for choosing that text, the other pedagogical strategy is embedded. That strategy consists in using her role as participant-researcher in a teachers' literature discussion to make an observation that performs a function analogous to Julia's question. The strategy uses teachers' identification with the story detail of the Buster Brown shoes.

In Curtis' (1995) story, the Watsons are an African-American family who originally lived in Alabama and have recently moved North; father, mother, two brothers, and a sister. The older brother starts getting into mischief with his friend and his parents decide to send him down South for a while to live with his grandmother, who is a traditional African-American woman, disciplined in her ways. The family decides to drive down together. While there, a tragedy happens. The Black church is bombed and many people from the community are hurt or killed. The novel is told from the first-person perspective of the younger brother and represents his coming to terms with the significance of a clearly non-random event. The church was bombed by white supremacists.

The teachers' conversation paradoxically turns on the universality of the audience that the book could appeal to, a conversation that Lewis ("Cynthia") begins:

Cynthia: I guess I was thinking a lot about audience for this book, and one of the things that seemed appealing to me is that unlike a lot of books, it seems to me that it would be equally appealing for a Black audience or a White audience. (Lewis, 2000, p. 261)

The teachers then actively engage in the kind of talk that Smith and Strickland (2001) claim is often characteristic of teacher book club talk, of using personal associations

as “springboards” (p. 162). One of the personal associations that arises is Buster Brown shoes.

Sarah: ... they're [the characters] [are] all so human. That's what I [like], the humor, the family situations and all. It's just like anybody else.

Cynthia: Everybody can identify with them.

Denise: ...there's so much more similarity in this book than there is difference. And you just identify with the family and the funny situations and the things that happen . . .

Sarah: It calls to mind things that happened in your family that were similar.

Denise: Exactly. Exactly. That's exactly right.

Sarah: The Buster Brown shoes and all that stuff that those of us who are older remember those things, and . . .

Abby: I had Buster Brown shoes.

Cynthia: I had Buster Brown shoes. (p. 262)

In this conversation, the Buster Brown shoes function as a personal association and source of identification with the novel. Lewis moves back and forth between acknowledging teacher responses (“Everybody can identify with them”) and being a researcher-participant (“I had Buster Brown shoes”), although her statement has more behind it than identifying with teachers’ naïve, as it were, disclosures of their experience. Lewis had thought about the significance of those shoes to the story, and the fact that as a young white girl, she once owned a pair.

The Buster Brown shoes carry a symbolic significance within the story that is related to the novel's "culturally conscious" message. The narrator's younger sister had just got a new pair of Buster Brown shoes and she took great delight in trampling on "the White figure of Buster Brown imprinted on the shoe's soles" (p. 262). When the fire breaks out in the church, the narrator, who was at his grandmother's house at the time, rushes there, only to find a dirtied Buster Brown shoe near the burning church; he assumes that his sister is inside the church. She was not, but a young African American girl did die.

In the following conversation, the teachers realize how Curtis uses white readers' identification to make them conscious of themselves as white and complicit in the very bombing they as empathetic readers condemned:

Denise: . . . Maybe you really are totally pulled into the, the . . .

Sara: Touchy, feely, oh this is good, and then bingo!

Denise: . . . how you identify with this family. How they are like you.

How we are, you know, so similar, and there are so many things that you share. And then, as you said, at the end, then you realize . . .

Denise: but they're just like us. You know, we're all the same. You know why, why is this the device [to end the book]? (p. 262)

This conversation, though very different in some ways from Julia's with Andy and James, is also remarkably similar. First of all, the teachers are moving towards a critical understanding, here of how the author has positioned them as white readers. However, as Denise's question reveals, they are still in the process of "figuring this out." Denise is puzzled as to why the author would use such a "device," the word

“device” suggesting a *deus ex machina*, or manipulation using story elements. Secondly, the context for the discussion goes back to Cynthia’s remark, which now seems somewhat disingenuous and purely rhetorical, to introduce the ideas of universality and identification. What these two transcribed pieces also leave out is a third piece. The lacuna in the quoted transcript between Denise’s comment and her question was filled by Cynthia: “I pointed out that the family’s values are easy for many readers to identify with, but in the end, when readers “live through” the experience of the church bombing, white readers are forced to understand that their experience cannot be the same as this family’s” (p. 262; emphasis added). This quote is embedded within the text of the journal article discussion rather than being represented in the text of the transcript. The language suggests that Curtis has control of the conversation’s direction and echoes the kind of words commonly used in the context of ethical criticism, which argues that literature, or particular works of literature, can deliberately engage the reader with complex moral issues.

Lewis plays a pivotal role in getting the topic of identification on the table, as well as in providing a summative explanation of how the author uses identification to engage white readers. We have to ask the same question that Julia asks of her own use of literature discussions. Would the teachers have engaged in this discussion if the teacher/researcher/leader did not push understanding in this particular direction?

### *Example 2*

Cochran-Smith’s (2000) study offers a clearer example of how the teacher controls the context through framing the discussion in a particular way, as through an adroit question. Cochran-Smith thought that as a white instructor she had organized

her courses in such a way that structural racism could be scrupulously and openly critiqued. The lid came off the proverbial jar when an Aboriginal student, a guest speaker, asked if there were any university courses that met the students' criteria of satisfactorily addressing their concerns around oppression. Cochran-Smith expected that her course would pass muster but instead, several students launched into an attack of the course's shortsightedness. What followed for Cochran-Smith was a heavy period of soul-searching and "unlearning" the racism to which she would later claim well-intentioned white educators like herself are blind (p. 1). In designing future classes, she drew on Castenell and Pinar's (1993) notion of curriculum as racial text to have teachers examine their own and other students' narratives.

Cochran-Smith (2000) explains that unlearning racism "has to do with the power of narrative in teacher education and, as importantly, the power of teacher education as narrative" (p. 185; emphasis in the original). Cochran-Smith's change in pedagogy moves toward a learner-centred approach, in that the gaze once directed outwards to students and society, she now applies to herself. Teachers' narratives, including Cochran-Smith's, become texts for analysis so that the constructed self and society can become vulnerable and open to alternative, more critical readings.

In one particular class, Cochran-Smith had her children's literature class read and respond to a children's book, Lynn Reid Banks' (1982) novel The Indian in the Cupboard, and then read the critique of that book by Slapin and Seale (1992), both Aboriginal writer-librarians. The class members felt embarrassed that they had been blind to the novel's racist overtones. The students remained divided, though, in their adulation of how the novel was written until Cochran-Smith asked: "What if it [the

title] were The Jew in the Cupboard or The Black in the Cupboard? Would that be all right?" (p. 184). Cochran-Smith reported that "the looks on the faces of my students, many of whom were Jewish, African American, or Hispanic, indicated that it would decidedly not be all right" (p. 184). She noted that this moment marked a turning point in the course, prompting "some of the best discussion of the semester" around race and racism (p. 184). What was previously experienced at a remove suddenly acquired a personal application. The effect of questioned aesthetic response was the implanting of a doubt: "For a while everybody seemed to have new questions, and nobody seemed as sure as they had been about the answers" (p. 184).

### *Summary*

A teacher-centred approach focuses on the teacher as the mediator of a knowledge (or a process of knowing) that learners are expected to take on for themselves. In the interval, until that acquisition takes place, the teacher is responsible for creating situations in which that transfer can happen. Particularly within the context of education in a diverse society, the teacher is responsible for modeling the kind of critical thinking required for participation in a democratic society. Questions are one of the most powerful pedagogical tools used to accomplish this transfer.

Critical pedagogy tends to rely on teacher-centred approaches because the teacher is the locus of an ideological knowledge. One of the critiques of this approach is that the teacher's rhetorical agenda, however well-considered, disallows other rhetorical possibilities. Another characteristic of a teacher-centred approach is that selection criteria for literary texts are not always made explicit or, on the other hand,

the literary work is chosen because of its rhetorical usefulness but the reason for this choice is only apparent to the leader, not to the participants or students. Neither of these is surprising, since teacher-centred approaches do not arise out of a literature-based pedagogy. Instead, teachers use literature as a rhetorical tool or as that common object around which discussion of the subject matter can take place, and in which a subject matter exists prior to or outside of literature, which is seen more as an ideological than as an aesthetic object.

### Approach-Centred

#### *Description*

Ethical criticism is but one possible pedagogy that places faith in curriculum to enact social change. Other pedagogies exist, such as anti-racist education (Sleeter & Grant, 1987) and multicultural curricula (Banks, 1994). Instructional strategies produced by Ministries of Education are likewise embedded within curricula based on principles of justice, equity and fairness, with particular attention to issues of diversity (such as the BC Ministry of Education's Social Responsibility curriculum, which is addressed in a later chapter). Because ethical criticism has come out of literary criticism, particularly that branch concerned about the intersections between rhetoric (or pedagogy) and aesthetics, it has more thoroughly conceived the role that literature can play in teaching to diversity.

No conglomerate of ethical critics exists, however certain elements are common to this approach. First, ethical critics often endeavor to explain the power of literature as a whole or of particular literary works to move the reader to think or act in particular ways. Reading literature is about learning and practicing values, such as

respect (Smith & Strickland, 2001) or friendship (Booth, 1988). A learner-centred pedagogy adheres more closely to the constructivist philosophy of reader response, focusing on what the reader brings to the situation. An approach-centred pedagogy, while acknowledging the vital role of the reader, discerns constraints within the text that allow for some interpretations and not others. In a teacher-centred approach, I have argued, the literature is often used for a specific rhetorical purpose. In a learner-centred approach, literature exists in relation to the histories and needs of readers. In ethical criticism, however, the ideal text is characterized by complexity, specifically that kind of complexity in which characters are placed in difficult situations that admit of no easy choices. The second common characteristic linking ethical approaches, then, is that the reader is likewise placed in that tight spot. The author writes in such a way that the reader is forced to consider the ethical dilemma from the particularized location of the deciding character. The reader also needs to consider the viewpoints of other characters and the text constrains the way in which those alternative interpretations need to be read. The ethical reader is above all a careful reader, and one that is careful because reading carries responsibility, which is a third characteristic of ethical criticism. The responsibility is to accurate or well-supported readings as well as to a consciousness of the self in relation to society, however the reader defines that relationship politically.

Phelan's (2001) close reading of Toni Morrison's (1987) Beloved provides an example of ethical criticism at work. The heart of the novel, says Phelan, is Sethe's decision to kill her children (she does successfully kill one) instead of subject them to the life of slavery that she has had to endure. The reader's responsibility is not to

judge whether what Sethe did was right or not, but to appreciate the ethical complexity of Sethe's situation, the impossibility of acting within such a situation and Sethe having no choice but to act. In ethical criticism, the reader's engagement with a literary work involves entering the perspective of a character involved in a moral dilemma. The reader has a responsibility to accept that engagement and what it implies just as the character is unable to shirk making a choice. Engagement involves directly confronting the ethical complexity of the dilemmas depicted in the literary work.

What may be called a fourth characteristic is the stand that ethical criticism takes on the relevance of the reader's personal experience to grappling with a text's ethical complexity. While the reader cannot help but bring personal experiences and associations to the reading act, interpretation involves using those experiences appropriately. Identification with a character on personal or emotional grounds can be misleading. Ethical criticism takes account of "the whole": the whole situation depicted in the text, including the various perspectives of the characters and the weighting of those perspectives (as disclosed through the author's writing) and the whole hermeneutic situation, in which the reader accepts responsibility for critically examining and re-examining the grounds of his/her own response.

Pedagogically, ethical criticism lends itself to discussion or moral debate, however the question has been raised of what kinds of models exist for the discussion of differences; "we lack established ways to talk about differences," say Smith and Strickland (2001, p. 143). Ethical criticism also struggles with the role that the teacher plays, alternately modeling ethical response and constraining the direction of

conversation, while wanting readers to take up that readerly responsibility for themselves. Smith and Strickland's (2001) recent study with a teacher book club using multicultural literature provides an example of some of the possibilities and problems with an approach-based pedagogy using ethical criticism.

*Example*

Smith and Strickland (2001) had two purposes in mind when they conducted monthly literature discussions over the school year with 12 elementary teachers from two different schools. One purpose was to engage teachers-as-readers in a particular approach to reading multicultural texts called "paying literary characters an ethical respect" (p. 139). Their second purpose was to alter the traditional IRE [initiation-recitation-evaluation] discourse pattern and move teachers towards more decentred classroom conversations, on the grounds that the IRE "default" discourse is associated with a false political neutrality and that new ways of speaking with one another are required for cross-cultural exchange (p. 143). The researchers found that the teachers made progress in the second goal by elaborating on one another's turns. The same success was not replicated with the ethical approach to texts which, the authors reported, teachers seemed almost immune to adopting.

That Smith and Strickland (2001) linked discourse patterns with the study of multicultural literature is characteristic of an ethical approach, with its focus on conduct: how teachers as readers conduct themselves in relation to literary characters and how they conduct themselves as social selves with one another through discourse. That the researchers failed to find (or rather, instill) a connection between the two goals may be a failure of design, application (in particular, of an ethical approach) or

conception. I want to focus on the approach that the researchers used with the teachers in their engagements with literary texts, look at how the researchers conceived their role in relation to the teachers and examine the reasons the authors offer for why the teachers did not take up ethical responsibility for the multicultural texts.

Unlike other studies, in which the group of teachers is usually white and female, the participants in Smith and Strickland's (2001) study were a diverse group: five African-Americans (four women and one man), one woman from Costa Rica and six European-Americans "of various ethnicities" (three women and three men) (p. 146). The authors also note that Strickland is an African American woman and Smith a European-American man, however the implications of this cross-cultural research collaboration are not developed. The study deals only indirectly with whether the composition of the group influenced the discussion. The authors are committed to embracing neither a radical politics of recognition (based on recognizing differences) nor a difference-blind liberalism (based on treating everyone the same). Instead, the authors' political stance is based on universality. Paying ethical respect to characters would be impossible if cultural or racial boundaries were impassable. Can the reported failure of the teachers to take up the researchers' ethical approach to literature be attributed to the group's composition? This is a question that I will return to.

The authors define an ethical approach as the paying of ethical respect to others; "by ethical respect we mean provisionally adopting the perspective of another as best one can and considering how that perspective might be instructive" (Smith &

Strickland, 2001, p. 138). Respect has two components: showing active sympathy and taking seriously the rules by which characters guide their conduct. Smith provides an example of how his own stance in a multiracial book club fell short of this expectation.

Alice Walker's (1992) "Everyday Use" is about two African-American sisters, Dee and Maggie. Their grandmother bequeathed Maggie some quilts. Maggie, always practical, uses the quilts as bedding. Dee, who has moved to the city and become politically active, returns for the quilts, which she wants to display on her walls as examples of how the quilts re-inscribe American history with an African-American perspective. In the book club, Smith took the part of Maggie, seeing Dee as unreasonable. Several African-American participants in the book club countered with a different opinion, arguing that racial equity could only be achieved through characters like Dee. Smith says that he left that night with a deeper appreciation for the character of Dee.

Applying an ethical approach, Smith had insufficient grounds for shifting his opinion. An ethical literary response would demand a close reading of the text and how Walker presents the two characters. Smith introduces this example to show that other elements may also be at work in moving readers' responses, and that these elements are not textually based: the participants' "reading" of one another's responses in the context of a book-club discussion, the identity of the respondents (African-American like Alice Walker) and Smith's identity as researcher (white outsider) and his "guilt" in being white (Roman, 1993).

In presenting an ethical criticism, Smith and Strickland (2001) critique the role that the personal has played in reader response theories. By personal, Smith and Strickland mean content that focuses on the speaker and their family or cultural background “without reference to the text under discussion” (p. 151); their definition is adapted from a coding system developed by Marshall, Smagorinsky and Smith (1995). While personal experiences can provide a “first step” towards formulating a response, they ought not to turn into a “substitute for engagement with the characters” (p. 157). An ethical criticism is interested in the role of the personal in response, but not its random associations. In Smith and Strickland’s (2001) hierarchy of coded responses, utterances categorized as personal-textual and teaching-textual qualify as conscious action. Ethical interpretation implies disciplined attention.

The language of ethical criticism is filled with an Aristotelian love of the virtues: respect, love, friendship, integrity, self-discipline. The purpose of literature is not merely to gratify; it is to instruct. A focus on the personal misses the point: “Instead of trying on the perspectives of others, the teachers shared their own,” Smith and Strickland (2001) said in their critique of the teachers’ over-reliance on personal associations. Ethical criticism demands vigilance, in which some responses are more defensible than others and in which content can be shared, not confined to associations rooted in discrete individual experiences: “the very point of them [ethical judgments] is to awaken or challenge those who have missed the point” (Booth, 1988, p. 20).

Smith and Strickland’s (2001) alliance with an ethical criticism and critique of reader response seem almost belated if we look at how their study was actually

conducted. Of the seven sessions devoted to literature discussion, six hinge on a form of “free response” and only one uses a literacy strategy to focus the readers’ attention. Only the literacy strategy is consistent with the precepts of an ethical criticism. The teachers tracked their understanding of the main characters using a three-column response: character’s name, a passage that affected the teacher’s understanding of the character and how that understanding changed as their reading of the story progressed. Smith and Strickland’s results are further complicated by the occurrence of more personal associations in one story discussion than in another and my question (consistent with ethical criticism) is why. Why did one story elicit more personal associations than the other one or, conversely, why did one story lend itself more to ethical response than the other?

Amy Tan’s story elicited many personal associations about family practices around childhood behavior. Smith initiated the discussion by asking what the teachers thought a daughter’s obedience meant in the context of Chinese culture and how their own experiences compared with those depicted in Tan’s story. The teachers took up only part of his question, recounting times when they remembered being disciplined by their fathers or mothers. Smith and Strickland comment that it was this kind of “lively talk” about prior experiences that the teachers came to enjoy, but that for the researchers constituted a failure to address the lived situations of the literary characters (p. 159). The teachers did not attempt to wrestle with the story’s complexities but instead treated the literature as a “launching pad” for personal expression (p. 159). The salience of cultural presuppositions in why this happened

emerges when the authors juxtapose teachers' responses to Walker's tale and Tan's story.

In the Tan story transcript, two personal-textual utterances are followed by two personal ones, which implies a moving away from the text. By contrast, in the Walker story transcript, much more variety of coded responses is evident, as utterances (on the level of sentence) move back and forth among the textual (2), personal-textual (1), teaching-textual (1) and global (3). Smith and Strickland (2001) laud this back-and-forth movement between text, self and world, and notice how a teacher-participant was the one to make "Alice Walker a participant in the conversation," (p. 160) a move that the authors see as paying ethical respect.

What factors could have produced such differing responses to the two stories, both of which Smith and Strickland (2001) deemed equally suitable for eliciting a paying of ethical respect to characters? Smith read Alice Walker's story aloud before the discussion began. Smith and Strickland (2001) discount this factor as relevant but pedagogically, judging from my own elementary teaching experience, it could have made a significant difference in engaging the teachers with the text. Moreover, the method of approaching the stories differed, with teachers tracking their response to Walker's story (as per the literacy strategy) rather than responding freely. This also likely proved significant, given the closer tie of the literacy strategy to an ethical criticism. The stories themselves are different, one featuring African-American, the other Chinese-American, characters. Five of the literature discussion participants were African-American while none were Chinese-American yet most teachers offered personal narratives for Tan's story even though they confessed to ignorance of

Chinese culture. Only the African-American teachers participated in the discussion of Walker's story. Is this difference not telling? Smith and Strickland (2001) cite another story, "A Visit to Grandmother," that white teachers were willing to discuss that also featured African-American characters and that white teachers were happy to discuss. Consistent with a focus on characters rather than on authorship, Smith and Strickland do not say whether this story was written by an African-American author or by a white author depicting African-Americans. They do note that "none of the white teachers participated in the 16-turn exchange" about mothers and culture with Walker's story (p. 161). Notice the authors' switch in this context from referring to teachers as "white" rather than their usual usage of "European-American." Could that have to do with the fact that the white teachers felt intimidated about discussing "differences" when African-American teachers were present and the discussion was of a story written by someone often identified as a "culturally conscious" African-American author (Sims, 1983)? When asked why they did not participate, "the white teachers noted that although they felt the discussion enriched their understanding of the story, they did not feel that their personal experience gave them anything relevant to contribute" (p. 161). But was the white teachers' silence an indication of resistance? The authors comment that the white teachers talked freely in discussing the other "African-American" story, "A Visit to Grandmother" (p. 161). Does a difference exist between a story "by" an African-American and one "about" African-Americans? The penchant to construct "the Other" in the Other's absence is characteristic of white and Western society (Said, 1978) but is not confined to white teachers. Cochran-Smith (2000), in using a novel that constructed Native Americans,

found that none of her teacher participants, many of whom were minorities (but no Native Americans), resisted those constructions, nor were they able to even notice them.

Further probing reveals more complexities. In comparing the content of the responses between the two stories (“A Visit to Grandmother” and “Everyday Use”), Smith and Strickland found that white teachers related to the universality and familiarity of the first story, with one teacher saying, “boy, this is so much like my family . . . there were so many feelings in here I could identify with” (pp. 161-2) whereas African American teachers used Walker’s story to reflect on the role of mothers in society. Smith and Strickland’s (2001) coding of the Walker story appears as interposed:

Teacher 1: . . . what Alice Walker always repeats in a lot of her work is that the first and foremost appreciation of your culture begins with your mother. (textual) I mean how can you appreciate or even act like you’re going to appreciate your culture [unless] you have this respect for your mother? (global)

Teacher 2: . . . it takes a lot to appreciate your mother who’s not doing what you think she should do. . . You really have to grow to be able to see past that (global). If you notice, the picture that was painted, everything on the outside was rough,/but you had to go a little deeper in order to see other qualities of the mother, like uneducated and the thing to do is maybe take this kind of piece and maybe read it with younger people . . . (teaching-textual). (pp. 159-60)

Is it only an artifact of reader response pedagogy that the personal (as the authors have defined it) keeps obtruding in the responses of white teachers? Are not the personal and the political intertwined for both readers (white; African-American), but only differently? What of the other readers who are neither white nor African-American?

The authors' conclusion that the teachers resisted engagement with multicultural literature rests entirely on inference and is tied to the ambiguity of the researcher's role in the study. First of all, both authors attempted to lead the group into discussions of culture in relation to characters yet reported that the teachers ignored their overtures. It is not clear whether the discussion of multicultural literature was an aim made plain to the teachers. Berthoff (1989) says that, from a pedagogical perspective, "elements of what we want to end with need to be present in some form from the first or we will never get to them" (p. 23). If the stated goal was to instill in teachers an ethical respect for characters in multicultural literature, it would make sense to adopt a pedagogy that explicitly aims for that goal. Smith and Strickland (2001) suggest two strategies that they could have used: asking the teachers to write from the perspective of a character (Beach, 1997) or asking teachers to "explain the characters with whom they most and least engaged and to consider what might account for that engagement" (p. 163). The authors' methodological approach of counting and categorizing utterances interfered with pedagogy, of asking why "personal" utterances appeared, why they were so persistent and what purpose they served and could come to serve differently.

Secondly, the researchers identify themselves as “leaders.” They select the literature as well as establish the protocol for response, yet they also want to be seen as “equals” so as to move the conversations away from “teacher-centred discussion” (p. 147). Judging from the transcript excerpts, their questions and comments are more rhetorically motivated than participatory. They have a vested interest in pushing the teachers to think about literature ethically. Using the researcher role to accomplish multiple, simultaneous objectives seems imprudent, especially when teachers are being observed for how they behave rather than being involved as “equals.”

### *Summary*

The advantage of ethical criticism for the study of multicultural literature is its focus. By carefully considering a character’s point of view, a more complex understanding may emerge in the reader’s mind, one that includes applying the story’s lesson to oneself, as in Phelan (2001)’s modeling of his reading of Morrison’s (1983) Beloved:

Sethe becomes a character who was once pushed beyond the limits of human endurance and reacted to that pushing in this extraordinary way. Consequently, we turn our judgment on the institution that pushed her beyond the limits: slavery. It is, of course, easy to say that slavery is evil, but it is another thing for readers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—especially white readers—to feel the force of that statement, to comprehend the effects of slavery on individual human lives . . . Such engagement is also crucial to Morrison’s larger purpose of challenging her audience to come to terms with slavery’s continuing

effects on the United States. (p. 106; emphasis in the original)

According to ethical criticism, socio-political awareness is a result of committed engagement with the text. However, any reading, J. Hillis Miller (2001) says, ought to involve an active engagement with a text:

By “read” I mean not just run the words passively through the mind’s ear, but perform a reading in the strong sense, an active responsible response that renders justice to a book by generating more language in its turn, the language of attestation, even though that language may remain silent or implicit. Such a response testifies that the one who responds has been changed by the reading. (p. 104)

What ethical criticism achieves in focus, it leaves out as a factor in response. That factor is “the personal” but not “the personal” as extraneous to and interrupting response, but the personal as political and social. Magda Lewis (1993), a feminist cultural studies scholar, in debating whether she should have begun her book on women and silence with her own experiences, reflects that although the personal has become associated with the private, they are not the same; instead, “the personal is often merely the highly particular . . . this is where our most idealistic and our deadliest politics are lodged, and are revealed” (Williams, 1991, p. 93; cited in Lewis, p. 6).

### Conclusion

I distinguished between three pedagogical approaches to diversity in education using literature: learner-centred, teacher-centred, and approach-centred. I myself acknowledge that this division seems artificial; in practice, elements of all

three intertwine, including in my own study. However, reviewing recent studies using this method accomplishes two objectives. It clarifies that although all three perspectives intend that the learner (“teacher”) assume responsibility for “difference” through interacting with narrative texts, the ways of encouraging learners to take up that responsibility differ. Those differing ways manifest themselves pedagogically and are ultimately related to assumptions about how learners learn and how teachers model learning. This is true even though I am not talking here about teachers and students in the classroom, but about teachers learning from one another, from texts as well as from the researcher (who often also plays the role of a teacher-educator in teacher book clubs). Without this differentiation among learner-, teacher- and approach-centred pedagogies, important differences are obscured in method, intent, manner, goals and pedagogical approaches. Also obscured is the researcher’s difficulty in negotiating the leadership role. This difficulty emerges as a common thread across studies from the three approaches. Far from being only a question of methodological design, how the leadership role is conceived within a study underscores the researcher’s pedagogical beliefs about where responsibility finally lies for learning and teaching.

Whereas all three approaches want the learner to take up responsibility for him/herself, each perspective conceives that transfer of responsibility differently. In a learner-centred approach, the tension centres around the teacher’s role in creating conditions for learning yet stepping back to allow the learners to shape the learning situation for themselves. Adherence to the belief that “meaning is for the subject” (Greene, 1995, p. 58) entails a devolution of authority on the teacher’s part. The

teacher can either help to create a situation conducive to learning then step away or attempt to become a co-learner. Neither move is unproblematic. Simply the fact of sharing a common literary text is a pedagogical move designed to influence the direction of learning. However, ways exist to negotiate the learners' relationship with the text so that the leader's point of view is not privileged. For example, the literary text can exist in relation to the teachers' own narratives (teaching narratives, literacy history and lived experiences), which was the approach taken in my own study.

In a teacher-centred approach, the teacher can fulfill multiple roles of co-learner and facilitator but ultimately assumes responsibility for organizing the group's learning. The way that responsibility is exercised, without appearing to take power away from students, is through the strategic use of questions or comments designed to redirect and critique understanding. Either way, the leader sees learning from a higher vantage point that derives authority from the researcher's pedagogical experience and/or knowledge of the subject matter.

In the approach-centred situation of an ethical criticism, the strategy of "trying on" a literary character's point of view for the purpose of developing a respect for "others" is intended to transcend the personal to move into a broader conception of self in relationship with the world and others (Smith & Strickland, 2001). The leader plays a key role in helping to choose the texts, determine the focus for the texts and model a possible version of ethical understanding. As Smith and Strickland (2001) found, this role proved difficult to manage, although it might have become easier, or at least clearer, had they identified the pedagogical assumptions underlying their approach and adopted a leadership role consistent with that approach.

The role that this chapter plays in the dissertation is three-fold. First, it provides a perspective on what choices were open to me in designing the study as well as provoking a re-evaluation and refinement of the approach that I had been formulating. Secondly, it situated my own methodology and rationale in relation to roads not taken and clarified why I chose a learner-centred approach. Thirdly, my critique of each the three approaches can be applied to my own data analysis and used to testify to the methodological rigour of the study and the degree to which as researcher, I was aware of my role. The conducting of an actual study, as I said in the introduction to this chapter, involves elements of all three approaches, even though one is predominant. In chapter seven, I reexamine my study in light of the areas of strength and critique identified with each approach. The following table summarizes the chapter's findings (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Strengths and Limitations in Learner-, Teacher-, and Approach-Centred Approaches*

Approach	Strengths	Limitations
Learner-centred	Creates a context for participatory learning Sees teacher as participant in learning	Disingenuous (failure to acknowledge the leader's role in creating contexts for learning)
Teacher-centred	Encourages critical analysis and self-examination Sees teacher as knowledgeable in a subject matter as well as tools of social critique	Rhetorical (predetermines the learning to take place and shapes the learning process to lead to that point)

Approach-centred	Reader responsibility to engaging with a text  Sees teacher as an ethical actor in the world	Dogmatic (predetermines how meaning needs to be constructed and what counts as meaning)
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# Memory

## CHAPTER 2

## TEACHERS AS LEARNERS; TEACHERS AS STORIED INTELLECTUALS

How do teachers come to learn something new? What part do stories play in that learning process? How do teachers perpetuate as well as transform culture and society by the stories that they tell about themselves and others? One of the purposes of this chapter is to develop an expanded view of reader response, one that relates memory to social action in the context of “difference.” All three of these concepts (imagination or stories; memory; action) contribute to a learner-centred pedagogy in which in this case, the teacher is the learner. But the learner of what? The focus on “teacher as learner” needs to be coupled with a recognition of the political and social significance of teachers’ work within literacy, society and schooling. In the absence of this connection, a “teacher as learner”-centred approach becomes an interesting notion or laudable ideal but for what end?

Mellouki and Gauthier (2001) have argued that teachers, as intellectuals, perform three roles in society: the transmission, interpretation and critique of societal values. There is a useful notion for understanding the role that teachers play in the larger society. Mellouki and Gauthier (2001) state that the teacher “is” an intellectual, whether teachers choose to acknowledge it or not: “qu’ils le veuillent ou non, les enseignants sont des intellectuels” [whether they choose to acknowledge it or not, teachers are intellectuals] (p. 1). Missing from their argument, though, is the question of how teachers come to “own” that work in which they are supposed to be engaged. Thus, I come back to the same three questions with which this chapter opened: How do teachers come to learn something new? What part do stories play in that learning

process? How do teachers perpetuate as well as transform culture and society by the stories that they tell about themselves and others? In this chapter, I elaborate two arguments. One is to revise Mellouki and Gauthier's (2001) formulation to address the role of story, thus: The teacher is a storyteller and intellectual who engages in the telling and interpreting stories so as to transmit, mediate and critique societal values. In the second part of the paper, I provide a theoretical basis for why the "teacher as intellectual" argument needs to be supplemented by a "teacher as learner" approach, as understood in the context of the importance of stories to literacy, specifically to reader response.

### Teachers as Storied Intellectuals

#### *Teachers as Intellectuals*

Giroux (1988) has used the designation "teachers as intellectuals" to urge the creation of "transformative intellectuals who develop counterhegemonic practices" (p. xxxiii), but he includes both educators and educational researchers. By teachers, Mellouki and Gauthier (2001) mean school teachers, or those people whose work is obscured by the locale in which they work (elementary and secondary schools) as well as the low regard in which early school training as compared to post-secondary education is held. Mellouki and Gauthier's conception of the intellectual has been influenced by primarily French scholars, such as Bodin (1997), who have been interested in broadening the notion of "the intellectual" to include anyone whose profession involves a diffusing of social and cultural norms and ideas.

Teachers fall into the category of intellectual, Mellouki and Gauthier (2001) maintain, first and foremost because of their mandate, which issues directly from their

chosen profession as teachers: “être l’intellectuel de service au sein de l’école et jouer son rôle culturel auprès des jeunes générations n’est pas, n’a jamais été et ne sera jamais un choix pour l’enseignant, mais une obligation qui fait partie de la nature même de la profession d’enseigner et d’éduquer” [being an intellectual in service to the school and playing one’s cultural role vis à vis the younger generations is not, has never been nor will ever be the teacher’s choice; instead it is an obligation integral to the teaching profession and the responsibility to educate others] (p. 15). While the state officially grants teachers the authority to teach based on their university credentials, teachers’ authority as intellectuals comes from society, which entrusts to teachers the care and guidance of children. In this capacity, their intellectual work consists in the performance of three roles that the authors borrow from the work of Dumont (1971): “d’être les dépositaires, les interprètes et les critiques de la culture” [to be transmitters, interpreters and critics of culture and society] (Mellouki & Gauthier, 2001, p. 1). As a transmitter of culture, the teacher’s intellectual mandate is to assist students in making links between various forms of knowledge, how these links are constructed and their social and historical contexts (p. 14). The transmission role is a conservative one, consisting in “the transmission of knowledge instrumental to the existing society” (Giroux, 1988, p. xxx). If teachers uncritically accepted their cultural inheritance, however, it would become “un poids mort” [a dead weight] (Mellouki & Gauthier, 2001, p. 14). Teachers need to combine “un regard tantôt grave tantôt amusé sur le paysage qu’il connaît bien” [a perspective at once serious and playful on the territory that is so familiar to them] (p. 15), thus becoming aware of traditions they have inherited and modelling a critiquing of those cultural

assumptions. Teachers perform an essential role in “d’éveiller chez les jeunes l’intérêt pour les cultures et les civilisations et de développer chez eux la faculté critique qui leur permet d’être des ‘consommateurs’ avertis de la culture” [awakening in students an interest in culture and civilization and developing their ability to critically assess their position as “consumers” of culture] (p. 17). Teachers are also interpreters of culture and society. Interpretation involves translation: “Chaque discours, chaque geste, chaque mode de fonctionnement et d’être avec les élèves requiert décodage, lecture, compréhension, explication (de texts, de situations, d’intentions ou de sentiments d’autrui)” [Every word, every gesture, every way of being with students requires decoding, reading, comprehension and explaining (of others’ texts, situations, intentions or feelings) (p. 15). Pedagogy rests on what hermeneutics called “la subtilitas” (Simard, 1999 cited in Mellouki & Gauthier, 2001, p. 15), or the flexibility in knowing how to apply, or translate, knowledge in multiple situations.

While Mellouki and Gauthier (2001) emphasize that the teacher already is an intellectual, the language they use to describe this role is filled with many “oughts” and “shoulds,” which suggests that in reality, teachers fail to appreciate the significance of their work in relation to culture and society. In such a context, the task of teacher educators becomes to create “les conditions susceptibles de contribuer à faire prendre conscience aux enseignants de la nature et des implications de leur rôle d’agents cultivés” [create the conditions in which teachers can become more aware of their role as intellectuals] (p. 17). Mellouki and Gauthier’s argument is like Levinas’ philosophy of ethics in that teachers’ intellectual role exists prior to their consciously taking it up, just as Levinas argues that a responsibility exists to “the Other” that is

prior to our recognition of that responsibility. The relation with the other is characterized by a radical asymmetry. The other is “above” me; the other commands, directs, enjoins my response by its presence: “The face is not in front of me (en face de moi) but above me” (Levinas & Kearney, 1986, pp. 23-4). The idea of “teacher as learner” constitutes a suppressed aspect of Mellouki and Gauthier’s (2001) argument, in the sense that the teacher comes to realize their role through reflective practice. But once again, do educational scholars know the multiple ways by which that learning proceeds? And how might the learning process alter the goal? The idea of teachers as “storied intellectuals,” in the following section, indicates the kind of cultural knowledge that teachers mediate, at least for those teachers involved in literacy education. The remainder of the chapter addresses teacher learning in the context of stories and reader response.

### *Teachers as Storied Intellectuals*

Teachers possess a wealth of knowledge. While all of us have been through elementary and secondary schools, for teachers that educational formation becomes both the ground of practice and the object of reflection. An integral part of that formation, as Mellouki and Gauthier (2001) have pointed out, is the cultural one. That cultural formation involves the inculcation of knowledge as well as of those interpretive tools by which a society makes sense of, or constructs, the world. According to Bruner (1986), we organize the world in one of two ways, by using logic or story. Teachers are “storied intellectuals” in the sense that they are filled with the stories that they were told and that they themselves read, or were required to read, for example in school, and teachers reproduce that knowledge in teaching. The notion

of “teacher as intellectual” therefore needs to be refined to acknowledge the role that stories have played in teacher formation and continue to play in organizing how teachers see the world. This is particularly true of elementary and secondary English teachers, whose primary materials for the classroom consist of stories (picture books, novels, short stories) and many of whose pedagogical approaches are organized around stories (read alouds, literature circles, reading comprehension, silent reading, readers’ or writers’ workshops).

Teachers bring a gradual accumulation of knowledge and experience to the stories they read and teach in the classroom: childhood memories of authors and books, knowledge of family rituals around reading (what was read, when, in what attire, in which rooms within the family home, with whose tacit or express permission or disapproval), memories of school, church, Sunday school, and libraries, the hearing of oral stories told about oneself, relatives or ancestors, and the formation of values, including what constitutes literacy and which stories are important. Also included in this formation is life experience: where teachers grew up, which Canadian or European landscape (prairie, inland or coastal community; rural Northern town or Southern urban centre), which occupations were dominant, what people lived there, who their family was, what elements were important in the formation of identity and community attitudes toward “difference.” Teachers are also individuals who interpret and respond to their environments. They bring memories of attachment and resistance to community or of being struck by some books, experiences, or teachers more than others.

It was through the writing of literacy autobiographies and sharing details of that history in the literature circles that teachers in the study realized that: a) a common range of books and genres was available to them as children and adolescents and b) teachers brought their own feelings of attachment and disengagement with those books and genres. The Aboriginal literature group also recognized that literacy has been defined narrowly and discussed which literacy, in the form of stories, were equally important to remember and why. It was through the interviews with the researcher, in which teachers recalled more of their lived history in conjunction with their literacy history, that teachers began to connect the stories they read with those they were told by family and community or inferred from their surroundings. The kinds of connections they made are the subject of another chapter. Relating my own “teacher as storied intellectual” to Mellouki and Gauthier’s (2001) “teacher as intellectual,” teachers need to acknowledge not only those stories that have figured in their own individual formations, but how those stories fit into a larger cultural narrative that it is their role not merely to transmit but to interpret and critique. In the following section, I explore the connections between memory and imagination in the learning process involved in this study, in which teachers read and discussed literature as well as related their responses to lived experience.

#### Teacher as Learner

The idea of a “storied intellectual” is itself a variation on ideas that Maxine Greene has been revisiting and developing for over thirty years within teacher education. In writing about teacher awareness of their personal and social histories and the central role of the imagination (literature and the arts) in “clearing spaces”

within education and society for excluded voices, Greene (1995) continually links the same concepts one to the other as in an elaborate chain, with the suggestion being that these concepts, though distinct, have become inseparable and in their inseparability, lies some answers to critical issues in education and society. Those concepts, distilled, are imagination, memory and action within the context of “difference” in teacher education. My approach has been more analytical in wanting to probe the links among the concepts. For instance, why or how might imagination, and specifically literature and the arts, be connected to opening spaces? What kinds of spaces? Is all literature included, do certain works, authors or genres conduce to this goal more than others? How does the teacher exercise imagination? In what ways can cultivating imagination be connected to changing society? Most persistent of all, in reading Greene’s work, has been my question of how these linkages translate into practice.

#### *A Phenomenology of Reader Response*

The reading of literature within the circle rather than as is more typically done, prior to the book club, made the teachers’ responses in the study more open to being revised in light of others’ perspectives. This approach, coming out of reader response, was initially indebted to Rosenblatt’s (1978) notion of the “lived through experience” but also drew on scholarship on the role of the unconscious in reading or learning (Felman, 1982; Holland, 1968; Lewis, 2000; Marshall, 2000; Morrison, 1992; Pagano, 1990; Pinar, 2001) as well as the role of memory (Sumara, 2002). Maxine Greene’s approach to reader response combines a phenomenology of reader response with an account of teachers’ social responsibility. Greene is not

conventionally viewed as a reader response theorist. Greene's "teacher as learner" is a practicing teacher who not only mediates society's culture and values (as in Mellouki and Gauthier's (2001) description of the "teacher as intellectual") but who is oriented towards the world in being responsible to it. This largesse of the teacher role has generally been absent from the reader response literature and an inconsistent aspect of Rosenblatt's (1938, 1978) work. The study did draw indirectly on more reader response theorizing on the social contexts for reading (Beach, 1997; Enciso, 1994; Galda & Beach, 2001) but pursued this line of thinking outside of reader response research by looking at research on intertextuality, which linked the notion of the teacher as "storied intellectual" with how intertextual connections are formed.

Greene (1995) has linked engagement with literature and the arts with an increased capacity to "tap all sorts of circuits in reader consciousness" (p. 186), which in turn develops a social conscience and sense of responsibility: "We see; we hear; we make connections" (p. 186). By opening our teaching practice to probing questions, we are led "on more and more far-reaching quests" (p. 187). Imagination, in providing us with a vision for change, endows us with "courage" (p. 198). Greene invests literary experience with the language of phenomenology so as to connect imagination and memory with action.

When New Critical modes of literary explication were dominant from the thirties to the sixties, Greene chafed against the language in which to explain the power and meaning that she saw and experienced as a reader. New Critical approaches focused on the aesthetic unity of a text; the purpose of criticism was to decode the meaning within the text by deciphering the clues. One of its central

arguments was that literature and life are distinct. Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954), New Critics, popularized two fallacies that they saw as plaguing the study of English literature. In the logical fallacy, a reader collapses the reality depicted in fiction with reality itself, while the affective fallacy involves projecting one's own feelings onto the literary work. In an early essay, Greene (1965) attempts to explain how the "toads, Grecian urns, or faces in a crowd" feel real yet are literary and therefore cannot be real toads, urns or faces but clearly struggles with articulating these distinctions (p. 420). She concludes that although the toads in poems are not real toads, poets are "literalists of the imagination" who make us feel as if their toads are real (p. 420). Her explanation is not entirely convincing until she ties in a phenomenological element now familiar to her writing with reader response theory, which was just starting to come into its own.

Like reader response theorist Louise Rosenblatt, Greene believed that literature's purpose was primarily social. Literature helps to "combat meaninglessness" by making the reader feel as if they are part of something larger (Greene, 1965, p. 420). Whereas in Rosenblatt's (1978) work, the role of emotion in reader response was later sublimated within her aesthetic theory of the lived-through experience, Greene had always been interested in how lived experience mediated literary response and was recycled back to inform lived experience. Lived experience was consistently understood as social as well as individual. Rosenblatt, on the other hand, has been criticized for changing direction and moving towards a more literary form of response in her later work, thus abandoning her earlier emphasis (Rosenblatt, 1938) on the social dimensions of response (Willinsky, 1991).

Greene (1965) argued that literary response is tied to the reader's own "existential history" (p. 420). Rosenblatt (1978) had likewise argued that associations, memories, feelings, prejudices and experiences influence the reading experience but remained vague as to how and why these associations might be important to response and whether some might be more important than others. Greene drew on the language of phenomenology to articulate how literary response was linked to memory. The literary experience becomes "complete" when the reader is led "into himself [sic] . . . to reflect upon, and to re-form his 'image' of his world" (Greene, 1965, p. 420). Greene (1978b) says that "we identify ourselves by means of memory" and memory helps us "compose the stories of our lives" (p. 33). Our stories arise out of "the patterns and schemata" that "we use in the process of sense-making" and these cultural patterns, which are also narratives, have been "made available to us" by previous stories, the ones that we read or were read to us in childhood, studied in school and comprised the canon on which our literary and cultural education was based (Greene, 1978b, p. 24). The composing of a life story also implies a social responsibility. Within a world characterized by plurality, which means the existence of stories other than our own, although we may not be able to choose the story of our beginning (birth and childhood), we can choose to attend to and teach stories other than "the master story" we have been accustomed to hearing (Greene, 1995, p. 118).

If there is one story that informs Greene's thinking on the role of the imagination in society, it is a "story of confrontation": confronting the elisions, those things that have gone unacknowledged, the lacks, the darkneses, all of which she likens to Marlow's journey in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. "Because it is a story of

confrontation . . . it brings us back to where we began” (Greene, 1965, p. 423).

Reclaiming our own stories or “landscapes” (Greene, 1978a, p. 2), as she calls them, involves recognizing our own “standpoints”: “Looking back, recapturing their stories, teachers can recover their own standpoints on the social world” (Greene, 1978b, p. 33). Words like “landscape” and “standpoint” also disclose Greene’s phenomenological stance. Greene (1978a) writes: “It is my view that persons are more likely to ask their own questions and seek their own transcendence when they feel themselves to be grounded in their own personal histories, their lived lives” (p. 2).

Central to Greene’s thought around ‘the teacher as learner’ is the notion of “releasing” the imagination (Greene, 1995). Not only does Greene (1995) believe that active engagement with literature and the arts provokes thought but that these experiences can “stir” us to respond in a certain way to the world (p. 110). However, Greene is not interested in prescribing those ways of being ‘stirred.’ All Greene (1995) says is that engagement should be of the kind that “breaks us loose from our anchorage” (p. 110), encourages us to find our own lived worlds lacking because of what we recognize (p. 111) and be “moved to rewrite” a story previously rooted in the “cotton wool of habit” (p. 115). This brings us back to the notion of a learner-centred pedagogy and the question of how such a pedagogy might look within the context of multicultural literacy education.

#### Why Not Critical Pedagogy?

Currently, one of the dominant approaches to teacher education in the context of multicultural education is critical pedagogy. Why have I not adopted a critical

pedagogical approach in this study? As I showed in the last chapter, critical pedagogical approaches, such as those of Lewis (2000) and Cochran-Smith (2000), tend to be teacher-centred. Critical pedagogy began with Freire's (1970) subversive use of literacy to emancipate learners. Whereas dominant literacy relies on perpetuating relations of domination between colonizer and colonized, an emancipatory literacy creates a pedagogical context in which learners become conscious of their oppression and reorient the tools of literacy towards achieving an end other than domination. Although the students Freire primarily had in mind were "the oppressed," he also talked about unlearning of the "master mentality" that subjugates both the oppressed and the oppressors. Freire's pedagogical approach has been enormously influential and rendered into concrete form by Shor and Freire (1987) through their "dialogical method of teaching." It has also been modified and critiqued, primarily by feminist scholars, such as Ellsworth (1989) as well as hooks (1995), who have developed critical approaches that take into account the particular histories of women and minorities and that move away from the dominant model of "rational conversation" for performing social change in the classroom. Although critical pedagogy historically takes its cue from the pedagogical focus established by Freire, it has been forged within the crucibles of university classrooms and in particular classes that address multiculturalism or cross-cultural awareness. In such teacher education settings, instructors have encountered: a) a predominantly white group of teachers, since white teachers continue to be over-represented in the student teacher population and b) resistance to the requirement of critically examining their positionality as white educators.

From the perspective of critical pedagogy, a learner's resistance is only justified when the learner is in a non-dominant position vis a vis a dominant literacy; such students "are responding to pedagogical practices that are politically biased against them" (Bahruth & Steiner, 1998, p. 131). Bahruth and Steiner (1998) distinguish resistance from "nonengagement," which instead happens when students, although being invited "to discover their own voices," become noncompliant because that process of discovery involves unearthing some unpleasant facts of their role, or their parents', or parents' parents' role, in reproducing practices of domination. "When the pedagogy is no longer flattering" and students are required to think critically, they discover "they have weak voices or no voice at all because they have been living in a materially privileged human condition" (p. 132). Furthermore, they become threatened by hearing how strong and clear "silenced voices" can be when given the opportunity to speak (p. 132).

The context of teachers volunteering to participate in a literacy circle focused on multiculturalism likely would differ from situations in which courses are required or highly recommended and the instructor has the power to evaluate students. Like any pedagogical approach, critical pedagogy implicitly makes assumptions about what learning needs to take place in advance of the learner. However, those assumptions are such as to preclude learning in any other way except by using the tools of critical pedagogy, which positions learners according to the kind of resistance that is possible for them to claim to have.

My own approach, coming out of theories such as Greene's, is to create a context in which teachers can appropriate their own learning but in relation to a

consideration of others and of the history of relations with others. While Greene links memory with lived experience, without knowing exactly why memory figures in that equation, a pedagogy of learning can be elaborated that looks at why memory might be central to learning, particularly in the context of understanding why we remember certain stories, how we link one story with another and other stories are occluded. The following section offers my preliminary thoughts on this subject.

### Intertextuality of Memory

Intertextuality is a specific example of how memory works when readers respond to texts. Recent studies of intertextuality in education have focused on the connections that readers make within and across texts (Hartman, 1995), emanating from Kristeva's (1969, 1980) coining of the term, "intertextuality," for how "utterances from other texts intersect and neutralize one another" (p. 36). The history of the study of memory itself includes the notion of memory as a process of making connections. How is it that one impression becomes connected with another in memory and specifically, in reading or in the reader? How is it, asks Foucault (1970), as he looks at how knowledge is constructed, that past and present become linked?

The idea that thinking once consisted primarily in "resemblance", or the identifying of "similitudes," persisted until the sixteenth century; "to search for a meaning" would be "to bring to light a resemblance" (Foucault, 1970, p. 29). Foucault (1970) identifies four kinds of resemblance (*convenientia*, *aemulatio*, analogy and sympathies), of which *convenientia* describes the relation between things that come into juxtaposition. Foucault gives the example of body and soul; the soul "had to be made dense, heavy and terrestrial" for God to place it in the body, which

was thought of “the very heart of matter” (p. 18). By the end of the sixteenth century, the previously integral and mysteriously hidden connection between word and thing was replaced with the notion of representation: “in the sixteenth century, one asked oneself how it was possible to know that a sign did in fact designate what it signified” (p. 42). However, Foucault identifies two related places in which the older notion of memory as similitude persisted: a) in literature, specifically, with its principle of identification which says “This is that” (the figure of the metaphor); and b) more generally, in the imagination, which likewise depends on a drawing of similitudes between things remote in time or place, and in which imagination is a form of thought or perception. Without such a principle of resemblance, Foucault argues, “impressions would succeed one another in the most total differentiation—so total that it could not even be perceived, since no representation would be able to immobilize itself in one place, reanimate a former one, and juxtapose itself to it so as to give rise to a comparison” (p. 69). This imaginative power is in turn linked with memory: “If representation did not possess the obscure power of making a past impression present once more, then no impression would ever appear as either similar to or dissimilar from a previous one” (p. 69).

The reader brings a history of associations, past and present, that intertwine “literary” with “personal” response (Greene, 1965, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978). Intertextuality is but one aspect of developing the idea of the reader (the “I”) as a socially and culturally constructed “text.” Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) identify two stances towards intertextuality within literary studies. One stance has looked at intertextuality as “an attribute of the text” (p. 306). Students studied the

allusions within texts to other texts or the socio-historical context, or how texts imitated other texts. The more recent stance towards intertextuality within literary studies emphasizes the reader's role, in which "whatever intertextuality exists depends on the connections made by the reader" (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 306). Theorists such as Barthes (1986), De Beaugrande (1980) and Kristeva (1980) are associated with this shift in perspective.

Hartman (1995) identifies three scholarly traditions operative in education (cognitive psychology, semiotics and literary theory) that currently share an interest in how readers construct meaning:

Scholars from these three traditions have viewed reading as *knowledge assembly*, where readers mobilize and assemble potential knowledge fragments into situation-specific configurations of texts (e.g., Rumelhart, McClelland, & PDP Research Group, 1986; Spiro, 1980); *signification*, where readers formulate signifieds as they encounter the signs of texts (e.g., Barthes, 1968; Eco, 1979); and *intertextuality*, where readers transpose texts into other texts, absorb one text into another, and build a mosaic of intersecting texts (e.g., Kristeva, 1969; Derrida, 1976). (p. 526; emphasis in the original)

One of the key figures in linking intertextuality with memory in readers has been Barthes. If we go back to Foucault's argument that resemblance persisted as a form of thought in literature and the imagination, Barthes has elaborated on reading as consisting primarily in the making of associations. Barthes (1986) makes a case for the reader as the central player. While the text "channels" energy and constrains

response, the reader “disperses” it (p. 30). One piece of evidence he uses to support this claim is that reading happens as much in the stopping as in the engagement and flow with the words on the page: “Has it never happened, as you were reading a book, that you kept stopping as you read, not because you weren’t interested, but because you were: because of a flow of ideas, stimuli, associations?” (p. 29). The logic of reading is “of the symbol”: “not deductive but associative: it associates with the material text (with each of its sentences) other ideas, other images, other significations” (p. 31; emphasis in the original).

Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) state that “simply defined, intertextuality is the juxtaposition of different texts” (p. 305) [viz. *convenientia*]. Hartman (1995) says that intertextuality “has to do with linking texts” (p. 523). Short (1992) identifies intertextuality as “a central process of making meaning through connections across present and past texts constructed from a wide variety of life experiences.” She goes even further to claim that “one could argue that intertextuality is a metaphor for learning” (p. 315) and of seeing learning as “a process of making connections,” a definition that she notes, agrees with that of noted early childhood theorists, Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) (Short, 1992, p. 315). Lemke (1992), who has written extensively about intertextuality in educational contexts from a linguistic and semiotic perspective, has coined the phrase “general intertextuality” to describe the truism that “every text, the discourse of every occasion, makes its social meanings against the background of other texts, and the discourses of other occasions” (p. 257); he distinguishes this usage from Kristeva’s more specialized one.

What more recent studies share is a definition of intertextuality as “socially constructed,” which therefore raises certain pertinent critical questions, such as “agency (who is doing the juxtaposition)” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 305; Hartman, 1995), “what processes are used to link the texts” (Hartman, 1995, p. 523), “location (when and where intertextuality happens)” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Hartman, 1995), using which interpretive perspectives (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) and “what are the forces that shape the linking” (Hartman, 1995, p. 523). Lemke’s (1992) questions are incisive: “Which other texts do we consider to be relevant for the interpretation of this particular text, and why? What kinds of meanings are made by constructing these relationships between texts? And what kinds of meanings are not made because a community will not, or cannot, make these sorts of connections between two other texts available to it?” (p. 257; emphasis in the original). This last question stands out at this particular time in British Columbia [B.C.] because of the controversy within the Surrey School District around using gay texts with children, an issue that for the Surrey School Board remains unresolved despite a Supreme Court decision that these texts need to be included in the classroom. Lemke (1992) concludes that “the social practices by which a community constructs intertextual links between texts are of fundamental concern for text semantics, discourse analysis, and the study of social systems generally, as well as for educational research” (p. 258).

In the next chapter, I look at how intertextuality and memory combine in the literacy autobiography, the central role that the literacy autobiography plays in

“bringing memory forward” as well as, reflecting back on chapter one, observations on the central role of the researcher in creating a context for this process to happen.

## CHAPTER 3

TAPPING MEMORY: THE ROLE OF THE LITERACY AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND  
INTERVIEWS (METHODOLOGY II)

Two recent books, one written by an award-winning journalist and critic, The Child that Books Built: A Life in Reading (Spufford, 2002), the other by an accomplished female professional storyteller, librarian and children's author, The Crack in the Teacup: The Life of an Old Woman Steeped in Stories (Bodger, 2002), describe a lifelong involvement with books or stories. The Child that Books Built is an account of Spufford's childhood reading and like the popular children's tale, The House that Jack Built, suggests the building of a house, along with the associated cultural image of the creation of a man or, as in Wordsworth's poem, of the child who was the father to the man. These images are tied to the epic genre, the founding of civilizations and following from research on intertextuality cited in the previous chapter, the creation of the individual through books. The "book" stands as a symbol of individual and cultural achievement since the book perpetuates a dominant literacy enmeshed in the production of print. Goody (2000), for instance, has studied the rise of literacy, from the economic exchange of tokens to the creation of libraries to catalogue and store documents. The "child that books built" is therefore a striking image of an individual who has been constructed out of books.

The picture of an old woman "steeped in stories" corresponds more with an anthropological notion of education, in which individuals become immersed in culture (here, stories) through daily living, as in the relationship of self formation to culture: "Les individus baignent leur vie durant dans cette culture immediate"

[Through daily life, individuals become immersed in the immediate culture] (Mellouki & Gauthier, 2001, p. 2). “Baignent,” translated literally, means “to be bathed in” or “to be steeped in.” The teacup, in Bodger’s title, conjures that British tradition of women sitting around and conversing over tea. The “crack” in the teacup, though, signifies the flaws, inconsistencies or contradictions within an otherwise solid upbringing and once you read Bodger’s autobiography, you realize that cracks are a good thing; they signify wisdom or the realization that life and people are made of pieces of selves that often contradict one another in interesting ways.

I begin with the titles to these two books because they are part of the rise of the literacy autobiography, a genre through which connections between life and stories are being explored: lives lived as readers and the everyday lives of individuals within culture and society, including their lives in schools. Teachers occupy an intriguing position in this regard, since they are several things at once. They represent the children that books built, except that as teachers, they are more than that, for they teach children by way of “telling” (as in “the telling of stories” through read aloud, reading instruction or improvisation). The teacher is pivotally placed, claim Mellouki and Gauthier (2001), to tell both official and unofficial cultural stories. As professionals, teachers read literature through pragmatic eyes, looking for material that can be integrated into the classroom. Teachers are also individuals who read in their leisure time and are thereby influenced in various ways by what they choose to read and what is available and recommended as “a good read” in bookstores, public libraries or through the grapevine.

In the present study, which consisted of three elements (a literacy autobiography, a monthly literature circle, and a brief interview each month with teachers individually), the literacy autobiography has played a key role in initiating a process of teachers' remembering things that have stood out in their literacy and lived histories as well as things forgotten. I will be looking at four aspects of that role: a) the distinctive role of the literacy autobiography in this study as compared to the marginal role it has played in other teacher book club studies, particularly those that engage teachers with "multicultural" literature; b) a condensed summary of how literacy connects with life history in teacher reader response; c) how the literacy autobiography links with teachers' constructions of difference; and d) the challenge within the study of continuing to find ways to encourage teachers to connect their engagements with difference through literature discussion with their own literacy histories; this has involved reflection on appropriate uses of the researcher role.

#### The Role of the Literacy Autobiography in Teacher Book Club Studies

The rationale often provided for using literature circles in the classroom is to provide opportunities for children to engage in "expressive talk" as well as scaffold opportunities for the child to learn from peers and the teacher (King, 2001, p. 32). This trend represents work coming out of the theories of James Britton (1970) on expressive writing, Louise Rosenblatt (1978) on the "lived through experience" in reader response and Vygotsky (1962) on the zone of proximal development. Within child-centred and learner-centred pedagogies, learners are also provided with opportunities to engage in the classroom in what "real readers" do and their teachers model those practices as well.

Many of the teachers who participated in the study used literature circles on a regular basis, intended to use them or wanted to engage students in literature discussions more often. Some research would suggest that teacher literature circles are not the most fruitful direction in which to pursue teacher professional development, since “teachers’ questions and interpretations of texts may have little connection to students’ perspectives” (Evans, 2001, p. 46). However, that was not the purpose of the study. Teachers came because they wanted the experience of being part of a literature circle focused on multicultural literature.

Accompanying the move to a learner centred pedagogy, then, is also the concern with diversity and making classrooms more responsive to the individual needs and histories of children; part of this trend is supported by Gardner’s (1993) work on the multiple intelligences of individuals as well as studies on how poorly minority children tend to do in schools as compared with children from the dominant culture and of the “cultural mismatch” between home and school (Ward, 1995; Wells, 1986). With a focus on the diverse histories of children likewise comes an interest in what teachers bring by way of literacy background and what they could bring instead of or in addition to that background. This interest has gone in two directions: the documenting of “culturally responsive” practices of minority teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1990) and the push to “supplement” the ethnocentric background of white teachers (Willinsky, 1998). The literacy autobiography has served as one way to make that background more explicit and, though sometimes attached to teacher literature circles, is just as likely to stand alone as a pedagogical strategy in preservice

teacher courses or as a methodological tool in literacy studies with teachers. Some studies have used collages rather than written autobiographies (McIntyre, 2002).

Of several studies involving teacher literature discussions and multicultural literature, common techniques for engaging teachers' backgrounds have included: using response journals combined with literature discussion, along with the sharing of those responses (Flood et al., 1994; Smith, 2002), having teachers write in journals in response to a prompt given by the researcher (Smith & Strickland, 2001), using a Social Attitude survey to probe teachers' beliefs about multiculturalism (Bean et al, 1999) or reading autobiographies written by others (Florio-Ruane, 2001). One study had teachers analyse their discourse patterns in the literature circles for their "subject positions" when discussing multicultural literature (Glazier & Brown, 2002). Other teacher book club studies have focused on teachers' professional identities, including the writing of literacy autobiographies, although the autobiographies functioned primarily as a warm-up activity and source of data for the researcher (Kooy, 2002). One study had preservice teachers explore their literacy backgrounds through autobiography before engaging in literature discussion with children from diverse minority backgrounds (Wolf, Ballentine & Hill, 2000). Others have used teacher autobiographies or personal journals as texts in reflecting critically on multiculturalism (Jackson, 1995) or the construction of social and racial identity (Cochran-Smith, 2000). The literacy autobiography in general has been used to promote reflective thinking among preservice teachers, although not specifically in the context of differences (Brown, 1999) and as a means to gain information on the

reading and writing experiences of teachers and in the process, make teachers aware of the salience of those experiences to their current teaching practices (Brandt, 1994).

The epistemological assumption underlying these studies, despite their differing methodological motivations, is that knowledge is socially constructed, perspectives “are strongly rooted in our lived experiences and unexamined beliefs” (Smith, 2002, p. 59; citing the work of Frankenberg, 1993) and how “the images and narratives we hold, unexamined, penetrate our thinking and, indeed, come to be our experience” (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 37). Little has been made, though, of the central position of the teacher as a holder of stories, a clearinghouse through which particular stories and approaches to stories are filtered. The distinctive aspect of this study is its incorporation of the literacy autobiography into a teacher action research framework such that the teachers are challenged to draw connections between their literacy histories and their current practices as readers and teachers.

#### Evaluating the Role of the Personal

The argument for the inclusion of literacy autobiographies, narrative, life histories and self-study in teacher education rests on a conviction in the role of the personal in learning, although how that role is conceived varies widely. Clandinin’s (1985) notion of “personal practical knowledge” in teacher education, for example, is based on “a person’s experiential history, both professional and personal” (p. 362) but where experience takes on “the narrative unity of an individual’s life” (p. 363). Kamler (2001), by contrast, draws a distinction between “constructing unproblematic texts” and “problematizing the text” (p. 28). Left to their own devices, teacher-authored narratives (those written down as well as those performed in the classroom)

imitate “a sequentially, unfolding realist tale, a modernist history of cause and effect” (p. 1). Instead, the teacher as writer needs to enlist narrative strategies in a more deliberate, critical process, for example, by shifting from first person narrative to third person. This shift alone can accomplish a weaning from the idea of the “I” as autonomous agent and author so as to enable the writer to better recognize the narratives embedded in the telling. Grumet’s approach to the use of the personal in teacher education is likewise based on the goal of not “reifying” one’s own text and is the approach closest to the one taken in this study. “Excavation,” the writing of autobiographical narrative, is the first step. Grumet (1991) says that “we start with narrative” and we record those culturally-specific details that created the texture of our childhood lives (the “given”- p. 80) (p. 87). “We [then] read what we have written,” we talk about it with others and through that private to public process, “the specific[s]” of our tales are connected with “what is general” (Grumet, 1991, p. 87). “Suspicion” is the “companion” of “excavation,” such that the writer recognizes after the fact that “in the interstices, the spaces where the pieces don’t quite meet, is where the light comes through” (Grumet, 1981, p. 122). The “cracks” signify the contradictions within the cultural narrative and the author’s mediation of it.

The writing of the literacy autobiography in this study was but the beginning of an ongoing process, one that I hoped would carry over into the literature discussions. Our first two literature circle sessions and interviews were devoted entirely to the literacy autobiography. The reading of the literature naturally garnered most of the teachers’ attention in the literature circles; teachers were looking forward to being exposed to children’s and young adult literature that they could use in the

classroom, especially multicultural literature. Also, the usefulness of the literacy autobiography when applied in another context (namely, the literature circle) did not become apparent right away. It became the responsibility of the researcher to find ways to remind teachers of the potential significance of their literacy histories to their current interests, choices and approaches to literature in the classroom and in their personal reading, but to do so within a context in which teachers were neither being told nor being led.

#### Procedures Associated with the Literacy Autobiography

To provide a more detailed background on the role that the literacy autobiography played in the study, the two initial literature sessions are briefly described:

##### *Literature Circle #1 (January, 2003)*

1. A week or two prior to the literature circle, the researcher distributed a list of suggested questions to prompt the writing that teachers would be doing in the circle (See Appendix I). Most teachers requested these prompts.
2. In the first literature circle meeting, the researcher reviewed the questions with the teachers and asked if teachers had thought of any other prompts. A teacher in LC2 added: "books that teachers tend to avoid." No one in that literature circle responded to that prompt, but it introduced a topic that we were to discuss later, of which books tended to absent from our literacy histories.
3. The teachers wrote quietly in their journals in point form or prose for about 20 minutes. I also wrote.

4. Everyone was called back to the table and I invited teachers to share some part of what they had written. They could read directly from their journal or paraphrase its contents. I shared last. After the first or second teacher had shared, teachers began to respond to one another's memories, and the sharing changed from a turn-taking to more of a discussion, with people excitedly interjecting comments like: "Oh, I read that too!" or "I loved that book!" or "I hated reading that!"
5. The session concluded with a preliminary analysis of the biographies: "What kinds of literacy experiences or materials were present?" "What was absent?" However, I did not push these questions too hard because the writing of the literacy autobiographies had initiated a tapping into memory and that process was still new and ongoing.

*Literature Circle #2 (February, 2003)*

1. The researcher summarized the results of the previous literature discussion into themes and a list of books; included in the lists were also books raised during the interviews. In the literature circle, we reviewed the contents of this list and amended any errors or omissions (see Appendix II for condensed versions of the lists for all four groups).
2. Based on the literacy autobiographies and the contents of the list, I asked teachers: "What are some commonalities in the books and experiences?" "What is missing or absent?" "In which direction do you want to see the literature circles go next: what themes and kinds of books would be

important for us to read and discuss, based on what was common or absent?”

3. I compiled a one-page summary of commonalities, things missing and directions, which I distributed at the next circle (see: Appendix III).

#### Next Steps: Working Out the Role of the Researcher

The next step was for the researcher to select the literature for the next four sessions (March to June, 2003). That selection was to take account of the teachers' literacy histories, the directions they wanted to experience growth in, and the researcher's judgment as to which books could be juxtaposed to encourage that growth, both in the direction that teachers had specified as well as directions that they had not specified. Those unspecified directions included books and issues that the researcher was exploring or already familiar with, and in most cases meant the inclusion of literature by “multicultural” and Aboriginal authors. The major challenge in the study has been for the researcher to find ways to remind teachers of the possible significance of their literacy histories while respecting the teachers' freedom to appropriate their own learning. As one teacher said, in speaking of the students in his classroom, “I think we have to let it be an exploration for the individual reader, a process of discovery for them, instead of telling them what the larger context is ... I don't want to frame it for them.” He also added: “you can't assign things in a vacuum either” (LC1, 25.03.03). The same push and pull that this teacher has felt in presenting issues within the classroom, I felt in my relationship with the teachers. This role became more apparent as the preliminary stage of tapping memories ended, and the new phase began of applying those memories to reading in

the literature circles. I wanted to avoid that “reification” of story that Grumet (1981) talks about (p. 123).

In what ways, then, could the researcher encourage teachers to continue to connect their literacy autobiographies with the literature discussion? Three methods had already been incorporated into the research design: the interview, the juxtaposition of literature within the circle, and the 3-way journal.

### *Interviews*

The interviews were open-ended and began with the teacher’s bringing forward of issues based on the last literature circle. I also brought questions from my reading of the literature circle transcripts as well as the rereading of previous interviews. I asked teachers to explain what they mean by a particular comment or to elaborate on previous statements (“Remember you said...”). These questions were not innocent and, while building on something that the teacher has actually said, were often explicitly intended to provoke thought or had the unintended effect of putting the teacher on the spot; examples of these “probes” are provided in chapter seven. The interviews have allowed teachers to elaborate on their engagements with literature, explore life experiences particularly around “difference” and think about some of the connections between their work as teachers and their literary, social and cultural formation as individuals; these connections are discussed in chapters five to seven.

The interviews have had three limitations: their contents could not be shared publicly in the circle by the researcher but only introduced voluntarily by the teacher; teachers could choose whether or not to read the transcripts of their interviews, which

meant that some would not read them; and the interviews were a month apart, which meant that the ways in which the literature circle discussion captivated, provoked or preoccupied teachers could be forgotten by the time of the next interview although as the study progressed, that ceased to be a limitation.

### *Juxtaposing Literature*

The juxtaposing of literature within the literature circle encouraged teachers to think of the spaces between two or more selections, and is a feature of the study that challenged teachers to consider materials in relationship to one another rather than as stand-alones, books admired primarily for their story-lines, illustrations, humour or detail. Teacher book clubs have tended to look at one selection per book club session. That way of conducting literature discussions, even within a critical context, can obscure connections between different stories. The danger in juxtaposing books lay in the researcher overdetermining the discussion, which would run counter to the purpose of writing the literacy autobiographies, or alternatively that juxtapositions could be infelicitous and not generate any interesting discussion. In practice, neither of those two things happened, although some juxtapositions were more effective than others, which is addressed later in the dissertation.

So as to avoid setting up a dichotomy, Fischer (1986) has suggested juxtaposing three or more things. Because of time restrictions, teachers engaged in deeper discussion when only two books were on the table. Whenever I could, I introduced more than two books. The selected books were also set within a wider context of literature, represented by a display of books on the circle's theme and addressed through a short book talk. Accompanying each display was a brief

annotated bibliography that teachers could take away with them. Teachers sometimes read those other books while waiting for teachers to finish writing their responses and often borrowed them.

The question of how books were juxtaposed is central to the study. Several criteria were used in selecting the literature: addressing aspects of each teacher's literacy history; responding to the new directions identified by teachers; taking up some of the commonalities as well as absences identified by teachers; and alternating picture books with excerpts from middle school or young adult literature. The wild card or element of surprise for teachers consisted in not knowing how the literature would be juxtaposed. Partly this move was strategic. It kept teachers motivated to see what selection of books would be awaiting them. But mostly, it allowed the researcher flexibility in adapting selection to teacher needs, based on the monthly literature discussion as well as what had emerged through the interviews. What had teachers been thinking about? What kinds of issues preoccupied them? How could I, through the selection of literature, connect those thinking processes to themes and directions already identified?

#### *Triple-entry Journal*

In the triple-entry journal, teachers recorded their thoughts and questions while reading a text or hearing it read during the literature circle. A page in a lined journal was split into three columns. The first column held author, title and date. In the second column, teachers recorded their on-line response by jotting down phrases, words or short sentences. The third column was reserved for queries that came up in the course of discussion, or in re-reading during an interview or the next literature

circle session. The intent of the journal was for teachers to have an opportunity to connect their responses with others teachers' responses and notice intertextual links in their reading over time extending back to the literacy autobiography. Some teachers wrote more notes than others, others preferred the oral discussion of the circle or the interview, while a couple preserved mostly silence, doing more thinking and listening and choosing to speak more in the interview. However, the more inwardly reflective teachers have said that questions raised in literature circles and interviews "forced" them to reflect or they found those questions coming back to them, willy nilly, during the school day.

While all three of these methods conduced to helping teachers' connect the literature discussion with their literacy autobiographies, the researcher played a vital role in keeping the possibility of a connection alive. It was this challenge that introduced changes into the study design. While these changes happened in response to the particular dynamics of each literature group, two shifts were important in producing change across the four groups. Underlying the shifts was the researcher's own process of assuming responsibility in deeper ways for the study, both in response to change and in attempting to produce change.

The first shift occurred in assuming responsibility for selecting the literature. The second shift happened as teachers failed to take up the explicit connecting of the literacy autobiographies with the literature discussion and the researcher sought ways to bring memory forward.

*Selecting the Literature*

I felt a gap, or perhaps more accurately, a chasm, open up when I realized that I needed to select the literature for the next sessions; this occurred after the writing and sharing of the literacy autobiographies. What would I base my selection on? Teachers wanted to get right to the literature. How would I be able to keep teachers interested if I continually deferred that engagement? I decided, though, that the only way in which I could go about selecting literature was to involve teachers in reviewing the literacy autobiographies. I have described the steps of that process during the second literature session. However, even after teachers discussed the autobiographies and identified commonalities, absences and future directions, I still felt an enormous responsibility in having to choose from countless titles and where a more democratic procedure was impractical.

That tension was partially alleviated through reading the literature that the teachers had brought forward, for then possibilities began to take shape in my mind of how to juxtapose the literature. In some cases, this involved a re-reading, such of Enid Blyton, who I had also read as a child; or a reading of something I thought I might have read, but had so completely forgotten that no bells rang upon rereading the story, such as my experience with Ballantyne's (1977) Coral Island. In many cases, the pictures were recognizable but not the story, as in my rereading of Helen Bannerman's (1972) Little Black Sambo. Often I read something entirely new to me, such as Pierre Burton's (1961) The Secret World of Og. I also read contemporary literature that teachers had mentioned.

Since I could not possibly read every title teachers had mentioned, and my selection could not depend on my interests or even my interpretation of teacher interests, I tended to choose those titles that stood out most strongly for a teacher and that, based on their remarks, connected to “differences.” For instance, one teacher was captivated by both Lenski’s (1941) Indian Captive and Sewell’s (1982) Black Beauty, and I chose Indian Captive because it dovetailed with a desire on the part of the teachers to look more closely at Aboriginal literature. The teacher had also articulated how she was struck by the heroine’s conversion to Seneca life. Teachers also brought forward their own books, often in the second session when we discussed the literacy autobiographies. I incorporated those teacher-selected titles into the circle or addressed them through the interview. Teachers also borrowed books from the display table, and those too became a focal point of discussion or interviews, such as John Henry (Lester, 1994), in which Barry and I discussed the genre of the tall tale, the story’s mythic elements, its elevation of Blacks within American history and which culminated with the teacher’s intention to juxtapose the story with Paul Bunyan in his class. This decision followed directly on his observation that the story felt “other” or “different” and he wanted to investigate further the source of those differences by rereading the less familiar story alongside the tale of Paul Bunyan that he was familiar with (2.3.3, 06.05.03).

#### *Bringing Memory Forward*

Since this study was conceived within a teacher action research framework in which teachers were being provided with an opportunity to reflect together and individually on the construction of differences, transparency was an important

criterion for the study's validity. The study would not work if teachers felt that they were being covertly "studied." It therefore made sense to bring back to teachers the results of the literacy autobiographies, as well as provide them with their interview transcripts for their own reflection. However, it would have become redundant to begin each session with the condensed transcript of the previous session, especially since our meetings were only an hour to an hour and a half. Instead, early on I decided to make explicit that the goal was to find ways to connect the literacy autobiographies with the literature discussion. To this end, I formulated the following questions and presented them to the first two literature groups: "In what ways are we grounded in our own stories? What stories have been important culturally and why? In what ways do those stories continue to influence our perceptions and classroom approaches to literature and "difference" generally?" I later changed the language to make the questions more accessible: "How do our stories live on within us? How do our stories live on in other, more recent stories? What has changed? How have we changed/are changing, as teachers, as individuals, as people?" At the beginning of two literature circles, I alluded to these questions and either handed them out again, had them before me, or framed my ongoing thinking about these questions in such a way as to invite teachers' thoughts. For example, in LC4, I shared that, based on my reading of the data, familiarity with certain kinds of literature could act as a bridge, but it could also act as a filter, letting in as well as excluding alternative possibilities. I showed teachers how that happened by "bringing forward" themes and comments culled from the previous literature discussions. Another strategy that also proved useful in bringing memory forward was the repetition of the question, in closing the

circles, “What difference are these circles making?” It focused teachers’ attention on what they themselves had said as well as what they remembering hearing from other teachers.

The most important decision that I made in creating a context for teachers to connect past with present literary response was to have the teachers reread their literacy autobiography and 3-way journal in their final interview and respond to three prompts: one thing you noticed, one connection back to your literacy autobiography, one thing you would like to investigate further (see also: Appendix VI). I was familiar with advocates in early childhood education of the importance of documentation, in particular Marie Clay (1972) and the Reggio Emilia approach (Fraser & Gestwicki, 2000), as well as with self-assessment in learner-centred pedagogies (Gregory, Cameron & Davies, 1997). However, even I was startled by the degree to which this strategy of rereading worked. One of the reasons it worked so well was because the prompts were consistent with the approach taken throughout the study. For example, the prompt “What I noticed” came directly from the prompt that began each interview. The “Connection back to the literacy autobiography” was a way to encourage teachers to bring memory forward and more than any of the techniques that I used in the circles, this strategy was most effective. Invariably, teachers also connected the direction they wanted to pursue with their answers to the previous two prompts. The final interview, therefore, achieved what the initial first two literature circles had set in motion.

The next chapter takes a step back by looking at the rationale for focusing the study on “differences” and why the selection of literature, in that context, needs to be thought through carefully.

# Imagination

## CHAPTER 4

## LITERATURE AND “DIFFERENCE”

“It is in . . . empty spaces that narrative grows”  
(Duer, 1988, p. 42)

The purpose of this chapter is to look critically at the ideas of “multiculturalism” or “multicultural” literature and examine how discourses of “difference,” with a focus on Canadian multiculturalism, become an integral part of the narratives of our everyday living, cultural narratives, curricula and literature. The chapter also considers how those categories can be challenged in children’s literature.

## Narratives of the Everyday

“For most of us, the location of our earliest and most poignant experiences of fear and pleasure, disgust and comfort, boredom and excitement, was home” (Grumet, 1991, p. 74). Grumet (1991) goes on to narrate some of the memories that stand out, beginning with a general sweep of “home”—the kitchen table, the backyard—and moving into specific details—the speckled linoleum, the sound of the radio, the milk bottles in the darkened hallway that Grumet doubts she would have remembered had she not continually knocked them over as she left for school, “turning back to see the tide of milk and broken glass flowing across the marble floor” (p. 74). Concrete details often impress themselves on memory through strong sensations (as in the slow spread of the milk in Grumet’s hallway) or simply through everyday contact, which functions as “backdrop” to the “drama that interrupts it” (Grumet, 1991, p. 74). “The problem with everyday life is that it is always the ground, rarely the figure” (Grumet, p. 74), so the question becomes how those details

can be made to stand out, which ones are likely to come forward in the process and why, as well as attending to what was unremembered.

Virginia Woolf (1978) speaks of strong emotions that become attached to particular places or things and how these sensations can often be traced back to childhood (“garden and nursery”—p. 78), that ‘long ago’ that evokes a time of self undifferentiated from its surroundings. Woolf’s “first memory” is of “red and purple flowers on a black background” on her mother’s dress as she sat on her mother’s lap (p. 74). This memory prompts another one of lying in bed in the nursery and “hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind” and feeling the blind carry a little acorn across the floor in the back and forth of the wind moving the blind (p. 75).

In doing this study with teachers, I have found both kinds of narratives of the everyday come into play: the ones that stand out and the ones that disappear. The teachers’ autobiographies and interviews are rich in examples of intense sensations and unremarkable, everyday details, some of which jump out as connected to “difference” while others have that quality of being embedded in an innocuous background of childhood time.

One example of a strong sensation connected to “difference” is Helen’s memory, dating back to Kindergarten, of a special field trip that the class made to the local art gallery, in which she was introduced to the Viewmaster and Helen Bannermann’s (1972) Little Black Sambo. The “leering grins” of Sambo, Mumbo and Jumbo (1.1.3; 26.02.03) did not become associated with a child’s unadulterated

delight at peering through such a wonderful new device (LC1, 16.12.02; 1.1.1, 16.01.03) until Helen read Griffin's (1961) Black Like Me:

It was a book about a white man who painted himself black and traveled around the United States to see what it was like. I was reading that and the image of the Little Black Sambo came into my mind. I must have been about twelve or thirteen. I've never forgotten that. It kind of spoiled the experience of something that I had held onto so fondly in my memory [the experience of looking through the Viewmaster] and I often wonder, why that story? Why wasn't it Sleeping Beauty or Snow White and the Seven Dwarves? Could have been more interesting than Little Black Sambo. It bothers me today.”  
(LC1; 16.12.02)

What do the milk bottles in Grumet's hallway signify about where she grew up? How was it that Bannermann's story so casually appeared on a Viewmaster? Why not Sleeping Beauty?

#### The Everyday Organization of Cultural Narratives

As a “symbolic community” (Hall, 1992, p. 292), a nation uses a particular discourse or myth, or what I call a “cultural narrative,” to organize constructions of self and nation. One way in which this discourse becomes apparent in the study is through teachers' encounters with the “same” event but from different vantage points. Each perspective confirms the existence of a myth that sustained the Canadian nation. The discourse I want to use by way of example is the one of Aboriginal people belonging to society's margins. Most of the eighteen teachers in the study grew up within Canada, with one emigrating to Canada from Germany when she was about

ten years old and another teacher growing up in Great Britain, but having lived in Canada for over thirty years. Of the teachers who were raised in Canada, most grew up in southern BC, two in Northern BC, one each in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Northern Ontario. The backgrounds of the Aboriginal teachers are diverse, ranging from growing up on reserve, being adopted by a white family, or living in the “liminal” spaces between multiple origins (First Nations, white, Metis) while remaining predominantly Aboriginal. If teachers were white, they lived within this Canadian myth of Aboriginality without noticing it, and if they were Aboriginal, they lived the myth, or were deeply affected by it, because of who they were and where they were positioned in society. The details of daily living became part of “the given” (Grumet, 1991) of the backgrounds of their existence.

Helen, who grew up in Saskatchewan in the fifties recalled an Aboriginal family nearby who lived in a “hovel,” wore “clothes that were falling apart” and had lots of kids who struggled to get along with one another (1.1.1; 16.01.03). Terry grew up in a community in southern British Columbia, seldom saw Aboriginal people and when he did, they struck him as outlandish, “like a guy with a purple shirt, really purple, and kind of cowboyish looking” (4.3.3; 29.04.03). Faye grew up in BC’s Interior, which involved traveling from a cattle ranch in “the boonies” to shop once a week in the closest town:

We went by the Indian reservation. As you come into town, it’s right there.

And years later, I heard that there had been all kinds of abuse going on at that place and I couldn’t help to think to myself that all those years when we drove by there, that that was going on for those children and what a terrible thing,

and we didn't even really realize that. We weren't aware. It was as if they were a different part of the world. (4.2.4, 23.05.03)

How was it that passing the residential school every day created an impression of Aboriginal people not sharing the same world as her family?

They [Faye's parents] offered work to them and we often had lots of First Nations people working on the ranch or at my father's sawmill [but] we were, as children, encouraged not to have conversation and contact with the working men, because they were rough and uncouth and beneath our standard, according to my mother. So, we didn't get to know them. If we had, we might have heard some of the things that went on there and been able to speak out, but they weren't considered someone that we should get to know. (4.2.4; 23.05.03)

For the Aboriginal teachers, the cultural narrative of marginality was at the centre of each of their histories, instead of comprising the "background" to a narrative in the white teachers' stories. Jeannette grew up in Alberta as Métis, with her family being regarded as neither white nor belonging within the Aboriginal community: "when we did go to visit our relatives, it was usually at pow-wows or funerals and kind of got a little bit ostracized by my cousins cause they always said that we were more white than Native. And we didn't have the Native accent, as well, so that was another downer" (3.4.1; 03.02.03). Lee was adopted by a white family when she was a baby and recalls noticing the Aboriginal kids in school, how quiet they were and how they were bused daily thirty-five miles in and out of the town for school: "They were miserable, when I think about it, but nobody picked on them because they were

quiet. They had the ability to become invisible” (1.3.3; 25.03.03). Although Lee knew that she herself was Aboriginal, this fact was so downplayed by her parents that it became a non-marker of identity. Her parents used to say: “Oh well, you’re hardly any Native. Not enough to worry about. You’re mostly French” (1.3.4, 29.04.03). Lee adds, “I just knew that being Native was something bad. And that anyone who presented themselves as different than anyone drunk and in a ditch, was not a real Indian” (1.3.4, 29.04.03). It was only when she was in her thirties that she realized, for example, that her best friend in high school had been Aboriginal (1.3.3, 25.03.03).

Where did the notion of “orientalism” come from? How was the idea diffused and who had a stake in its diffusion? As a Palestinian-American, Said (1978) was interested in how narratives of “difference” are constructed. As North Americans, we continue to take for granted that the world is divided in “East” and “West;” it is part of our ordinary speaking. I find myself unwittingly repeating this cant when my children need to label a map to satisfactorily complete a school assignment. However, the division is a construction. It is a construction by “the West” of a fictive “East.” An essential part of the construction has been the construal of “the East” as inferior, raced (viz. the “colored” or “dark” races as opposed to “white” and invisible) and pawns within a Western hegemony. Willinsky (1998), following up on Said’s (1978) work but focusing on the area of literacy and school practices in Canada, points out how imperialism continues into present curricula and textbooks, but remains unseen because within a “post” world (post-modern, post-colonial), nations are supposed to have superseded antiquated notions of difference rooted in essentialism. The predominant cultural narrative of “difference” within a Canadian context is the myth

of multiculturalism and its point of reference is the construction of “the Indian” just as in the United States, Morrison (1992) argues, national myths hover around an African presence.

### The Canadian Narrative of Multiculturalism

Imagine this scenario. A creative summer program exposes children to drama, characterization, script-writing and creating sets. The instructor invites small groups of children to produce a musical that will be performed for friends and family on the final day. On the first day, the children come up with characters in response to the question, “Who would you like to be?” The characters, as one can well imagine, come from familiar places such as fairy tales (princesses and princes) or popular books and movies (“Harry Potter”; “Lord of the Rings”). Someone picks an explorer. An explorer? Hmm. Two other children chorus that they want to be Indians. Out of this cast of characters, the children weave a preliminary story involving magic, forces of good and evil, betrayal, transformation and kindness. They sketch out the set: a ship arriving from the distance, teepees in the foreground, a sun, banana trees. Banana trees? “I’m good at drawing banana trees!” one child explains. Later on, as the kids are playing in the park, one child initiates a private conversation with the leader that includes some information that the child considers necessary for the instructor to know. The child tells the instructor that she is First Nations, as is her brother. This raises a question different from than the one that the leader has been addressing with the children thus far. Whereas in the beginning, the leader wanted to know from children “What do you want to create?,” the question now becomes, “How do I act towards this child?” and by extension, “How should the other children act?” The

boundaries between the fictive and the “real” worlds begin to blur as imagined categories are seen to have repercussions in the worlds we create and live in.

In the past decade, social responsibility has increasingly overlapped with Language Arts or Literature instruction, such that schools are recognizing the need to attend to a balance of representation in classroom materials (picture books, novels, texts) as well as in hiring practices (Burroughs, 1999; Hassan, 2000; Wolf, Ballentine & Hill, 1999). While these issues involve several socially and culturally identified differences (gender, class, language, sexual orientation, race/culture/ethnicity), most of the focus has been directed to the last category and comes under the name of “multiculturalism.” The British Columbia Ministry of Education (2001) has generated a set of performance standards that delineate four areas of social responsibility: 1) contributing to classroom and school community, 2) solving problems in peaceful ways, 3) valuing diversity and defending human rights and 4) exercising democratic rights and responsibilities. On their website, the Ministry provides teachers with a reference set that identifies student behaviors that are not yet within expectations, minimally meet, fully meet or exceed expectations. To render these standards more concrete, a problem is presented that requires that the student navigate between ethical dilemmas, such as the summer play one that I have presented. The Ministry also relies on scenarios borrowed from literature. The student who exceeds expectations is a model of multiculturalism and, depending on the grade level, demonstrates one or more of the following: an “appreciation for cultures encountered” (p. 22), an “interest and pride in the multicultural nature of Canada” (p.

64), is accepting of those who are “different,” consistently treats everyone fairly and speaks out against racism “even when that may not be a popular stance”(p. 142).

Of the teachers in the study who talked about their efforts to combine literature instruction with meeting the social responsibility standards, the child who exceeded expectations represented an ideal rather than the actual responses and “messy situations” (Schon, 1983) teachers typically encountered. That multiculturalism represents a fictitious ideal is the argument that Day (2000) makes in his study of Canadian multiculturalism. Day (2000) argues that Canadian multiculturalism represents a quest for unity that revolves around a fiction, the “naturalization” of diversity (p. 207):

The Canadian government seems to be ‘breaking the rules’ of nation-building by trying to create a national Thing that has no particular ethnic affiliation—that allows for variety...However...what is emerging is not a nation-state but a nations-state, in which all ethnicities, in general, and therefore no ethnicity, in particular, can seek their enjoyment in the simultaneous possession and loss of a simulacrum of identity. (pp. 207-8; emphasis in the original)

Multiculturalism in Canada, Day (2000) recounts, began with *vacuum domicilium*, “which allowed one to take possession of ‘empty’ or ‘vacant’ land” (Day, 2000, p. 78 citing Dickason, 1984). For the French explorers and missionaries, “the problems posed by the fact that the New World was not truly ‘empty’ were acknowledged early on” and addressed through the strategy of conversion (Day, 2000, p. 78). The British, Day (2000) maintains, used the strategy of “ignorance of

the Other” (p. 89), which said that persons could not be said to be granted human rights if they did not fit into existing categories of what constituted a person (p. 93) or if they refused to accept the gifts of civilization (p. 94). The argument that Aboriginal peoples in Canada already had their own forms of social and political organization as well as practices of education (Battiste, 1986) could be undercut by the counter-argument that “lawyers and judges remained unaware” of this (Berger, 1991, p. 150 cited in Day, 2000, p. 96; emphasis added by Day). Day (2000) looks at how the history of Canadian multiculturalism, whether from the point of view of the French or English, has consisted in an effort to displace others through integration, as in the Roman model of imperialism, which used a method of “seduction” before resorting to “brute force” (p. 61). The Greeks were one of the first to establish “difference” by contrasting the city-state and its citizenry (polis) from “heathens” or *ethnikons* (p. 52). Kristeva (1991) also documents Greek practices in their treatment of “the stranger.” Mackey (1999) found, as others have as well, that Canadians like to distinguish themselves from Americans, and this differentiation is in part founded on the narrative that the American method of dealing with “the Indian problem” was eradication whereas the Canadian government pursued a gentler course of integration. Day (2000) documents several instances in Canadian history that show what happens when “seduction” failed and certain peoples got “in the way” of nation-building (p. 103), such as the Beothuk, Iroquois, Acadians as well as the Métis. Extermination, or its “softer form”, transportation was tried on several occasions. The fact that many of these peoples survived is a testament not to Canadian multiculturalism, says Day

(2000), but to its failure and the “determined resistance to a statist dream of a perfectly striated space of social order” (p. 3; emphasis in the original).

While the terminology of “difference” has changed over the years from “mosaic” in the 1920’s to “integration” in the post-war period (Day, 2000, p. 171) to “bilingualism and biculturalism” in the 1960’s, “as a state policy, multiculturalism emerged out of volume 4 of the B & B Report [Bilingualism and Biculturalism],” significantly entitled The Cultural Contribution of Other Groups (Day, 2000, p. 187). While differentiation was made on the basis of “race” before the Second World War, “ethnicity” replaced “race” in all documents once Hitler’s strategy with the concentration camps became public. In more recent documents, “race,” “culture” and “ethnicity” tend to sit side by side with no explanation of what distinguishes one word from the other.

Multiculturalism’s history lies in the formation of the nation, first with internal populations then in creating immigration policies. Day (2000) shows how a historical pattern of “strategic simulation of assimilation to the Other”, beginning with British concessions to French “differences” (in the matters of language and religion), was later followed by carefully orchestrated immigration policies that consistently managed to favour those of Anglo-Saxon origins over all others (p. 88). A racial Chain of Being was generated in which, lacking British immigrants, other Europeans were let in, with Asians and those of other noticeable differences excluded because of their so-called unlikelihood of being able to adjust to a Northern climate (p. 141). Lee testified to how, within the Northern BC community in which she grew up, “there was a hierarchy of minorities in our [community members’] minds. The

least liked minorities were the East Indian people because they practiced their religion and culture as much as they could, so they just did different things that we didn't understand" such as when several family members lived in the same house (not just the "nuclear" family of the Dick and Jane readers) or bought a cartful of buttermilk at the grocery store (1.3.3; 25.03.03). The reason such hierarchies persist, Day (2000) claims, is that they are embedded in Western history, beginning with Herodotus, "father of ethnography" (p. 48), and encoded within a "chain of being" that started in the Renaissance with differentiation among species of creatures (Lovejoy, 1935) but that became used for within-species distinctions in nineteenth century theories focused on race and genetics (Day, 2000).

In the particular case of the British founding nation within Canada, "rather than worrying about protecting an identity," as was the case for the French, "there was a fear of never achieving one" (Day, 2000, p. 127). English Canada's projected identity was based on a "fantasy" of a non-existent "Anglo-Saxon purity" (p. 125), but at the bottom of which lay an association of whiteness with a lack of culture (p. 127). This is because whiteness was instead a category based in domination, in which "difference" included all others who appeared different from the norm, or could be demonstrated to be dangerous and therefore the object of exclusionary practices, such as the Doukhobors for their religion and their refusal to integrate into Canadian society. Immigration policy from the very start, Day (2000) claims, has played a key role in trying to curb or contain "differences" while also seeking a national imagined identity in which 'colour' is seen in relation to a dominant 'whiteness.' A conversation between myself and Helen illustrates this play between desire and

domination. Helen, being white and adopted, admitted that “I’ve always wanted to be more colourful” and that one place she has been able to access it is through her husband’s side of the family:

Helen: We have my husband’s family on camels and donkeys in Egypt with the Sphinx in the background. They ended up in Alexandria after they left Armenia. I don’t know my own background so it’s very fascinating to me to see the connection in the Ancient World through my husband’s side of the family. I’ve got the family on my mother’s side but it doesn’t go that far back. First generation British Canadians. Very boring, and they’re not mine anyways. I guess I’ve always wanted to be more colourful and Armenia gives me a little colour.

Teresa: Well, I can empathize with that. I feel the same way.

Helen: Do you?

Teresa: I’ve gone through stages of listening to Robbie Burns and bagpipe music.

Helen: It doesn’t stir my loins, though, does it for you?

Teresa: Well, when I hear bagpipe music, I do get that shiver up and down my spine. But in terms of actual stories of people, there really isn’t anything for me to connect to. It’s kind of vague. It’s like you with the subterranean imagery. It’s that kind of allure, I guess, although it’s not there so much now since I’ve become connected [through marriage] to [this particular] First Nations community.

Helen: That’s interesting. (1.1.5; 26.06.03)

As Portelli (1991) found in his study, roles can become reversed and the researcher becomes the subject, here the therapeutic subject.

To go back to the example of the ethical situation around identity in the children's summer program, if we were to use the BC Ministry guidelines to resolve the situation, the appropriate actions would take place within the context of a Canadian multiculturalism oriented towards appropriately handling "the Other." In the BC curriculum, the student who exceeds expectations is the one who fully appreciates and is sensitive to difficult situations and takes appropriate steps to offer unequivocal support. Yet this persona seems curiously absent, only able to perform this role because a knowledge and practice of Canadian multiculturalism has supplanted the child's own consciousness of what he/she brings by way of history. Reich (2002), in writing about how multiculturalism has taken hold in American schools (classrooms, school, lessons, pedagogy, lunch menus and school assemblies) testifies to its "gravitational pull" (p. 1); you can only be "for" multiculturalism because to be against it implies that you are "monocultural" (p. 1), that is, bigoted. He points out, though, that even though the rhetoric of multiculturalism is "ubiquitous" (p. 1), the actual details of how to put it into practice have eluded him. It would be interesting to compare the two nations in terms of their multicultural policies and ideologies, especially in view of the fact that, as Mackey (1999) found, Canadians pride themselves on practicing a different brand of multiculturalism than the Americans. Perhaps this ambiguous and elusive content is one of the reasons why at least three of the eighteen teachers in my study, without renouncing multiculturalism as a goal, have turned to "The Virtues Project," which places diversity within a

broader context of universal values (Popov, 2000). To some teachers, the practice of virtuous conduct seems logically to be at the base of what multiculturalism is all about: patience, tolerance and courage. The BC Social Responsibility Performance Standards are full of such language.

However, it is outside of the education documents that deal directly with issues of social responsibility that the contradictions within Canada's approach to multiculturalism become apparent, in those documents that are not focused on making an argument for diversity but are instead focused on a particular subject.

#### Cultural Narratives Embedded in Curricula

In searching the Learning Resources section of the BC Ministry of Education's (1996) Language Arts IRP [Integrated Resource Package] for children's books to use in my study, I came across a tension that would likely have passed unnoticed had I not been looking for Aboriginal resources and in finding some, set the two book recommendations side by side. I ought to mention that very few of the recommended resources are accompanied by cautionary notes, which is no doubt another reason why these two stood out.

The first book recommendation is for Copper Sunrise, by Bryan Buchan (1972), which is advised for grades 7 and 8. The story is about a young boy (a Scottish settler) who befriends a Beothuk boy and attempts, unsuccessfully, to save him from being hurt by the white settlers who perceive the Natives as "savages." The book is replete with the word "savages" to an almost numbing degree, as well as other language demeaning to Aboriginal peoples. On this aspect of the book, the curriculum designers warn teachers: "In this satirical portrayal of racist attitudes, derogatory

language is used to refer to First Nations people: e.g., the term “savage” is used as well as “barbarous wretches,” “foul animals,” and “unwashed mindless vermin.” This may be offensive and the irony, without teacher guidance, could be misinterpreted by some students” (BC Ministry of Education, 1996, B-29). The Ministry’s categorization of the novel as “satire” is striking in view of the fact that teachers tend to use the novel as a realistic portrayal. The categorization is also noticeable in removing to an aesthetic realm the racist attitudes and language of the settlers, who are Canada’s settlers, in other words, those Scottish settlers of Anglo-Saxon stock prized above all other immigrants. It is as if the Ministry is saying the author overlaid the Scottish settlers with this language and that this was a literary device, rather than language corresponding to what actually might have happened. The focus is on the readers’ perception of the settlers and where those students (and teachers?) who “may” find this language “offensive” would be, likely, Aboriginal students. In other words, the empathy is not directed where, historically, one would think it would belong: with the Beothuk Indians and by extension, Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Shirley Sterling’s (1992) My Name is Seepeetza is by an Aboriginal author on the subject of another form of assimilation, residential school, and is directed to the same age group (Grades 7 and 8). The book is based on Sterling’s diaries that she kept hidden during her stay there. The note to teachers is brief but pointed: “Teachers should note that one page contains stereotypical ethnic remarks about ‘white’ people” (B-69). Whereas one book was full of patently demeaning language of Aboriginal people and was called satirical, this book contains one page that includes references to “white” people and the language is considered demeaning (viz. stereotypical).

The British Columbia curriculum comes to the defense of Canada's "founding nation" (Day, 2000) who, by very subtle implication, is the white teacher. It is well-known that most teachers across North America continue to be white, middle class and female, myself included. "The profession struggles to attract and retain teachers (Archer, 1999), especially teachers who represent the diversity of the students served and the goals embraced. At the elementary levels, U.S. teachers continue to be mostly white, mostly female, and mostly middle class in background (Grant & Secada, 1990)" (Hoffman & Pearson, 2001, p. 31). The suggestion that teachers (especially white teachers) might take offense at this page in My Name is Seepeetza is not ungrounded, and I can offer a personal anecdote by way of example. In the context of a presentation of Aboriginal literature to preservice teachers, I passed around some of the books that I thought teachers could incorporate into their lessons. All or most of the books were by Aboriginal authors. In a story on the buffalo, one teacher came across the reference to "white people" and not in a flattering context; white people were being linked with the extermination of the buffalo (Caduto & Bruchac, 1991). She promptly raised her hand and took issue with this language, saying that as a teacher, it offended her, she didn't see herself as "white" and as a consequence, she perceived this book to be dangerous for classroom consumption or use. Whereas the Ministry's language suggests that a person might take offense to that part of Sterling's book simply because of their "white" ethnicity, as one ethnicity among a plurality of ethnicities in Canada, much more is at work. By juxtaposing the note on Sterling's book with the one for Buchan's, the larger context of the cultural narrative of multiculturalism becomes visible.

### Why “Multicultural” Literature?

To use the word “multicultural literature” in the study may seem like a contradiction. Am I not perpetuating the very legacy (my legacy, as someone of Anglo-Saxon extraction) that I just finished critiquing? Or am I trying to cover up the Anglo-Saxon legacy by using evasive words blandly associated with inclusivity, words like “multiculturalism”? I kept this word in place for several reasons: a) philosophical. As Hall (1992) points out, in the absence of a “third term,” it is difficult to find the right language to identify a place at which, culturally, we have not yet arrived; b) pragmatic. I knew teachers would not readily recognize the word “difference” (which has its own connotative difficulties) unless I paired it with “multicultural.” “Difference” is also commonly understood to mean individual and ability differences; 3) theoretical. I wanted to see what meanings and language teachers would rely on in speaking of “differences” as well as find out how they interpreted words like “multicultural.” This theoretical work took place in the context of literature discussion and interviews rather than being the object of discussion, as in Dyson’s (1997) study in which several teachers discussed what “difference” meant. In my study, teacher statements of belief on “difference” often differed from how they spoke about those same concepts in their lived experiences or in discussing their responses to a particular text. Having said this, I recognize that I am making words like “multicultural” or “difference” perform double duty, to signify that which is common usage and that which is “not yet,” to use Maxine Greene’s (1995) phrase.

Another reason for continuing to use phrases like “multicultural literature” is so as to connect my work with that of other scholars working in the area of literature

and “difference,” specifically children’s literature. For the reasons identified in connection with Canadian multiculturalism, it is not surprising that the label “multicultural” has continued to be affixed to “children’s” or “young adult” literature. The label “multicultural literature” is delightfully ambiguous, conflating at least 3 kinds of stories: a) those with a “multicultural” plot, setting or character(s); b) those by a “multicultural” or non-majority author, whether the subject matter of the book “covers” multicultural elements or not; and c) those deemed written expressly by minority authors for a political as well as an aesthetic purpose; these books are often called “culturally conscious” (Sims, 1983) because they combine political astuteness of audience with narrative ability (p. 22).

Scholarly literature on multicultural children’s literature from the past decade has in general emphasized the criterion of “authenticity,” which is usually understood as an insider’s point of view or the authority to speak from experience (Harris, 1992, 1994). After Nancy Larrick’s (1965) “The All-White World of Children’s Books,” a series of investigations were conducted that confirmed her findings that books by outsiders flooded the market (Chall et al., 1979; Sims, 1985). By the 1990’s, the need for an insider perspective and the concomitant suspicion cast on outsider perspectives, even “well-intentioned” ones, began to be generally acknowledged (Harris, 1994, Lahey, 2000, Yokota, 1993). However, that shift has been shortlived, primarily because of critiques of authenticity as yet another form of essentialism associated with conservative political theories (see Kamboureli’s (2000) critique of Taylor (1992) on authenticity). Trinh Minh-ha (1995), for example, has objected to essentializing identity according to race or culture: “the questioning subject, even if

s/he is an insider, is no more authentic and has no more authority on the subject matter than the subject whom the questions concern" (p. 218). The reason for this is because "differences do not only exist between outsider and insider—two entities—they are also at work within the outsider or the insider—a single entity" (p. 218). "We are all, in some sense, outsiders," begins a recent article reviewing children's "multicultural" literature: "To occupy the position of outsider . . . is not always negative, nor is it always avoidable" (Pataray-Ching et al, 2001, p. 477). As in Giroux's (1992) "border pedagogy" or Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) "contact zones," new metaphors are being sought to articulate the spaces in between post-modern identities that are partial and shifting. The insider-outsider argument, then, needs to be surpassed by a different kind of insight, such as the one afforded by Toni Morrison (1992), who looks at all literature as "racialised."

#### Literature's Racially Inflected Language

"How do embedded assumptions of racial (not racist) language work in the literary enterprise that hopes and sometimes claims to be "humanistic"?" Morrison (1992) asks (pp. xii-xiii). The word "racial" sounds softer and more palatable to the ear than "racist," which connotes unforgivable acts and that seems to be one of Morrison's purposes: to shift perspective by changing the language or lens through which literature and "difference" are seen. When she began re-reading literature from a writer's perspective, Morrison discovered that writing involved a "process of entering what one is estranged from" (p. 4) and she became interested in what makes this process possible as well as what "disables" it (p. 4). She collected examples from literature ranging from Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, Henry James, Faulkner,

Hemingway and Cather and concluded that “for both black and white American writers, in a wholly racialized society, there is no escape from racially inflected language” (pp. 12-13). Literature is about producing “a shareable world,” Morrison (1992) says, yet she recognizes that the process of producing such a world belongs to the author whose “blindness and insight” are “part of the imaginative activity” (p. xii).

The literary psyche provides a mirror to the social mythology of a society, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with it, but wrestling with it as an anxiety of influence inherited by society’s historical origins. Rather than indicting Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Hemingway and Faulkner for being racist, Morrison (1992) finds a “sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical, but always choked representation of an Africanist presence” (p. 17). This view of literature is much more nuanced than some post-colonial critiques of children’s literature in which the reader is positioned outside a rampant societal prejudice seen within the work; the reader judges the literature from an enlightened, safe stance (see, for example, Kutzer, 2000). Morrison (1992) argues instead that the writer (and reader) is a participant; “the ability of writers to imagine what is not the self, to familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar, is the test of their power” (p. 15). Morrison uses this criterion to evaluate literature, such as Willa Cather’s (1940) Sapphira and the Slave Girl, in which she finds evidence of the non-credibility of the story that coincides with the author’s avoidance of the power of the white slave mistress over her female slaves (p. 18).

The myth upon which American society was built is one of achieving freedom: freedom from oppression, freedom from stratified and class society, freedom to invent or “imagine” one’s own identity. However, “the concept of freedom did not emerge in a vacuum” (Morrison, 1992, p. 38). For historical reasons, it has been bound up with Americans’ adoption of the institution of slavery. The biography of William Dunbar provides Morrison with a case in point (Bailyn, 1986). Dunbar was not an impoverished or oppressed individual; he came from a privileged Scottish background, receiving his education from tutors until he attended the University of Aberdeen. He became a scientist with a breadth of knowledge in areas ranging from linguistics to hydrostatics; his geographical explorations had been published widely. But for unknown reasons, in 1771, at the age of twenty-two, he came to the United States. He staked out a claim in Mississippi, then traveled to the Caribbean and came back with a retinue of slaves to build an estate and plantation in the bush: “feeling within himself a sense of authority and autonomy he had not known before, a force that flowed from his absolute control over the lives of others, he emerged a distinctive new man, a borderland gentleman, a man of property in a raw, half-savage world” (Bailyn, 1986, p. 492 cited in Morrison, p. 42). American writers, says Morrison (1992), wrestle with this myth of “freedom” on which the nation has been founded.

What kind of relation would we find disclosed in Canadian literature and literary criticism? Judging from my own knowledge and experience of “Canlit”, as experienced in high school literature curriculums in the 1960s and 70s, the anxiety centred on identity, which is to say, on the Canadian worry of an absence of one. This

anxiety coincides in a remarkable way with Day's (2000) analysis of the failure of Canadian multiculturalism. The imaginary at the centre of the Canadian plot in relation to which authors construct narratives has been "the Indian" (Atwood, 1995); developing this thesis here would detract from the focus of the dissertation, however it is an argument that I intend to pursue through other writing.

#### Nonplots?

I return to my scenario of the children involved in creating a play out of their imaginations. The script-writing phase the following day was preceded by a discussion of stereotypes. One of the outcomes of this discussion was that two of the characters (the Native ones) were emptied of any offensive connotations; they retained Native-sounding names but essentially became white characters. Another outcome of the discussion was that the villain, who had been Native, also disappeared.

Betsy Hearne (2003), writing in the New York Times Book Review, refers to the absence of "action" in recent children's "grandparent books" and calls this kind of literary situation a "nonplot" (p. 20). It is a situation that she says adults are accustomed to, but children are not. All four of the grandparent books that she reviews contain vivid, endearing and comical anecdotes of children's relationships with grandparents but nothing really happens in a conventional sense; gone is a hanging on to every word or "what comes next" feeling (p. 20). Perhaps, she suggests, this is because we are used to children's books in which grandparents "play second fiddle" instead of being the protagonists (p. 20). If such stories are plotless, what is a story with plot? We as readers (Western readers, at least) likely understand

plot as Hearne shows that she understands it when she invokes another story in which a grandmother figures: “A few children have even been captivated by the suspense of grandma’s getting gobbled up by the wicked wolf. Now, there’s a story” (p. 20).

As Frye (1976) has pointed out, children’s literature, which is written within the mode of “romance,” depends on a polarizing of good versus evil, whether evil is the monster in the closet, the polar bear in the fridge, the dragon who captures the princess (or prince) or the mystery or obstacle that needs to be resolved. No matter that the monster may be scared of the dark too and ends up crawling into bed with the child, as in Mercer Mayer’s tales. Children’s stories play on a threat of danger. Some stories have been deliberately re-written to take out the villain, or avoid putting one there in the first place, such as when the Aboriginal children of Hartley Bay rewrote the Red Riding story (Hartley Bay School, 1997). The wolf warns Little Red Riding Hood that, as her mother told her, she needs to be cautious of wolves and other strangers but the wolf does not invoke a frisson of fear to awaken the girl to this realization. The message is more subtle. People are afraid of wolves because that is what they have been taught. The deeper lesson is to be wary of strangers until you know their true intent, which is a good lesson coming out of colonization. This particular Hartley Bay wolf turns out to be a relative of the girl’s and like Ariadne who leads Theseus out of the Minotaur’s maze, the wolf helps Little Red Riding Hood find her way back home.

A similar reworking of the plot happened with the children’s musical theatre group. The original story had been going in the direction of imitating (unconsciously) Shakespeare’s The Tempest. In the revised version, there is no Caliban and Prospero

is replaced by a female, earth goddess figure played by one of the Aboriginal girls. Moreover, the shipwrecked explorer makes such good friends on the island that she/he decides not to leave. Another subversion was that the boy explorer was a role chosen by a girl. The story is more tender of human relationships, but for that, does it lose its excitement?

The more interesting characters, Frye (1976) said, thinking especially of Satan in Milton's Paradise Lost, are the bad ones, because with goodness, nothing happens. It is badness that "lubricates" the plot, to borrow a verb from Toni Morrison (1992) who asks how it is that American literary critics fail to notice how "the black woman" in Henry James' (1947) What Maisie Knew "lubricates the turn of the plot and becomes the agency of moral choice and meaning" (p. 13). Could it be that "darkness" or some form of "otherness" is necessary to provide moral depth, otherwise called "complexity" by Morrison (1992)? To reiterate Morrison's (1992) phrase, creative writing is a "process of entering what one is estranged from" (p. 4) and where the purpose is not to evade one's own literary psyche and cultural narrative so as to participate in another, but to enter more deeply into that "symbolic order" that, as Grumet and Woolf attest, becomes an integral part of the things we remember as well as those we appear to forget.

### Conclusion

Aoki stresses the imaginative possibilities that can emerge through conversation and listening by asking: If "others" could be reconceived in an auditory rather than visual sense, what might emerge? (Aoki, 1978; Pinar, 2003). Bakhtin (1981) has already developed some of these ideas, for the "others" that "speech

genres” address are “others” who we address, through speaking, or are heard, as in the intertextual echoes in reading a text. So, to come back to my question of whether it is necessary to imagine an “other”, the answer is yes, but whether literature will ever, or should ever, move away from its wrestling with “difference” or “otherness”, the answer is also “no” because the founding stories cannot be erased; we have inherited them. But that does not mean we are condemned to repeat them, as the saying goes. Did the children need to change their characters? I don’t think so, if the children could have used imagination to portray the characters in such a way that they could not be taken at face value. However, that is a tall order for any writer and in the end, relationships are sometimes strengthened by choosing a gentler route. The question, though, ought to remain behind, of how to imagine an “Other” in such a way as to provoke thinking or offer something new.

## CHAPTER 5

## TEACHER CONSTRUCTIONS OF “DIFFERENCE”

“What are ‘differences’?” This question was posed in the circles as a closure to the literature discussion but always in conjunction with another one, “What difference are the circles making?” Because of time constraints, teachers had a choice of which question to answer. The second question had actually come first in the methodological design as a way of “checking in” with teachers to find out if the study was making any difference to them as participants and if so, in what ways. Even though the construction of differences was at the centre of the study, by allowing teachers to choose not to answer the first question, I seemed to be communicating that I myself lacked conviction in the worth of the question or of the kinds of answers it could elicit. Almost without fail, teachers chose to reply to the question of what difference the circles were making. While this could be construed as avoidance (“teacher resistance”), that interpretation would hardly be fair unless applied to myself as well. Perhaps teachers welcomed the opportunity to reflect on their participation in the study since the experience felt immediate as well as new whereas the question about “what was difference” sounded intellectual and abstract, more like an exam question. When teachers did address the question of “What is difference,” their answers were philosophical, couched in the language of explanation rather than in that of experience.

In this chapter, I take the approach of looking at how teachers across the literature circles actually talked about “difference,” including when they were not consciously addressing it as a subject of conversation. This approach is consistent with adopting an ethnomethodological lens (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1986) as well as with Morrison’s (1992) stance of seeing literary language as “racialised” and in contrast with Dyson’s (1997) approach, in which teachers were asked to reflect on their classroom experiences and derive a definition of “difference.” Four constructions are discussed in relation to “difference”: constructions of story, of the reasons for reading literature, of lived experiences of “difference,” and of childhood.

#### Constructions of Story

In Imperial Eyes, Pratt (1992) examines how colonization was embedded in travel literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She begins with a very pedestrian example of the names given to streets, buildings and landmarks in the Ontario town in which she grew up. Included were names such as Livingstone. Livingstone had made his mark in colonial activities in Africa, yet within the town all consciousness of the significance of the name had passed into oblivion, except for the odd artifact. Pratt recalls that her neighbourhood pharmacist, who habitually showed children interesting toys and gadgets, once produced a faded letter alleged to be from Livingstone, “a great uncle of his who had been a famous missionary in Africa” (p. 1).

In recalling the books they had read from childhood and adolescence, teachers were likewise prompted to remember these taken-for-granted contexts of literacy: what kinds of reading materials were available in the home and community, where

they bought or borrowed books, what they read at school, who attended their school and what the relationships were among people living in the community. Some teachers circled back to these questions in later interviews or literature circles, such as Helen, who wondered how it was that she came across Black Like Me. Not in school. Not from her parents. “I haven’t been able to identify exactly where it [Griffin’s (1961) Black Like Me] came from. It may have been as simple as the drugstore, which may have had paperbacks and I would buy what they had. So I could have been influenced by the pharmacist who was ordering the books” (1.1.5; 26.05.03). Her memory, in the context of Pratt’s (1992), reinforces the importance of the “ground” that is the background to the figure (Grumet, 1981).

In childhood and adolescence, teachers obtained books from school and public libraries and in some cases, from bookmobiles and books-by-mail. All of the teachers emphasized that these were small operations compared with the range of children’s books now available to young people in libraries and bookstores. Despite this observation, those teachers who were avid readers recalled feeling saturated, of having “gobbled up” everything that was to be read. I want to draw attention to that feeling of saturation because it speaks to cultural formation; of a child not only knowing which books were central to read but if you were a girl, knowing to seek out Beverly Cleary’s “Ramona” stories, the Little House on the Prairie series, Nancy Drew, Enid Blyton and the Bobbsey Twins, and if you were a boy, Hardy Boys, Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn and National Geographics. Thus, too, the anxiety communicated by those teachers who were not avid childhood readers or whose interests did not conform with gendered lines.

The feeling of saturation, I suspect, comes from a familiarity with “story” or what Frye (1976) has identified as “story structure” or “myth.” The central myth organizing English literature is the journey outwards and back home again, of which Frye points to two versions that reappear in Western English literature: the story of Odysseus and the story of Christ. One story tells of fabulous adventures abroad but home as being where the heart is. The other story tells of redemption through Christ through the imaginative “recreation” of the Garden of Eden (“home”) in literature. Although the Odysseus-like adventure story is most characteristic of children’s literature, Frye (1976) maintained that a) the Christian and “pagan” stories were two versions of the same story and that b) that this story constituted a structure, the structure was called “romance” and that it underlay all of literature. By “romance” he did not mean romantic love but the reaffirmation of the world of the imagination, which has become associated through this story structure with homecoming or the creation of a home.

Story structure ties into cultural formation. Frye’s analysis of literature, even though it has been heavily criticized, remains the most useful compendium and distillation of those stories, or rather “story,” at the centre of the Western imagination. That story reaffirms a particular kind of symbolic imaginary. In reflecting on commonalities across their literacy autobiographies, teachers noticed that the story structure was tied up with values and behaviors belonging to white European culture: characters could be “mischievous” but “everything turned out all right in the end,” in large part because the children were “good people” who came from “stable families” (LC2). Stories were a form of “indoctrination” (LC1). Therefore, what kinds of books

were made available to the teachers as children and young adults as well as what was absent are significant to teachers' cultural formation, particularly when the notion of "saturation" is tied to story structure. By far the most dominant genres in childhood were the adventure story and the fairy tale, stories that have been linked with imperialism and colonialism (Hannabuss, 1989; Kutzer, 2000). Consistent with that, teachers could not recall multicultural or alternative content in anything they read, unless that content was embedded within a story structure already familiar to them. Multicultural content was either seamlessly interwoven into the setting, as in the "Negroes" and "Indians" in Laura Ingalls Wilder's stories of settlers on the frontier or Dinah the cook in The Bobbsey Twins, or was the appropriated subject of the plot, as in Lenski's (1941) Indian Captive, the story of Mary Jemison's capture and adoption by the Seneca, in which the plot reaffirms the heroic struggles of the protagonist, who is Mary. Young Mary in fact convinces Seneca elders of the wrongness of their ways and the rightness of some of her White ones. Even though Frye (1976) argued that story structure needed to be separated from ideology, or society's use of stories to produce compliant citizens, the question, from a phenomenological and critical point of view, is: Do readers make that distinction, particularly in childhood? Or is not saturation in story structure intertwined with saturation in cultural narrative, in this case, the discourse of multiculturalism?

Telling is the evidence from the Aboriginal teachers, who did not talk about feeling saturated. Only one teacher could remember having books around the house by Aboriginal authors, including a collection of oral narratives by indigenous people called I am an Indian (Goodenham, 1969) and George Clutesi's (1994/1967) Son of

Raven, Son of Deer. Clutesi was the first Aboriginal author to publish his own stories without a white author as intermediary, breaking the “dearth” in Aboriginal literature in Canada (Lutz, 1997). This silence had persisted until the late 1960’s. “Aboriginal” literature until that point had been dominated by European writers. Two of the Aboriginal teachers who grew up in adoptive families or off reserve recalled the same kinds of books as did teachers of European descent, yet also recalled feeling that something was missing while two teachers who grew up as Metis (one in Alberta, the other in Ontario) remembered either no books from childhood, except the school basal reader and the Bible, or only one book (a coffee table book on Kennedy), which stood out because it reminded her of her feelings of “disaster” in growing up within the dysfunction produced by marginalization and systemic racism of the kind that Maria Campbell (1973) documents in Halfbreed.

What is striking, then, is the saturation felt by most readers immersed in European literature, and the dearth of Aboriginal books and the lack of saturation noticed by several of the Aboriginal teachers with regard to books they strongly identified with. “Gee, they finally have some Indians out there that are actually writing stories!” (3.4.3; 30.04.03) was Jeannette’s response to encountering contemporary Aboriginal authors in children’s literature. This is not to say that Aboriginal teachers did not also enjoy and voluminously read works of English literature; many did, but they were also aware of the lack of representation and availability of literature by Aboriginal authors, or of the importance of other stories. One Aboriginal teacher talked about the stories she heard as a child about her ancestors. Whereas Jeannette “digested” and “ingested” Catholic prayers because

memorizing them was homework, the oral stories that she heard from her grandmother about her ancestor Big Bear, were stories she “thrived on”: “I was like a little sponge and I just wanted more and more all the time” (3.4.2; 13.03.03).

The range of books available influenced cultural formation when teachers were younger as well as continued to determine literature choices into adulthood. For example, one teacher spoke of choosing books for leisure or the classroom “that have similarities to things I’ve experienced” (4.1.1; 26.03.03), which she defined as stories “that pull you in and envelop you in another world. Or not in another world, but a life that’s not yours but that has common traits with it” (LC4, 06.03.03). The “common traits” turned out to be anything connected to the “village life” in England that she did not grow up in but with which she was enchanted from her too few visits to relatives in England (4.1.1; 26.03.03). Echoing a similar sentiment, another teacher said that “What I look for in a good book [are] . . . emotions that all can relate to; a setting that, if foreign, can still be imagined” (LC4; 30.01.03). In her literacy autobiography, one teacher wrote that “I look for myself in stories” (2.5.4) and later realized that that self was defined in relation to a British preoccupation with “appearances,” despite her wry resistance. She recognized that this cultural baggage had coloured her initial impressions of Aboriginal peoples when she emigrated to Canada and, more recently, her expectations in reading books written by Aboriginal authors (2.5.4; 06.06.03). Virginia referred to this gravitational pull towards the familiar as “the comfort zone” (LC4; 03.04.03).

Saturation, then, is connected not to the number of books read but to saturation in one kind of story structure. This singularity of story is a point taken up

next. More study needs to be done that explores the significance of Frye's work on story structure to teacher education, particularly early childhood education, and which stories continue to be read and promoted and why and with what societal consequences.

*More Than One Story*

The Aboriginal teachers brought with them into the circles the awareness that more than one story is possible. Not only do different versions of stories exist but more than one "cultural story" is possible. This was confirmed by an example from Margot's class of five- and six-year old Aboriginal students. In the Aboriginal literature group, we read and discussed the Hartley Bay version of Little Red Riding Hood in which the wolf turns out to be a relative of the girl's family and leads her back home (Hartley Bay School, 1997). Margot recounts:

It's interesting when I read this story to my [First Nations Kindergarten] class. A boy from another class joined us and said [imitating him, with his finger pointing, outraged]: "But that's wrong!" [Margot laughs] I was thinking that my kids just accept different versions of the story. They just accept that there's two different versions of Cinderella or that there's two of this kind or that kind. But this boy: "That was wrong!" The wolf was supposed to eat her. (LC3; 29.04.03)

The insight that more than one story was possible was apparent from the very beginning of the circles when the group of Aboriginal teachers resisted the term "literacy" and expanded it to include not only written but oral stories. The term "literacy" met no resistance in the other three groups, including the one with a mix of

Aboriginal with non-Aboriginal teachers. This suggests that company makes a difference. In Western literacy, oral and written have come to signify moments in the history of literacy, with “orality” identified with literacy’s pre-history and after Levy Bruhl’s (1984) influential writings on “the Native mind”, specifically with “primitive” societies. Literacy’s moment arrived not simply with the invention of the printing press but, as Olson (1992) has argued, with the disassociation of the word from a spoken context, which generated the possibility of discourse, or multiple interpretations circling around the “same” text. When the Aboriginal teachers used the terms “oral tradition” or “oral story”, they were referring to an indigenous or tribal epistemology of the origin and significance of story. “Oral tradition” was used specifically to mean stories handed down intergenerationally from within an indigenous worldview. Jeannette, as the elder woman within the Aboriginal group, was conscious of her intergenerational role:

I thought, what am I bringing to these meetings? That was a question to myself, I guess; why am I here, why am I doing this...I felt right at home. I thought, well, maybe I’m meant to be here. Maybe my input won’t be much but certainly from an older point of view (I am talking about where I am from), as you get on in years you’re supposed to gain wisdom, and hopefully I have gained a little bit to pass on the younger girls, the younger teachers.

(3.4.1; 03/02/03)

One of the stories she recounted was about the actions of her ancestor Big Bear. She had heard this story several times from her granny.

Part of his [Big Bear’s] visions was that he could see that there

was a big change coming. He tried to stop some but it was really hard on him. One of the things that you could see in that was that the white settlers would come and put up fences and he would go and rip them down and tell his family, which was quite huge, that this land was for all of us to share, that we shouldn't block it off because it was big enough to share with everybody else. So that would be the reason why he was trying to tear down the fences as they came up. (3.4.1; 03.02.03)

I am reminded of the significance of fences to Canadian history and the formation of its landscape through “garrison mentality” (Frye, 1957). The Aboriginal teachers also defined oral stories as family stories, or stories of everyday events. These kinds of stories emerged in the other groups too but not right away and primarily in the interviews. Yet oral stories were granted full recognition in the “public” forum of the literature circle from its very inception in the Aboriginal teachers’ group.

*“If I had only known...”: The One Story*

One of the stories that was challenging for several of the white teachers to hear, especially those who in grew up in Canada, was that of residential school. Time and again and independent from one another, teachers made the comment that they (meaning themselves and often including family, neighbors or friends) did not know about what had happened in residential school; indeed, that people knew very little except in passing about the history and living conditions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, thus: “We never went there so we wouldn't have had any reason to have found out anything” (4.2.4; 23.05.03); “I think it was just far beyond the experience of most people [in Southern British Columbia] ... They might have known but I don't

think they knew about the abuse. I grew up 1950's, 1960's, post WWII and it was just probably something that people didn't really think about" (2.1.3; 23.04.03); "No one was ever told that there was trouble there [at the residential school]" (4.4.5; 03.06.03) or the following literature circle exchange between a teacher who emigrated to Canada in the early 1970s and one who grew up here:

Teacher 1: We weren't told about the residential school. I don't think, I don't think that we were aware of it when we came. The rest of the world knows about it.

Teacher 2: No, we didn't...people didn't know about it. (LC2; 27.03.03)

The stories that teachers reported that they did have access to were the ones available in public and school libraries, bookmobiles, classrooms as well as local stories and pharmacies. However, everyday details can be "excavated" and reread for stories alternative to the dominant one. For example, after saying that "we never went there [to the residential school] so we wouldn't have had any reason to have found out anything," Faye added:

My dad wouldn't take.... Well actually I can remember us driving there ourselves to pick up people to bring them back to work at my dad's sawmill or cattle ranch. At the end of the week, he would pick them up and they would pile back into the truck and we would all head back 65 miles to where we lived (4.2.4; 23.05.03)

Further on, she recalled more about how the life of her family was entwined with the lives of those staying at the residential school:

we were, as children, encouraged not to have conversation and contact with the working men, because they were rough and uncouth and beneath our standard, according to my mother. So, we didn't get to know them. If we had, we might have heard some of the things that went on there and been able to speak out, but they weren't considered someone that we should get to know. (4.2.4; 23.05.03)

Despite that interdiction, Faye recalls how the children came to see one of the men as like an uncle:

I can remember one person who spent a lot of time with us, and had come to us as an older teenager. Even in hard times, he would stay on. He battled alcohol and other substance abuse in his own life but he was such a wonderful person. He was almost like an uncle to me. He helped take care of us as kids. (4.2.4; 23.05.03)

Frances recalled one story that contradicted the dominant view that no one knew what was happening:

My friend's father worked for Air Canada and he flew one flight where they went in and took children, and he refused to go on another. So, his experience would have been different. But as a child growing up and as a teenager, I knew nothing about it (2.1.3; 23.04.03)

The most telling conversation was the last interview that I had with Isabel. She had borrowed Olsen's (2001) No Time to Say Goodbye and talked about her response to the book. As Anglican missionaries, her parents did not work in residential schools

but they did have contact indirectly with the school or with Aboriginal people. And so did Isabel in high school.

Isabel: There is so much now about residential school; it's non-stop. For my mom, it was a big thing to send quilts to the residential school. It was part of her involvement with the Anglican Church. She still can't come to believe that residential school was a terrible experience. It was so sad in the book and it was happening all the time. Just the images were so moving and sad, like of the braids being cut, and the priest with Monica. It was the same when I lived in [another BC community with a residential school]. No one was ever told that there was trouble there. I was a teenager when I lived there.

Teresa: What did you think [of the First Nations people there]?

Isabel: They were separate; a community unto themselves. There was no interaction. I saw another culture unto itself and who were strangers in that way. But they were also strangers because they had all been to residential school before coming to senior high. I was only there until junior high.

Teresa: What do you remember of your impressions [of them]?

Isabel: None really. Now I can say that I had no idea that cultures were so different. My dad certainly knew that and therefore we did. That there was a law for white people and one for First Nations people. My dad picked up a man hitchhiking once. The man had to get a lawyer in [another town]. They made him go all that way to get a lawyer [even though there was one closer by]. Our family had friends with ranches. There were a lot of First Nations cowboys.

There wasn't a whole lot of difference in those situations. But in school, there was a difference.

Teresa: How do you know?

Isabel: They weren't the kids in my circle.

Teresa: What do you mean, your circle?

Isabel: I didn't socialize with First Nations people.

T: How do you connect that with teaching students?

Isabel: It still amazes me that I can live so close to a culture that is different, yet know nothing about it ... I go home feeling depressed about my effectiveness as a teacher. Forty years ago, my family lived side by side with First Nations communities and never knew them. Forty years later, I live even closer but know even less. (4.4.5; 03.06.03)

I ask myself the same kinds of questions as Isabel, but instead with growing up in Quebec. How is it that the only time I can consciously remember encountering an Aboriginal presence in Canada was through a Grade 6 Social Studies textbook featuring meek-looking Hurons and ferocious Mohawks, or through borrowing Tales of Glooscap or a biography of Emily Carr from the school library? And yet, when I think about it, how many moments of my life were enmeshed in what Daniel Francis (1992) has called "the Imaginary Indian," through such "commonplace" things as names of football teams my father coached and the celebration of woodland and woodfolk ("Indians") depicted in the Brownies and Guides handbooks? What allowed for a complete ignorance on my part of whose land we were living on historically and where those people were now in relation to myself? I could ask the same question as

the teachers: Why had I never heard of Aboriginal people, except in the past tense? It seems hard to believe that one cultural narrative could hold such power in people's lives that it literally shapes the knowledge and experiences capable of being heard, seen or thought. Yet for white teachers, including myself, access to and saturation in the dominant culture has silenced not only other narratives, but the capacity to recognize and hear those narratives, including the ones embedded, as Morrison (1992) noticed, in literature: "What is fascinating is to observe how their [critics'] lavish exploration of literature manages not to see meaning in the thunderous, theatrical presence of black surrogacy" (p. 13; emphasis in the original). Coming back to Day's (2000) argument on Canadian multiculturalism, its purpose was to erase any other versions of nationhood than that of the founding nation or nations. The other Canadian myth that can be heard in the teachers' words, besides the one of the "vanishing Indian" (Francis, 1992), is that of "two solitudes" (McLennan, 1945), of communities that "choose" to be different and therefore distinct and apart.

#### Constructions of Reasons for Reading Literature

Teachers often spoke of literature as an "escape", particularly the literature that they read in their leisure time. By "escape," most meant "light reading" or stories that did not require a lot of thought, books within their "comfort zone" such as they would pick up in a bookstore by quickly scanning the bestsellers section (LC4; 03.04.03), favorite stories that they had re-read one or more times, which often included children's books and of course, romances, which were mentioned furtively by a couple of female teachers. Most teachers preferred narratives that had some factual or truthful basis while still being told in the form of a story, such as

biographies and autobiographies, stories that explored the relationships among the lives of different characters or those that were based on historical or contemporary events or details. One teacher said this escape was necessary especially when time was at a premium. Faye explained that lighter books “take me into a world that I can’t live in when everything that I’m doing is so set . . . when everything’s structured in your life, it takes you away to another place and time. A real escape” (LC4; 30.01.03).

How was “difference” constructed in this turning towards literature? Two kinds of teacher responses were evident. Literature provided an escape into a vicarious world, in which vicarious came to mean travel to an “other” or unfamiliar place but one in familiar and comforting garb, thus providing evidence for why literature, especially multicultural literature, remains within the “all white world of children’s books” (Larrick, 1965). For some teachers, literature also served a therapeutic function in allowing them to remain with and confront questions or areas of human understanding that perplexed them. While the stories could not provide conclusive answers, they allowed teachers an opportunity to struggle with the complexity of the question.

### *Travelling*

The vicariousness of literature allowed teachers to enter something ordinarily beyond their immediate experience. Teachers who grew up in the interior of B.C. dreamt of landscapes of water, those who grew up in small-town southern B.C. read of Canada’s history and the struggles between French and English in Hugh McLennan’s (1945) Two Solitudes, those who were raised in the gentle rolling hills

of Southwestern England imagined flat plains and riding bareback with braids flying while those raised on the Prairies imagined sophisticated dialogue in drawing rooms in the stories of Jane Austen and Edith Wharton. Even the *Bobbsey Twins*, which would now be considered a repository of racial homogeneity, one white teacher remembered as “exotic” literature, not because of the landscape but because of the adventures that seemed so removed from her life (LC2; 27.03.03). One of the most frequent devices used in children’s literature is travel through space or time to another world. The protagonist finds something (a wardrobe, locket, book) that allows him/her to journey to another place or time. Brought back is something of use to the present—wisdom or knowledge—and for the reader, a feeling of reinvigoration from travelling elsewhere.

Even though imaginary travel often brings a welcome change from routine, this particular kind of travel that teachers talked about remained overwhelmingly within the familiar places of the imagination. This is true whether the teacher is situated in the dominant culture or outside of it. For teachers within the dominant culture, multicultural or alternative literature represented a territory yet to be explored. Yet those who had begun to explore it tended to rely on literature written by authors from the dominant culture. This was evident from the lists of books that teachers provided that they liked to use in the classroom (See: Appendix II). The same was true, though, in looking at “Aboriginal” literature with the group of Aboriginal teachers. Aboriginal content was embedded within a Western fairy tale, quest or adventure story structure but the teachers only saw the Aboriginal content. When teachers ventured outside of their “comfort zone,” their certainty in their

cultural assumptions and terms of reference could be dislodged, such as Marjorie's experience with Thomas Highway's (1998) Kiss of the Fur Queen and Ruby Slipperjack's (2001) Little Voice, Virginia's with Eden Robinson's (2000) Monkey Beach and several white teachers' with Sylvia Olsen's (2001) No Time to Say Goodbye.

*Remaining*

Whereas the desire to escape into vicarious experience constitutes a re-entry into the familiar, the confronting of perplexities through literature comes from a desire to remain and understand. This desire is manifested by a search for eye witness or first person perspectives, people or characters who speak with the authority of direct experience. Virginia, who grew up in Germany until she was ten and whose grandmother lived in Baden Baden during the Second World War, was haunted by the question of how people living in the vicinity of concentration camps could not know about them or in knowing, not act:

it's just unfathomable to me that something of that magnitude can occur. I can see how one can get caught up in electing a leader and then get stuck with him. I can see how it would be possible—if you put yourself back in that time where they had just gone through WWI and they're just devastated, nothing left, massive unemployment, massive starvation—and some guy comes along with election promises of “I'm going to fix this and fix that, there's not going to be any unemployment.” Don't kid yourself, I don't think for a second that Hitler stood up and said, “I'm going to get rid of the Jews.” I don't think he did that. I can see why people may have voted him in. I can see how things

can subtly change to a point where those that did want to get him out, possibly couldn't, short of killing him off, which I think some people tried. I just can't imagine the number of concentration camps and people not realizing what was happening. (4.5.1; 19.02.03)

This question became important to her when she was confronted with her cultural and family history in coming to Canada at the age of 12:

We were quite different. You sort of start to hear the whispers, "The Germans were Nazis." I was very embarrassed for a long time of my heritage. I mean, I hated being here. I wanted desperately to go back home. I didn't speak the language. I didn't understand anybody. I didn't have any friends. I just wanted to go back home. (4.5.2; 01.04.03)

It was not Anne Frank's Diary (Frank, 1952) but a series of books that the Reader's Digest published on the concentration camps that prompted Virginia to question how much her family knew:

Reader's Digest, I remember, put out a series of 24 books. Very very graphic. Of different concentration camps. Not in Baden Baden. I think the nearest one was in Stuttgart, an hour and a half away. There were so many of them. That was what blew my mind, of how many camps there were. The fact that so few people knew or claimed to know. And I don't know which it is because so few talk about it and of course you know, when nobody talks, your curiosity gets even bigger! That's a question that remains unanswered to me, to this very day. (4.5.2; 01.04.03)

Since answers were not forthcoming from her family, she has turned to reading adult and children's literature pertaining to Nazism and the Holocaust, especially ones that come from or adopt a first person perspective thus providing a glimpse into the sources of human motivation.

While some things may be difficult to imagine except through literature, other experiences may be denied, which means that remaining and staying with literature provide teachers' only modes of access to a culture they are endeavoring to understand. Open access to certain forms of cultural knowledge can be forbidden because that knowledge is protected by tradition or community codes of conduct, community members are actively resistant to others having access to and gaining control of that knowledge, and because of who the teacher is and the history he or she brings. As Smith (1999) observes, Western culture is predicated on access to knowledge. The teachers in this study teach and live in close proximity to Aboriginal communities and most have taught Aboriginal students. Several of the white European teachers spoke of the challenge of teaching Aboriginal students because of their own lack of knowledge, as teachers, of Aboriginal culture. Many teachers reasoned that if they could have better access to the culture, perhaps they would gain a deeper insight. Terry, for example, borrowed several Aboriginal materials but was desultory until he started to read Ruby Slipperjack's (2001) Little Voice, which made a tremendous impression on him and from which he went away satisfied that he had gained some insight into an Aboriginal perspective. Even after reading Aboriginal literature, though, some teachers were left with questions. They became aware of the gap between their own interpretation of the story and what was left unexplained, such

as Marjorie who wondered how the girl and her grandmother in Slipperjack's book could communicate with "silent words" (the title of another of Slipperjack's novels). She both enjoyed the "difference" but could not explain it further on her own:

One of the things that really annoyed me was they didn't talk to one another, Grandmother and Ray. And then I realized, ohh, this is a different way of being, it's a different way of communicating ... I grew to enjoy it ... You know, they poked each other and they giggled. It just seemed foreign. Very foreign. But at the same time, I thought, what a lovely thing. I wish I had a granny like that ... I didn't really understand what they meant by "the community." I assumed a small village of some kind, not all First Nations ... I hadn't come across or understood that [way of communicating] before. That there was this whole new way ... Even the way the passages moved from one paragraph to another, I found a little different. (2.5.4; 06.06.03)

Virginia alluded to the "cloud of mystery" that surrounded some cultures and while it was that which attracted her, it also impeded her view.

#### The Construction of Lived Experiences of "Difference"

From a critical perspective, the epithet "outsider" or "outsider within" cannot rightfully belong to someone from a majority culture. Bailey (2000) says that "race traitors" can "destabilize their insider status by challenging and resisting the usual assumptions held by most white people" (p. 288) and may feel ostracized as a result (p. 287) but the experience of being an outsider (i.e. the object of "difference") is denied to whites because of the privilege they enjoy in society. While remaining aware of the discontinuity between an experience of feeling "different" and being

subjected to systematic racism or discrimination on the basis of societal constructions of “difference,” I am nevertheless calling all of the following lived experiences those of “difference” because of their pertinence to teachers’ constructions of “difference.” Three kinds of experiences stand out: a) individual differentiation from family values or history; b) struggles with gender and identity; c) struggles with race or culture and identity.

### *Individual Differentiation*

Many teachers recalled feelings of differentiation from other members in their family, particularly from parents. Being an avid reader in the context of a family of non-readers or of parents who read primarily newspapers or magazines, for example, often drew unwanted attention in the form of names like “bookworm” (1.1.3; 14.01.03) or restricted the spaces in which one could safely read or pursue one’s interests, like Helen’s reading in the bathtub (1.1.1; 16.01.03) or Virginia’s clandestine love of music (4.5.1; 19.02.03). Sometimes parents and children differed in what they valued in reading. Barry’s father had not censured the reading of fiction, but he was critical of it, encouraging instead the reading of factual material. Barry did not realize the extent to which he had always disagreed with his father’s opinion:

I think I mentioned at some point that my dad used to really frown upon fiction. Why would you want to read something that didn’t really happen when there are so many lives out there, real things that happen that we don’t have to be telling stories, telling lies, about them ... I don’t know how much of it I understood at the time but I did have a sense that ... fiction gets into the

mind of somebody else” and therefore does educate, but in a manner different from non-fiction. (2.3.4; 03.06.03)

What all of these experiences of differentiation have in common is a sense of isolation, disparagement or feeling “less than”, or the need to become subversive because of difference from a perceived norm. The family is the child’s first encounter with “the norm” and the authority that goes along with it, in which certain practices are condoned, others marginalized, belittled or excluded. One of the books that testifies to this is Wyndham’s (1965) The Chrysalids, which tells the story of a father so thoroughly devoted to the community’s creed that he would be willing to eliminate his own aberrant son. One teacher recalled her father’s support of reading, and how he told the public librarian that his young daughter could read Germaine Greer and was not to be barred from borrowing any book from the library, however accounts like these were in the minority. One teacher recounted the time when her parents systemically rifled through her books, throwing out those they perceived as dangerous.

How might these experiences have influenced reader response, particularly in the context of “difference”? Of the many examples I could provide, I have selected two. Any felt sense of differentiation was multi-layered, with one teacher recounting her feelings at being an adopted as well as a hyperactive child in addition to recalling events that presaged her struggles with depression or what she also called “mental illness,” itself a category of marginalization. It was only in our final interview that Helen realized a possible connection between those experiences and her strong interest in and feeling for “differences” in the classroom and society. She told of an

incident in which as a young child, she woke up screaming. After screaming for hours, she was taken to Emergency and subjected to psychological testing in which, she recounted with disgust, “they put me in a little dress and put me in a room with a little boy and tables and chairs and I was told to play.” Helen reflected that

Maybe I was aware of there being something wrong, very wrong, because they had given me sedatives. I was hyperactive, I realize that now. A really nervous child. High strung. So I think ... that’s part of the appeal with people who are struggling or are marginalized. Because I always felt, at whatever, level, that I was one of them.” (1.1.5; 26.05.03)

She also recalled how in literature, she gravitated towards figures on the margins, like those represented in the novels of Thomas Hardy, Wyndham’s (1965) The Chysalids or Keyes’ (1966) Flowers for Algernon as well as towards “majority” authors like Griffin (1961) who dabbled in the margins in Black Like Me.

The second example comes from Marjorie, who lived in England most of her life and was the eldest of three girls. She liked to climb trees yet as a girl, was not supposed to. “I was trouble.” She recounted an incident, when she was only six, when her mother dressed all three girls up and took them on the bus to the photographer for a family photo. The retelling is interwoven with her adult consciousness of how much “trouble” her mother had gone to in organizing this photograph: “She was probably pregnant with the next one. Got us all dressed up in little dresses that she had done all the embroidery on.” Marjorie is the “dark” heroine trying to usurp the “master narrative” of the golden-haired and fair heroine(s): “I have wiry curly hair and my

two sisters are blonde angels ... I'm dark and curly and bigger than them." She "liked being different," though or given that she felt that she was, embellished it:

I have my hat behind me in one picture and I'm slowly bringing something round and there's a series of pictures where I've got this brick in my mouth. Nearly every picture, I'd do something I shouldn't whereas my angelic sisters were sitting primly and properly. Everybody else was angelic. (2.5.2; 14.03.03)

The desire to be different was tied up with an acute awareness of class, primarily because she wanted a horse. In Marjorie's imagination, riding a horse was associated with freedom. Thus the "fascination that I had as a child for so-called Indians... Plains type Indians who rode horses and galloped around with their hair flying" (2.54; 06.06.03). These examples illustrate how complex the threads of memory are and how they become intertwined with grappling with constructions of "difference."

#### *Struggles with Gender and Identity*

Marjorie's desire to be free of social constraints reflects as well a struggle with gender expectations, a struggle also familiar to Frances who resisted being a "girl" and identified with stories in which the central female protagonist was a tomboy:

I wanted to be a boy for a long, long time because I could do that right. Parts of a being a girl I obviously wasn't doing right. You'd have relatives who'd say, "You really should have been a boy!" So gender, I think, was always an issue. (2.1.2; 26.03.03)

One of Frances' favorite books was Lemke's (1947) Indian Captive, the story of a little girl who chooses to remain with the "Indians" who kidnapped her even though they kill her family. Part of her attraction to the book was similar to Marjorie's fascination with "the Prairie Indian": freedom. Frances explained that "Molly decided that she'd rather be who she was with her adoptive family than go back. To me, I always thought: "Hmmm." Not to go back and be a lady; well, I just thought that she was probably freer" (2.1.2; 26.03.03).

Barry's penchant for fiction in the form of adventure stories persisted despite the higher regard in which his father held non-fiction. "Why the adventure story?" I asked him. In the course of the first interview, Barry had talked about being a gay man and how that influenced his interpretations of literature. I was curious as to why the strong male heroes of boys' adventure stories had appealed to him as a child.

Teresa: You talked a lot about reading boys' books when you were young. Boys doing things. In the image of the boys that are portrayed in those books, is there any conflict—well, not conflict but tension—between the image of those boys

Barry: And my self-image?

Teresa: Yes.

Barry: I liked boys who were alone and facing the world... Maybe it was having a big noisy family and a desire to be on my own. I know socially in school I did feel on my own a lot, and adventure books were something that I could do, in a sense. Yet I avoided some of the more typical... like the Hardy Boys books. It was too much a "boys being social boys

changing the world.” It wasn’t what I see ... I don’t know if I ever read one past the first chapter and yet I felt that obligation to. That this is what boys do. I hated the things. (2.3.1; 18.02.03)

In other words, Barry co-opted the lone protagonist celebrated in the survival genre to his own understanding of lived experience. The survival genre continues to be a popular genre in elementary classrooms. Barry’s example raises the question of how the canonical use of certain genres in schools can be undercut by children’s lived experiences. This is so even if the child cannot articulate the reasons why one genre is more attractive than another or instead produces the standard interpretations yet later reflects, as an adult, on the sources of its appeal.

#### *Struggles with Race/Culture and Identity*

The Aboriginal teachers struggled with constructions of race, culture and identity. Their life narratives had been influenced in one way or another by the effects of colonization yet their consciousness of the significance of these events only came later on in life. Two examples stand out. Lee, who was adopted by a white family when she was just a baby, was raised to believe that she was part French. According to the hierarchy of races that Day (2000) talks about, the French constituted the highest of the marginalized races and therefore the least offensive of “differences.” That her adoptive parents deemed this fiction necessary because Indians did not “blend in” became clear from the following anecdote of Lee’s reception by a community member: “I remember at three being introduced to someone and the woman looked at me and she kind of stiffened up and backed away and she looked at

my mom and whispered in this kind of stage whisper, “Is she Indian?” (1.3.3; 25.03.03).

Yvonne talked about how she and her siblings would weave narratives to explain connections among family members. This weaving of stories was necessary because the family story, especially on her father’s side, was never talked about, only slipping out when he had been drinking. What she recalls from this storytelling was the humour associated with engaging in it, even if later on she recognized that the stories were tragic:

My dad was very, how would you say, he grew up with a lot of internalized racism and a lot of damage. He was involved in the child welfare system and this was during the forties, which would be frightening. He was shipped out to farms as a labourer at twelve. He had to care for his little brother who was in foster care ... So he never talked about his family. Then he’d start telling us stories and our ears would perk up because this was the part of our family that was Native and you wanted to know what was going on but he wouldn’t allow you to be involved in anybody’s lives and wouldn’t invite them in our lives. When he did, it was drinking parties and then he’d be tossing them out in the snowbank, kick them out of the house. Humorous stories to get through a really dysfunctional upbringing. It’d be like, grandpa would come and visit, “Oh I wonder how long it will be before his feet were sticking out of a snowbank!” You just knew that this was their relationship and we never knew why. We’d be looking out for clues ... (3.3.1; 25.02.03)

One of the unmistakable clues to his family connections was his colour, which was only ever a strike against him so he never acknowledged it as a mark of belonging:

The Native community was on the edge of town. We were never really invited to be part of that because my dad was so racist. He's as dark as those guys [Yvonne points to a picture of a child with dark skin] but he's just a very visibly Native man. He's just got so much racism; nowadays he's not as racist. (3.3.1; 25.02.03)

While some of the white teachers struggled overtly with being white and privileged, a minority resisted the association of whiteness with privilege, arguing that because of reverse discrimination, things have gone the other way. However, they did not maintain that view consistently. It was frequently contradicted by other comments or experiences that demonstrated that they struggled with injustice and the prejudices at the root of that injustice. Like Lee and Yvonne, the white teachers could remember being raised in a certain context in which certain things were not questioned and those moments of shock or recognition when they suddenly recognized constructions of race that they had likely long heard around them, such as Marjorie's example of someone her mother knew who said of a Black child "I wouldn't have one of those touch me." Marjorie recalled:

I was shocked. I was thoroughly shocked that anybody would say that, even that many years ago. Because although you might have felt like that, you wouldn't say it in front of everyone else. I don't know why that came up but I just suddenly remembered it. My upbringing was in a very white

[community]. Even foreign-speaking white people, there weren't even any of them. It was very British. No color. (2.5.2; 14.03.03)

Marjorie was in her early twenties when this incident occurred. As in many of these examples, while one prejudice was identified, a different one remained undisclosed. Marjorie is more shocked at the woman's improper behaviour in public. Marjorie's admission of the importance of appearances to her own cultural formation came in the last interview. Recognition of the significance of past events comes in layers. Consistency in recognizing racial, cultural or gendered constructions across experiences does not tend to happen unless the teacher has already been engaged in such "excavation" of everyday experiences (Grumet, 1981). Such experiences nevertheless provide the tacit ground against which learning takes place. Nowhere is this more evident than in everyday language.

Several teachers could recall the common language by which "Others" in their community were constructed and that nobody, including themselves, noticed in growing up. Children imitated adult language. Marjorie remembered how owning a golliwog was "normal":

Robinson's marmalade jam, if you collected a certain number of labels, you got a golliwog pin and they were all different kinds. You know, golliwogs doing different things. We used to love them ... Enid Blyton's books that had golliwogs in them, you know, in the 60's, they became disapproved of, and rightly so. But I had a golliwog toy and having that stereotype was quite normal. (2.5.3; 02.05.03)

Her account reminded me of the troll dolls I used to collect and play with when I was a child; dolls with slightly darkened skin, protruding bellies and flattened noses, along with their different coloured hair, which was their main attraction. Lee recalled how the phrase “nigger toes” was an integral part of a child’s vocabulary where she grew up. But with all of the teachers, a definite point was reached when they knew this language was not appropriate, as in the following two exchanges, one with Lee, the other with Faye:

Lee: Well, my mom used to call Brazil nuts, Nigger toes. And those little black licorice candies that look like people, they were called Nigger babies ... I didn’t know what it was, what Nigger meant. So we were always saying Nigger toes.

Teresa: That was when you were young?

Lee: Yeah. And we did that eeny-meeny-miney-moe. It used to be catch a Nigger by the toe. I didn’t know what a Nigger was. It was just like a word that I was taught to use to refer to these nuts.

Teresa: So when did you realize or recognize what they were?

Lee: When I got older. We started saying, catch a tiger by the toe.

Teresa: You deliberately substituted it?

Lee: Yeah. When I was little tiny, I just went along with what everybody else was saying and I think that’s how stuff like that gets passed on. Just don’t have any awareness of what things mean. Like when you say, “We jewed them down.” I always thought it was “chewed them down.” So I said that for a

long time. “We chewed them down.” It wasn’t until I was an adult that I realized that it was a racist statement. (1.3.3; 25.03.03)

When I asked Faye what made a difference in recognizing her parents’ paternalistic attitudes towards the Aboriginal men who worked on their farm, she identified one teacher’s impact:

Teresa: So how did you know better?

Faye: ... to say I learned at school is wrong. I just learned in life ... But I can remember my Grade 10 English teacher was a man who had left South Africa and he was Black and we just thought the world of him. He was so wonderful. He spent quite a bit of time making us aware of discrimination and attitudes.

Teresa: So that made an impact.

Faye: It did. (4.2.4; 23.05.03)

### Constructions of Childhood

Teachers consistently interpreted childhood as a time of innocence. This is in spite of the fact that teachers’ memories of their overt resistance to dominant norms reached back into childhood, such as Barry resisting the Hardy Boys as a male book of manners and preferring the solitary hero (male or female) of the survival genre. Teachers also construed themselves as the protectors of childhood. In contradistinction to this, teachers frequently indicated that as children, they understood more than the adults around them assumed that they did. The children’s or young adult texts that provoked teachers to talk about the construction of childhood were Skarmata’s (2000) The Composition and Khan’s (1998) Roses in my Carpet.

Roses in my Carpet is written by a Palestinian author as well as set within a Middle Eastern country. Skarmata is a Chilean author and The Composition is set within the time of a dictatorship in Chile. Teachers saw both books as “multicultural” as well as about childhood therefore their constructions of childhood were superimposed on as well as struggled with their constructions of “difference.”

Lee: [The Composition] just showed really clearly how they [children] act on ideas that they don't clearly articulate or don't fully understand. So that's interesting, almost an innate survival strategy ... Understanding on a visceral level but not necessarily understanding cognitively... regardless of what happens, children seem hardwired to play ...

Helen: I have to think about that. That's a provoking idea that you had, of whether children are hard-wired, because play, by definition, for me, is how the children learn about their world. But is that something that is beaten out of them by adversity? ... What happens to that innate and natural play if it's not allowed to flourish?

Tom: And the word play itself, if you think of it in terms of dramatized play, it's keeping things real instead of fiction[al].

Helen: Right. Playing with real things helps them to identify the reality. Play is not just a fantasy. It's dealing with what is really there. I guess it is the properties of the things that are going on in their life. To us, they're just horsing around. Like babies who would much rather play with pots and pans than with toys.

(...)

Lee: Children die in wars. It's not like they're separate ... Their own way of being in the world protects them because they make up games or see things only to the capacity that they're able. (LC1; 25.05.03)

The teachers in this group explored the idea that through play, children protect themselves from harm. Adults play too, Tom pointed out, but for escape, arguing that the American media presentation of the war with Iraq was like watching a sports game. The group did not relinquish the idea that childhood and play go together, but were receptive to Lee's notion that children know or sense more than adults think they do, which was consistent with their own recollections from their literacy autobiographies, such as Helen, who "was absolutely in love with the story of The Twelve Dancing Princesses where they had go down under a subterranean area... I didn't understand all of the sexual connotations. I just knew that there was something here . . . I kept reading those kinds of stories over and over again" (LC2; 16.12.02). Many of the teachers recounted similar experiences in childhood of ideas or feelings that they could not have articulated at the time, but that they knew indicated their broader understanding of a phenomenon, comment or event, more than the adults around them assumed that they did.

In her teaching of young children, Margot had already been toying with the idea that Piaget was wrong about how much children know and when: "It's surprising what they [young children] can grasp. You know Piaget says they can understand more and more abstract later and later, but I think they get it sooner, a lot of things sooner (3.1.4; 26.05.03). In two of the literature groups, we had had an extended discussion about whether teachers would read these books to their classes, with the

early primary teachers saying “No.” I introduced this question in Margot’s group and in the last interview, she drew my attention to the fact that she had read Khan’s book with her students: “I asked them afterwards, “Do you think this is appropriate for me to read to you? Are you too young?” ... One child (male) said, “Yeah, we’re too young.” I love their honesty! Another child (girl) said, “No, I think it’s important. We need to know.” Some kids said, “yeah, it was a good story even if it wasn’t happy.” Some said, “it was happy in the end.” I thought, oh, they’re debating! In an early young way. I was pleased with it. It was good to get them to really reflect on it” (3.1.5; 06.03). Whenever teachers made such observations about children, I reminded them of what they had been able to remember through writing the literacy autobiographies.

The focus in LC2 and LC4 was heavily centred on the innocence of children. However, while responsibility was initially positioned at the opposite end from innocence, both groups began to question that dichotomy. Their admiration for the courage and temerity shown by the child protagonists was a factor as was their critique of the complacency of North American society, including the way this culture shelters children from harm. Teachers in these groups also picked up on how children understood more than adults would credit them with being able to grasp. Since the conversations from those two literature circles are strikingly similar in how they talk about children’s innocence, I present here an excerpt from one of them:

Barry: It was so offensive using the child’s innocence. Especially after what the father had said when the boy said, “Will you ever get taken away?” And

he said, "You are my good luck charm." And then to be trapped [by the officer asking the class to write the composition]; to use that innocence.

Ruth: But he was smart. He figured it out.

(...)

Marjorie: ... Again, it's the responsibilities put on children's shoulders that are so beyond their years. I don't want kids to have those responsibilities.

Barry: And it shows how much more mature the children were. He was aware of what was going on. He'd picked up what his parents were saying and what they were listening to even though when you're reading, you don't think he's really that into what they are listening to on the radio but yet subconsciously, he had because he figured out what they were doing with those essays.

Marjorie: In both books, we have children taking on responsibility. And they're both children. I compared it to children here who are writing their biographies and moaning and groaning about their little brothers and sisters.

Ruth: And he was bound and determined that they were never going to do without. He was learning a trade. He'd have something to provide for his mother and sister.

Marjorie: It's a conundrum, isn't it, because you want them to maintain their innocence and yet you admire what they're doing. Because of an awful situation, they become responsible.

Barry: In The Roses in my Carpets, it didn't seem like he was really having a childhood. All the responsibilities that he had ... I liked the parts [in The

Composition] where you see the child's innocence. They talk about chatting with his friend and when it says, all the other kids say, "Do I have to write a paper?" "Do I have to do this?" [emulating students' clamouring voices in school]

(...)

Ruth: Last year would have been a good year for me to use this one because I had a little boy who wrote in his journal and drew his dad getting bin Laden's head because if he did that, the war would be over and his dad could come home. So he had more of a concept of the war and how involved people were and how scary it was. (LC2; 22.05.03)

The discussion in LC4 followed similar lines of discussion as LC2, except that the question arose of how Khan's book ends. The ending disrupted commonly held notions of a childhood story, especially for Isabel.

Teresa: What did you think of that book, Isabel [The Roses in my Carpet]?

Isabel: I thought it was a very good book. I thought the end came so suddenly. [Virginia: yeah]. That was the only disappointing part. There just should have been more until the end came.

Teresa: What was the ending in that book?

Isabel: Pardon me?

Teresa: How did it end?

Virginia: That was my question too, what I wrote down. I wondered if the ending was, you know, a bomb that came and blew them up, and their spirit is leaving them and they're running to that field of dreams, that carpet of roses,

that is like comfort and safety. He's leaving, and he and his family aren't pulling back now. He's not having to drag anybody. Everybody's running, happily to this place of dreams, the place where there isn't any more pain. I don't know if that's what happens, but I'm guessing that maybe that's what happens.

Isabel: I never considered that! It's a kid's book! It can't be! [we laugh]  
(LC4; 01.05.03)

As in LC1, the idea arose of how children seem, as Lee put it, "hard-wired for play":

Diane: I really noticed in both of them the escape even though they were completely in this, especially in The Roses in my Carpet, where he was so completely responsible. They [each] had their escape. He had his prayer and the other one he had his soccer.

Virginia: And how important that is to have. How important to have something that is your escape. (LC4; 01.05.03)

Is Virginia talking about children or adults now? The one seems coterminous with the other, whether we are talking about the books that continue to enthrall us, or the reasons that we read literature, as adults and as children, which goes back to the previous discussion in this chapter of stories and teachers' reasons for reading them.

### Conclusion

This chapter has identified four ways in which teachers in the study constructed "differences" without necessarily being aware of these as constructions of "difference." These ways became interpolated with the more common ways of identifying "difference": gender, sexual orientation, race/culture/ethnicity, disability

and mental illness. One of the very first “differences” that arose during discussion of the literacy autobiographies was gender. Class was also mentioned, as was sexual orientation. Disability came up but only in passing, comprising an area that some teachers expressed an interest in discussing further. Questions about identity in terms of race, culture and ethnicity comprised the most common category, no doubt influenced by the context of the literature circles with their focus on “multicultural books.” Also consistent with critical race theory and research was that for most of the white teachers, color and race belonged to “others” rather than to themselves. Even though teachers talked about the depiction of white European characters in literature, their own life narratives belied an awareness of themselves growing up as white. How does this discontinuity arise? The embeddedness and layering of different yet related constructions provides one possible explanation as well as a direction for teacher education and professional development.

The chapter has looked at how more commonly recognized “differences” were embedded within constructions of story, reasons for reading literature, “difference” in lived experience and childhood. While some scholarly research has begun to look at some of the interconnections between these constructions and “difference,” such as work in the study of the social contexts of children’s literature (Butt, 1992, Hannabuss, 1989, Richards, 1992) or post-colonial children’s literature (Kutzer, 2000, Susina, 2000), few have concretely addressed how it is that the construction of “differences” become intertwined with the various strands of people’s lives and how these constructions can be confronted. By adopting a more ethnomethodological lens, which entails examining how constructions of “difference” are embedded in teachers’

language and the meanings that they themselves assign to that language, a step has been made in that direction.

Teachers' discussions coming out of the writing of the literacy autobiographies demonstrate that most teachers possessed an early awareness of larger significances but could not articulate it. Childhood is a time of the saturation of sense and, in relation to the focus of this study, of literature and larger narratives (cultural, life experience, literacy). Following on this focus on the teacher as learner and storied intellectual, the next chapter identifies those learning strategies that teachers in the study used to grapple with the literature and the literature discussion.

# Action

## CHAPTER 6

### LEARNING PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES

This chapter returns to the question with which this study began, of the role of the teacher as learner in approaching “difference” in education and what that learning entails. In this study, I have looked at how those constructions of “difference” become embedded in the stories that comprise the familiar background of literacy and life experiences. While it is a truism that individuals learn in different ways, surprisingly little research has looked at the processes of how teachers learn in the context of multicultural education. Most research has focused on the goal of social justice in a critical context (Sleeter & Grant, 1987) and not on what might be involved in arriving at such a consciousness. The challenge in this study was to identify how learning took place when learning was understood to take place as “slow knowing” (Claxton, 1997). Based on the sample of teachers participating in this study, the following processes and strategies are indicative of the teacher learning that needs to be taken into account in designing curricula for pre-service and in-service education in the area of multicultural education (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

#### Distance and Attachment: Teacher Learning Processes and Strategies

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>I. Distance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Doubt</li> <li>b. Contradiction</li> <li>c. Juxtaposition</li> <li>d. Subterfuge</li> <li>e. Bracketing</li> <li>f. Meta-awareness</li> </ul> | <p>II. Attachment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Bonding</li> <li>b. Touchstones</li> <li>c. Learned literary responses</li> <li>d. Classroom application</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

I have grouped the strategies into two categories, “Distance” and “Attachment.” “Distance” refers to strategies that involved establishing a critical distance or standing back from a phenomenon while “Attachment” corresponds to learning processes that draw on personal investment or involvement. In my discussion, I will begin with “Distance” because these strategies will be more familiar to multicultural teacher education, which rests on the presumption that establishing critical distance from one’s surroundings and history is fundamental. Learning processes associated with “attachment” are either assumed to take place within the learner as a result of engaging in critical self-examination, or are often perceived as obstacles to achieving that understanding because attachment re-embeds teachers into familiar patterns.

#### Learning Approaches Using Distance

##### *Doubt*

Doubt became a particularly powerful learning strategy when connected with something to which the teacher was strongly attached. Margot (an Aboriginal teacher) loved W.P. Kinsella’s writing, particularly his book Dance Me Outside (Kinsella, 1977), in which the narrator reflects on the ironies and contradictions involved in being an Aboriginal writer. Margot had thought that Kinsella was an Aboriginal writer but when she found out that he was not, it set off unsettling questions. One of the directions that the Aboriginal teachers had wanted to pursue in the circles was to read literature by Aboriginal authors; this was something that they had not had an opportunity to do systematically and together with other Aboriginal educators. Margot had initially proposed (in one of our first interviews) that we read Kinsella:

Teresa: Any other ones [authors or books to read in the literature circles] that you can think of, off the top of your head?

Margot: Kinsella. W. P. Kinsella.

Teresa: You want to read Kinsella?

Margot: He's good. [laughter]

Teresa: A lot of First Nations people hate Kinsella.

Margot: I can see why, but still! Stir things up! (3.1.2; 27.02.03)

When Margot said, "I can see why, but still," I assumed that she knew that Kinsella was not Aboriginal but was including him with other authors who use parody and comedy within Aboriginal discourse. In actuality, Margot was only making that argument because she assumed Kinsella was Aboriginal and the fact that he was not only arose in passing in our informal conversation after the first interview. Thus at the very start of our next interview, Margot raised the issue:

Teresa: I'll ask you first if there's been anything you've been thinking about or noticing since our last [literature circle] meeting last week.

Margot: Well, the thing I thought about mainly was Kinsella. Trying to figure him out. [we laugh]

Teresa: What were you trying to figure out?

Margot: You know, because I didn't know before that he was white. I always thought he was Native and I thought: "Hmm..." (3.1.3; 07.04.03)

What kinds of issues did the doubting of Kinsella raise? Margot began by questioning how it was that someone could "slip into" an Aboriginal perspective. Was Kinsella not "exploiting" Aboriginal people? (3.1.3; 07.04.03). In the next

interview, she relented somewhat, admitting to still liking Kinsella's stories but "guiltily" (3.1.4; 26.05.03). By the last interview, which involved re-reading and reflecting on the literacy autobiography and the triple-entry journal, Margot stated that she was definitely not reconciled with Kinsella: "Now I'm more disappointed in Kinsella. They say that when Native authors write things, there's always the worry that they're selling out their culture. If someone's non-Native and doing it, it's definitely selling out" (3.1.5; 25.06.03).

The doubting and letting go of Kinsella connected with the issue of authenticity, which had come up in LC3 literature circles and interviews, and that Margot in particular had explored through articulating her beliefs around "Aboriginal voice": "our voice is trying to break through and be stronger . . . We want to have our own culture and be strong for ourselves but we want to influence that bigger culture too because we have to live in it" (3.1.2; 27.02.03). Her doubts about Kinsella were raised by seeing his writing as a manifestation of re-colonization: "this is our [Aboriginals'] major theme: colonization. That's what I am thinking about a lot of the time" (3.1.2; 27.02.03). She coined the phrase "doing a Kinsella" to articulate the artificiality or dishonesty involved in assuming another's voice (3.1.3; 07.04.03). Bringing Kinsella into doubt also triggered reflections on her own experiences as an "urbanized Native" and feelings of not quite fitting in: "you go away and you can't come back...I'm too urban...They don't like sushi, they don't like my stir-fry... They tried to like it" (3.1.4; 26.05.03).

One of the aspects of both Kinsella's and Thomas King's (Cherokee) writings that Brenda enjoyed was that both authors provided a subversive view from the inside

of contemporary Aboriginal communities. Margot wrestled with the fact that Kinsella's writings would reinforce the image of Aboriginal people as exploitable: "The Native people are trying to tell the truth and ... it is harsh at times and it is something to laugh at at times because if you don't, then you're really messed up" but "it's like airing your dirty laundry. You don't want people to come and say, "You obviously can't manage things," or "What's happening?"." She saw literature as providing a venue for "getting it out instead of keeping it in." Kinsella's pretense in having an inside perspective became exploitive because he was poking fun at something he has seen but "he hasn't experienced; he doesn't know" (3.1.3; 07.04.03). And yet, Kinsella managed to create the illusion that he did know, knew enough to convince Aboriginal readers that he was Aboriginal, or the fact that he was not Aboriginal did not matter; he could write persuasively as if he was. Margot's bringing of Kinsella, a favorite author, into doubt involved contending with complex issues to which her literacy autobiography and identity were closely connected. Margot's fascination with Kinsella's motivations was akin to her being drawn to J. R. R. Tolkien's Gollum: "I liked Smeagol, Gollum, because he's a complex character. There's good and bad in him. I like the struggle that he goes through" (3.1.1; 04.02.03). This complexity in turn echoed Margot's struggle to think through those "spaces where the pieces don't quite meet" (Grumet, 1981, p. 122) in her commitment to Aboriginal voice, her own experiences as an "urbanized Native" and her literature choices for herself and the classroom. Doubt disrupts memory by forcing teachers to rethink the sources of their attachments.

### *Contradictions*

As the reader of the data from the interviews, literacy autobiographies and literature circles, I could discern certain “interstices” or cracks where the pieces of the teacher’s story did not quite meet (Grumet, 1981, p. 122). These cracks are important because they signify places of disjuncture in which awareness can arise: questions, doubts, insights, memories; the memories often came in the form of “counter-memories,” or memories to that point, forgotten that countered a previous impression. This notion of “counter-memory” is connected to Foucault’s (1977) notion of literature as inscribed with “the history of our otherness” (Bouchard, 1977, p. 8). The themes that Foucault was preoccupied with were “violence, transgression, madness, sexuality, death and finitude” (Bouchard, 1977, p. 8). Morrison’s (1992) idea of literature as “racialized” is also a form of counter-memory. The literature speaks of a Black presence in American society but that speaking is muffled because of the history of oppression and a society’s failure to adequately confront that history.

What evidence can be marshaled to show whether teachers themselves addressed these contradictions? Three kinds of contradictions are evident in the data: 1) those that teachers noticed and addressed, for example, through remembering a “counter-memory”; 2) those that stayed as contradictions, neither addressed nor covered over; and 3) those that were covered over; filled, as it were, with a compelling explanation based in the teacher’s patterns of interpretation and therefore unlikely to be as easily dislodged. As I argue in the following section (“Attachment”), these “contradictions” constitute the starting-points from which learning needs to proceed for that particular teacher and therefore they play a significant role in

learning. A finding of the study was that learning occurred along these fractures. The following table summarizes the recurring contradictions. In the first column, the poles of the contradiction are identified. The second column identifies ways in which teachers themselves recognized the contradiction. The third column identifies ways in which the study's context or the researcher contributed to recognition of contradictions. Since the study was designed within a learner-centred approach, the elements of the third column could become part of a teacher's learning. Evidence is provided in the following chapter of how teachers appropriated some of the study's strategies.

Table 3

*Contradictions in Teacher Learning Processes*

Contradictions	Contexts or sources for awareness (Teacher-directed)	Contexts or sources for awareness (With help of researcher)
Conscious use of discourse of "difference"; <i>Attachment to memories or texts that contradict that discourse</i>	Tapping memory; Counter-memory; Re-reading of literacy autobiography, 3-way journal, interviews	Prompts; Juxtaposition of familiar/unfamiliar texts
Awareness of Aboriginal peoples as "contemporary" or "modern"; <i>Failure to recognize myth of Vanishing Indian</i>	Attentiveness to differences in language, plot, setting, characterization between literature written by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children's authors.	Prompts; Juxtaposition of familiar texts with Aboriginal content with less familiar texts by Aboriginal authors; Juxtaposition of "same" story by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors
Looking for "authentic" stories with "First Nations" content; <i>Equating "authentic" First Nations literature only with stories written and/or illustrated by First Nations authors</i>	Literature circle discussions among Aboriginal educators; Identifying who the author is; Literacy autobiography; Doubt cast on the books teachers once attached to	Prompts; Juxtaposing books by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors; Choosing a genre (eg. fairy tales) and finding examples of Aboriginal perspective
Teacher role as neutral; <i>Teacher committed to social justice or social responsibility</i>	Bracketing (practice of not foregrounding teacher beliefs so as to support student learning)	Prompts

Since my own theoretical framework has leaned in Grumet's (1981) direction of looking for those "interstices where the light shines through," all of the above elements within the table are addressed in the dissertation, especially in the last three chapters; cross-references have been created back to this table. Here I will provide an elaboration on two elements not explained elsewhere, one drawn from a teacher-directed ("teacher as learner") source and the other from a researcher-directed source.

### *Counter-Memory*

Counter-memory began with a "tapping of memory" process and was facilitated by the context of the study: the writing and discussion of the literacy autobiographies, the interviews, the juxtaposition of familiar with less familiar texts and literature discussion of those texts with other teachers and the researcher. Counter-memory remains a teacher-directed learning process, though, in that the tapping of memory occurs against the teacher's "landscape of learning," which involves teachers choosing whether to "think aloud" what they are remembering. Phrases like "Come to think of it" or "Now that you mention it" signaled that teachers were making connections between memories that they had already articulated and ones that until that point, seemed to have been either forgotten or deemed irrelevant. Counter-memory, as the name suggests, consists in bringing forward some detail, experience or memory of an often-heard word or phrase that causes the teacher to re-think the connections that she has been making so far. For instance, Faye recounted the following memories in succession. Some of these passages have already been quoted in the dissertation in other contexts but are replicated here to show the associative and critical process. All excerpts are cited from 4.2.4, 23.05.03.

Faye grew up in BC's Interior, which involved traveling from a cattle ranch in "the boonies" to "shop once a week" in the closest major town:

We went by the Indian reservation. As you come into town, it's right there.

And years later, I heard that there had been all kinds of abuse going on at that place and I couldn't help to think to myself that all those years when we drove by there, that that was going on for those children and what a terrible thing, and we didn't even really realize that. We weren't aware. It was as if they were a different part of the world.

She then recalled her parents' "paternalistic sort of view" and how they perceived First Nations people as "not at all ...[pause]... on an equal plane", which led to reflecting back on the Aboriginal men who her father had employed:

They [my parents] offered work to them and we often had lots of First Nations people working on the ranch or at my father's sawmill. I can remember one person who spent a lot of time with us, and had come to us as an older teenager. Even in hard times, he would stay on. He battled alcohol and other substance abuse in his own life but he was such a wonderful person. He was almost like an uncle to me. He helped take care of us kids.

Faye then reframes this memory of attachment within the broader context of recognizing why the relationship only went so far:

My parents didn't have a very . . . and they're now in their seventies and eighties, and they had the old world attitude . . . very discriminatory. So it was hard to break away from that . . . But I think back to lots of things, that when I go home to visit my parents, those kinds of comparisons do come up . . . we

were, as children, encouraged not to have conversation and contact with the working men, because they were rough and uncouth and beneath our standard, according to my mother. So, we didn't get to know them. If we had, we might have heard some of the things that went on there and been able to speak out, but they weren't considered someone that we should get to know.

The crux of the memory is Faye making the association between the men that worked for her father and the residential school. Her focus on the residential school was in turn prompted by the reading of an excerpt from Olsen's (2001) No Time to Say Goodbye, which is based on the experiences of Tsartlip people in the Kuper Island Residential School. Faye once mentored a First Nations preservice teacher whose father was a hereditary chief in Kuper Island; she remembered how this teacher was reticent on the subject of the family's history with the residential school. The counter-memory is of her parents' paternalistic attitudes, which she describes in terms similar to those Faye used in the literature discussion to criticise the nuns' attitude: "I sense the same kind of contempt, superior attitude, from the narrator or the nuns, in the case of No Time to Say Goodbye [as from the boys in Coral Island] (LC4; 21.05.03). What role did the researcher's play in this process of remembering?"

#### *Examples of Prompts*

The power of prompts to encourage remembering and thinking cannot be underestimated. No prompt is ever straightforward or innocent in merely eliciting what participants would already bring forward on their own without another's assistance. Clearly, the person listening to another's words and choosing the next prompt plays a central role. Researchers want rich qualitative data when they are

conducting interviews, and so one of their motivations is to use wisely the time that the participant has granted by making the interview a good one. A good interview happens when the participant develops, connects and thinks through ideas aloud. An interviewer can tell when a participant is being reticent or holding back; the answers are clipped or perfunctory, with little or no elaboration, or more precisely, the participant is showing resistance to participating in “the dialogue game” (Burbules, 1993), to go back to a notion of Burbules’ introduced in the Preface. By definition, a prompt belongs to a series of typical open-ended questions or phrases that interviewers and researchers use to provoke response, such as “What did you think of...?” or “Tell me more about...” Obviously, in the context of an interview, even these generic prompts can be strategically placed just at the right moment to encourage expansion or deeper reflection. The stated purpose of the interviews in my study was to encourage teacher reflection, therefore as much as feasible, I came prepared to interviews having re-read the literature circle transcripts and previous interviews with that teacher. I say as much as feasible, because depending on when the interview was scheduled, the literature circle transcripts may or may not have been already transcribed. In addition to drawing on generic prompts, then, I also prompted the teacher based on what he/she was saying or had previously said. Throughout the study, teachers consistently remarked on the power of these prompts to induce reflection. Three examples of prompting follow:

*Example 1: Encouraging teachers to “take back” their own words*

Teresa: In the circle, at the end, I asked people to reflect on what difference the circles were making and you shared that it was making you more

reflective, and you even shared that it was “forcing” you to be more reflective [Isabel laughs], so I wondered where that was coming from and in what ways you felt that push of being reflective and what directions it was going in.

Isabel: [pause] I’m not a real avid reader but just in terms of the people around the table, the questions that you’ve been asking have been making us think. I can’t speak for the others, but they’ve been making me think. (4.4.3; 28.04.03)

*Example 2: Encouraging teachers to connect back to their literacy autobiography*

Teresa: So what have you been thinking about since the last session?

Frances: What have I been thinking about? Well, after the last session, I was thinking about whether or not I thought the writing in Indian Captive was racist...

Teresa: So the racist part, where did that come from?

Frances: Because there was a comment made at the group whether it was blatantly racist. Whether the descriptions—well, the Indians, they were called—whether describing them as “savages” was racist or whether it was a realistic feeling based on the actions of what happened. Just wondering where one draws the line and where does that label become appropriate and where not.

Teresa: What does “racist” mean to you? What would it imply?

Frances: Well, “racist” would imply judgment, an unfair judgment based on someone’s race. And whether that book is racist from the author’s point of view, and whether the actions and judgments were racist.

(...)

Teresa: So did you come to any conclusions? What thoughts did you have?

Frances: I don’t think that the comments were race-.... I don’t think the comments were unjustified, from the author’s point of view. I think the attitude that these people were to be feared, were to be judged to be “savage,” that they did kidnap people and kill people, is true because it’s balanced out in the rest of the text with an appreciation of why that actually happened and also an appreciation later of the strengths in that culture. So I don’t think they were.

Teresa: So what do you learn from that book in terms of cross-cultural relationships? What did you take from there?

Frances: I took from that, even as a child, that people’s attitudes can change. That when one gets to know somebody, or gets to understand a culture, your whole point of view can change. And I didn’t think of it in those terms as a child, but I do remember having the sense of people that [what] this woman had feared, she came to love and she came to understand and that the differences between the white culture and the First Nations culture made sense, taken in context. I remember being struck by that. I don’t know if I could have actually articulated it as a child but I was really struck by it as a child.

(...)

Teresa: So you've been thinking about this book, Indian Captive, which was your favorite

Frances: One of my favorites; long-term favorites.

Teresa: How did that feel to have that label attached to it?

Frances: "I don't think someone should say that about my favorite book!"

[feigns shock] That was sort of: "Oh, well!" [feigns surprise] But then I thought about it, and I've been playing around with it, and just decided that no, I don't agree. That's okay! (2.1.3; 23.04.03)

*Example 3: Encouraging teachers to look for contradictions, here between discourse and lived experience*

Teresa: Talking about town life, were there any parts of it that as a child you really resisted or were critical of, do you recall?

Helen: [Pause] No, I really loved it. I really loved it. It was primitive and people had to help other people. A lot of it was controlled by the seasons, which I really miss because there were so much inherent periods of joy just built into the natural flow of things. I really miss that even now. We were further enough out from the city that I could get on my bike and literally ride out onto the bald Prairie. I really liked having that access. The people were a community. If somebody was in trouble, they would come and ask for help. And they would get it.

Teresa: Do you still have that relationship to those people or that place today?

Helen: No. I have a relationship still to my mother's home town. I don't have that many relatives left. But I go there as often as I can. That would be my heart's home now, I guess you would say.

Teresa: Do you see any influence between those relationships and the network that you've made around yourself here?

Helen: In terms of the kind of people that I choose to be with? For sure. My chosen relationships tend to be those that are closer and more supportive. By the same token, there were some things that the family deemed very private. And I've retained that sense of privacy. It was a code that we were given and we didn't break away from that. The one thing I regret about those days in Regina was my feelings about the First Nations people. I didn't understand them. Of course their situations were ... We had one family in the school, they lived in a hovel, it really was a hovel, and they had a lot of kids and the kids appeared tough to me, because they had to just get along with each other, and they wore clothes that were falling apart. I don't think I was very understanding or kind to them. I mean I regret that, and I regret not having access to a greater cultural diversity. We didn't have anybody who was Oriental unless it was some old guy with a corner store. So that was all very stereotypical stuff. And we didn't see Black people or Hindu people. I think where we are now—here—I am getting it all now. I think some of my attitudes that are positive about people in general might have developed quicker had there been more exposure at an earlier age. The thing is so locked into the "Great White Culture." And "Wasp" to boot. (1.1.1, 16.01.03)

### *Juxtaposition*

Several teachers continued to think about books juxtaposed in the literature circle long after we had discussed them. In the final interview, for instance, Diane came back to Raven and Snipe. Diane was struck by the Clutesi (1967/1994) version, which sounded “real” whereas Cameron’s (1991) was “just” a story (4.6.3; 20.06.03). This was a point that had been brought out in the literature discussion, in which Cameron’s was described as more like “a conventional folk tale” (Isabel; LC4; 03.04.03) and Clutesi’s contained more “mystery” (Isabel; Terry; LC4; 03.04.03) and “ceremony” (Diane; LC4; 03.04.03).

Teresa: Which one stands out?

Diane: Oh, remember when we were doing the one with the salmon and the little piper?

Teresa: Raven and Snipe.

Diane: That was the one that really hit me because I thought, here there are two different stories and I thought the stories would be equally interesting, but one of them just seemed so real. The other one just seemed kind of “story.”  
(...)

Diane: It hit me that I really have to work at doing this; this has to work for the kids in the same way, because that’s how they’ll get drawn in and a lot of out of it. Instead of just reiterating the story. (4.6.3; 20.06.03)

Like Diane, some teachers reflected deeply on the juxtapositions created between books in the circles. Other teachers created their own juxtapositions, such as Terry who, upon discovering Slipperjack’s (2001) Little Voice, implicitly juxtaposed

it with his “touchstone”, Ballantyne’s (1977) Coral Island; the notion of a “touchstone” is explained in the next section, under “Attachments,” but briefly defined, is the measure against which other experiences or books are judged. Terry found that Slipperjack’s book addressed a broader list of criteria for what he was looking for in a book at that time than Ballantyne’s did. Some teachers brought an already-formed disposition for seeing books in relationship to one another.

Throughout the study, Margot, for instance, had been running Kinsella neck and neck with Thomas King, an author who uses similar techniques to Kinsella (parody, irony, exaggeration) but is Aboriginal. Yet that ongoing juxtaposition only emerged clearly in the final interview. Virginia recounted her practice of embellishing stories with her own experiences and how the children loved when she did that; however, she hesitated to do that in an Aboriginal literary context. An implicit juxtaposition was continually at work, then, between her own story and that of the stories she read. As part of a mini book-talk, I introduced the literature group to Garay’s (1997) The Long Road, and offered it as a book for teachers to borrow. The story tells of a boy from Nicauranga whose family life is disrupted when he goes with his mother to visit his grandmother and on their return, the village has been occupied by soldiers; the villagers, we presume, have either fled or been killed. His mother makes a difficult journey with the boy across the border to safety and eventually they reach Canada, where they make their new home. Virginia said: “I think I had a little more success [with my students] with the book, The Long Road” (4.5.4; 03.06.03). She was able to engage them in discussion around questions that she and the children could connect with: “I kept bringing them back to times in their lives: Have you ever been in a

place where you've had to go to somewhere totally strange? A new place where you don't know anything or anybody or anything about the culture?"(4.5.4; 03.06.03).

Virginia's re-experiencing of the fears and anxieties that she experienced as a child in coming to a new country are seamlessly interwoven with the questions she uses to prompt the children.

Juxtaposition is a common intertextual strategy for understanding texts and our relationships to them (Genette, 1982). However, certain insights were forthcoming because of the juxtaposition of familiar with unfamiliar texts. Lenski's (1941) Indian Captive tells the story of Mary Jemison who was kidnapped by the Seneca while Sterling's (1992) My Name is Seepeetza tells of a young girl's experiences in residential school and is based on the diaries Sterling kept while she was in residential school. Whereas Frances was struck by the fact that Lenski's retelling was based on a true account ("Actually in the back of the book, I think they give some source references"—LC2; 27.03.03), the juxtaposition of Mary Jemison's "true" story with that of Shirley Sterling's threw into relief for others the adventure story structure embedded in Lenski's retelling of Jemison's life. Noticing the adventure genre was continuous with observations this group of teachers had made previously, when they had reviewed the notes from their literacy autobiographies.

Ruth: It was very, just the little sections [that I read] were very emotional; captivating. I just ignored your [Teresa's] little highlights and I thought, "This is good! How come nobody showed this book to me earlier?" That was my reaction. It appears to be quite the adventure.

Frances: Uh-hmm. And she finds out...

Ruth: It's hard to believe it's true, though.

(...)

Teresa: How does it [Sterling's] compare to the Mary Jemison story?

Marjorie: Well, it seems to me that the Mary Jemison story, from the bit I've read, feels very light compared to this because this is so modern. I'm sure it's not [light] but this one feels more like a story than the real thing.

Ruth: Yes, this one almost seemed like make believe; pretend. Just a story.

Whereas this feels like a diary. Like The Diary of Anne Frank or something. It's somebody's real journal. (LC2; 27.03.03)

The fact that two groups of white teachers (LC2, LC4) independently came to similar conclusions in comparing "Aboriginal" stories by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors is important and shortly, I suggest why certain juxtapositions of stories may have been more potent than others.

The teachers saw the strategies used within the literature circles as a modeling of possible approaches that they as readers could use with stories or that, as teachers, they could use with students. However, teachers sometimes resisted the juxtaposition of older with newer texts. Simone thought it was unfair to put Indian Captive side by side with My Name is Seepetza on the grounds that they were from two different historical periods. She was thus applying a hermeneutic criterion similar to that of Schleiermacher, who said that authors need to be studied in their own context (Gadamer, 1975/1988, p. 166) whereas the study had proposed imaginative continuity through "literary formation," or the idea that books in one's past could inform one's selection of books in the present:

Well, I think there's evidence of flagrant racism in both of them so there are some strong comparisons to be made between the two. But it is hard to compare them. It's going back in history and bringing it forward to compare it. One can't do that, I don't think. (LC2; 27.03.03)

In asserting that both books contained “flagrant racism,” I asked Simone to clarify what she meant. In the back of my own mind, I was reminded of the B.C. Ministry of Education's implicit juxtaposition of Sterling's (1992) My Name is Seepeetza with Buchan's (1972) Copper Sunrise, discussed in chapter four:

Well I mean the whole Indian Act and the taking of First Nations children to put them into residential schools was a flagrant act of racism in and of itself. In the other one, there's racism on both sides, and that isn't the point of the book. The point of the book is to tell the story. This is about this one person and is about her story but is in the context of a story that was true for many, many, many people. So it's hard to take something that is really of a different genre, really, and make those comparisons. (LC2; 27.03.03)

Simone's hermeneutic proposition was made more complex by the fact that she did draw a comparison, one that rested on a distinction that seemed to work intuitively but was difficult to articulate and therefore maintain, namely, that one book tells a story to make a point about racism whereas the other story tells about racism but is told to just tell a story. Her distinction plays with the same elements brought out in the literature discussion but left unchallenged, namely, that one story can be more “true” than another. A common thread throughout the study was that contemporary Aboriginal stories based on real events like residential school are more “true” because

they struck a chord with Canadian readers in British Columbia, in which many of the residential schools were located. Reading books such as My Name is Seepeetza “pushes buttons” by playing on political sympathies or mixed feelings. It was harder for teachers to read My Name is Seepeetza as a story, and the juxtaposing of it with another story apparently no less true (Mary Jemison’s) threw into relief that historical circumstance of the reader.

Some juxtapositions of books generated more focused discussion (see Table 4), the reason being, I believe, that the particular juxtaposition of books tapped into deeply-held beliefs or “constructions” and therefore engaged teachers’ learning that had already been instigated through the literacy autobiography and its discussion:

Table 4

*The Tapping of Belief through the Juxtaposition of Books*

<b>Juxtaposition</b>	<b>Belief/Construction Tapped</b>	<b>Literature Circles</b>
Raven and Snipe (Clutesi)—Raven and Snipe (Cameron)	Every story basically tells the same story.	LC4
Coral Island—No Time to Say Goodbye	Freedom and oppression are unrelated in the world.	LC4
The Extraordinary Egg-- Holding	With discovery comes the power to name.	LC2
The Composition—Roses in my Carpet or No Time to Say Goodbye	Childhood is a time of innocence.	LC1, LC2, LC3, LC4

The juxtapositions challenged certain shibboleths:

1) Every story basically tells the same story. This refers to the idea that stories, though they can be foreign or strange, still sound familiar. The juxtaposition of Clutesi’s (Nuu-chah-nulth) story with Cameron’s Westernized one challenged that

assumption. Whereas one story was transparent to teachers' understanding, the other raised questions that they could not find the answers to, even through close reading;

2) Freedom and oppression are unrelated in the world. This corresponds to the belief, often articulated in major North American newspapers, that freedom in one context is unrelated to oppression in another. "Problems" always happen elsewhere. The spirit of adventure in *Coral Island* has nothing to do with the oppression that Aboriginal children endured in residential school;

3) With discovery comes the power to name. The juxtaposition of the two stories challenged the assumption that we can name what we see as if every new thing is a "terra nullis" (i.e. the frogs' naming the crocodile a "chicken" in Leo Lionni's The Extraordinary Egg). This juxtaposition was particularly powerful because a familiar story was read in a new way because of the juxtaposition;

4) Childhood is a time of innocence. Teachers had difficulty relinquishing the idea that childhood and innocence are one and the same, even while they recognized the children's heroism and insight to see beyond "the immediate." Through the writing of the literacy autobiographies, it had become apparent that teachers had all had experiences as children of divining more than adults would have credited them with. Yet for an adult whose primary interest is to protect children from harm, childhood and innocence cannot be sundered because it is too painful. We discussed in LC3 (the Aboriginal teachers' group) how painful or harsh elements have been cleansed from children's stories.

All four of these constructions are central to Western culture. These constructions are also integral to teaching, going back to an earlier chapter on the close ties between teaching, culture, society and teachers as “storied intellectuals.”

### *Subterfuge*

Barry’s reading of Rankin’s (1998) Wow, It’s Great Being a Duck as a “coming out” story was not a typical reading. Nor was it a reading “against the grain,” which this strategy seemed to resemble. Instead, the story was read on a literal and normative level (about a duck who learns that home is where he belongs) and was supplemented by a reading in which the duck resists then comes to accept who he really is. Teachers coming at a story from a location other than the mainstream often infused that literature with their own meaning in such a way as to not directly challenge a mainstream interpretation but create an alternative reading of the same events. In other words, the author’s construction of the story was not critiqued, which marked a shift from the debate about authorship, representation and authenticity. Rather, the narrow range of possible readings of events was expanded. This can be a particularly useful strategy in teaching, in which teachers can use “mainstream” books but with “alternative” readings. Maxine’s reading of E.W. White’s (1952) Charlotte’s Web and Laura Ingalls Wilder’s (1953) Little House on the Prairie as exemplary of Aboriginal family values provides another example. By contrast, Tom’s reading of Enid Blyton’s (1949) “The Golliwog” as fraught with sexual and racial overtones provides an example of reading against the grain, in which the story elements are not left to stand as credible but become transparent to a knowing critical perspective that replaces the story.

Another form of subterfuge is the way some teachers talked about introducing stories that otherwise might meet resistance. For example, Yvonne used her position as an Aboriginal parent to introduce fairy tales from an Aboriginal perspective to her son's teacher. Isabel was unsure about whether she would be comfortable with reading aloud Khan's (1998) Roses in my Carpets when the ending was ambiguous, with its suggestions of death as well as hope. However, we discussed venues during the school year when such taboo topics as death become acceptable, such as Remembrance Day, and when such books could be safely slipped in. Subterfuge becomes necessary for some teachers when certain interpretations of children's and young adult literature become commonly accepted through curriculum guides and tacit truths regarding early childhood development.

### *Bracketing*

Bracketing refers to a teacher's practice of setting aside their own personal beliefs so as to allow room for students to develop their own ideas and opinions. This kind of teacher move is often associated with being falsely apolitical through the avoidance of controversy or the belief that one's own views as a white European teacher, for example, are part of an invisible and raceless norm. Teachers in the study could think of teachers who deliberately avoided controversy, including addressing "multicultural" literature. However, several teachers in the study struggled with how to remain committed and socially aware while allowing space for students' learning. Teachers who used the strategy of bracketing had discerned that teaching involves interpretation and that acknowledging this was important even if, in the moment, it could easily be forgotten. Helen, for example, exhibited a wry self-irony in

recounting the following episode: “I catch myself being the Reverend Helen ... we were talking about the hierarchy of life and I got onto the classics and [one of my students] said, “Can we get on with the lesson?” “This is the lesson, kid, this is life!” “Oh, okay” [lots of laughter]” (LC1; 25.03.03). Helen’s remarks prompted Tom to say that “we have to let it be an exploration for the individual reader, a process of discovery for them, instead of telling them what the larger context is.” Despite his strong political opinions on oppression and injustice, he had developed a strong philosophy of what learning involves. That teaching philosophy consisted in allowing learners to come to their own understanding in their own ways:

If you give the background, I would rather let them discover for themselves instead of framing it for them. I don’t want to frame it for them. It’s like you can’t assign things in a vacuum either ... so you have to try to be undogmatic about a lot of these things because situations aren’t black and white. (LC1; 25.03.03)

### *Meta-awareness*

Some teachers demonstrated a capacity to step outside of the literature circle topic to point out constructions even while we were engaged in perpetuating them. These points were usually not taken up by others in the group, nevertheless they indicate a strategy of meta-awareness on the part of the teacher. For instance, when discussing Lois Lenski’s (1941) retelling of the Mary Jemison story, and how we thought Lenski informed herself on the ways of the Seneca people, teachers were stumped, saying that they did not have any knowledge with which to compare Lenski’s. Neither did Ruth, but she offered the following perspective that related to

how memory and stories are constructed. Lenski's tale is a retelling of Jemison's, which is cobbled together from memory and various secondary sources. Ruth said: "When you think about your own remembrance from your childhood and how some things that you think you remember are really what you've been told when you're growing up, so how much has her [Jemison's] memory been actual and [how much] embellished and changed?" (LC2; 27.03.03).

In the final literature circle, Terry drew attention to his confusion around whether in a book club, one is supposed to engage in stories for pleasure, or read them with a critical eye:

it's kind of interesting because in doing this process, and listening to other people going, [whispers] "Do I know what I am doing?" And every time reflecting on that and coming up with something.

What I came up with was that sometimes we talk and say that the little girl [in the story] is doing this and this, you know, it's from her perspective . . . . But then what I did was go, okay that's getting into the story and looking at it right from the children's point of view . . . . And then coming out and looking at it from the author's point of view: What's she [the author] doing? What's her thing? What's she writing this book for? And will she develop both sides? (LC4; 05.06.03)

Terry noticed that the mode of engaging with the story changed when the story changed. Some stories we engaged in more from the point of view of the child or as if

we ourselves were like children reading a story; others we stood away from and critiqued.

#### Attachment

Frances was fascinated with why Molly stayed with the Seneca people even when she had a chance to rejoin white society. One of Frances' sources of attachment to the book in spite of the suggestion in the literature circle that it might be racist was that:

I didn't think of it in those terms as a child, but I do remember having the sense that [what] this woman had feared, she came to love and she came to understand and that the differences between the white culture and the First Nations culture made sense, taken in context. I remember being struck by that. I don't know if I could have actually articulated it as a child but I was really struck by it. (2.1.3; 23.04.03).

The role that attachment plays in multicultural teacher education has been largely overlooked, with only passing statements such as Alcoff's (2000) on the need of even a white teacher "to feel a connection to community, to a history, and to a human project larger than his or her life" (p. 264). Other educational scholars have argued that intuition and care play an essential role in learning generally (Noddings, 1984) while empirical research has been conducted on affective factors in learning and literacy (Athey, 1985). Writing from within the discipline of philosophy, Zwicky (1992) has argued that emotion has been systematically sidelined within a theoretical tradition rooted in mind and reason. Within this study, Greene's (1965, 1978, 1995) phenomenological version of reader response has provided grounds for suggesting

that attachment to certain works, genres or authors arises out of lived experience, including the lived experiences of reading and literary interpretation. Attachment, in the context of this study, specifically means attachment to memories and experiences that come to constitute the landscape against which reading and interpretation then take place.

From the re-reading of the data, the following four strategies or approaches emerged as ways in which teachers connected to literature: bonding, touchstones, learned literary responses and classroom applications. Bonding describes the context in which connections are made and, conversely, indicates the grounds for resistance to connecting. Although resistance plays a valuable role in learning, it can also induce paralysis and cause teachers to turn away from subject matter. Why do teachers connect more easily with certain things than with others? Matthew Arnold popularized the term “touchstone” in literary discourse as the best of what has been thought and said (Eells, 1955), and the word has been adopted by Nodelman (1985, 1986, 1989) to itemize the “best” stories in children’s literature. In this study, touchstones refer to those books, authors, memories or ideas that stand out for teachers and become the measure of their enjoyment or rejection of new ideas. By identifying those touchstones, teachers can better understand how their literary responses are constructed and consider other perspectives. A learned literary response is a habitual way in which a teacher has learned to respond to literature, either through training or inclination or both. In this section, I will discuss how those responses can be turned to advantage in multicultural contexts. Classroom application involves the continuity of teachers’ lived experiences, including their experiences

with literature, with the community they help create in the classroom. Bonding clearly plays a role here as well, in which teachers will often identify closely with literature by way of particular students' responses, as well as gauge the worth of the text or their teaching by how well students engage with the lesson.

### *Bonding*

Bonding was central to teachers' literacy formations. The relationship of bonding to literacy and reading emerged in each literature circle as an outcome of the writing and discussion of the literacy autobiographies. In LC1, reading was described as like taking "a nice hot bath." In LC4, it was an experience of "falling in love" with books or conversely, of being turned off from a book. While some scholars have looked at the role of identification in reader response and how resistance is tied to a lack of identification (Bogdan, 1992), less commonly do researchers ask teachers to examine why particular books stand out more than others. Teachers linked certain books or literacy events with experiences that were either enjoyable or distasteful. For example, several teachers were able to describe in fairly close detail the conditions under which they read: Helen soaking up Anne of Green Gables (Montgomery, 1908) while submersed in the aroma of Desert Flower, Lee hanging upside down off the side of her bed under the covers with a nightlight reading a book, Margot snuggling beside her mother on the couch and enjoying "her time" with her mother (3.1.2; 27.02.03). Recalling something that Jeannette said in the literature circle, Margot explained the significance of bonding to literacy experiences: "When you're reading together...what did Jeannette say? When you give a book, you're giving a gift of knowledge? But I think when you read together, it's a bigger gift. It's a gift of sharing

time together. Sharing something enjoyable together” (3.1.2; 27.02.03). Bonding is associated with being in the “comfort zone” (LC4; 03.04.03). Why does a teacher bond with one book and not another? Often teachers themselves cannot say why one book appeals over another. Usually the reason lies in memory, particularly a memory that goes back to childhood or reminds the teacher of a time of childhood. Petra, for example, looked for stories that connected with “village life” of picturesque southwestern England of a childhood she would have liked to have had there (4.1.1; 26.03.03) while Marjorie hearkened back to the landscape of her childhood in England as well:

For the longest time, I often (I may have told you this before since the same stories pop up) liked stories or fiction set in England, like the collections of books my parents would send me about England, countryside, calendars. I love the area I grew up in. I’d feel a bond with this part of the world that I scrabbled about and rolled in as a kid. And the literature falls into that too, because it describes [southwestern England]; it’s very soft, gentle, and the common land in the woods, fields, pretty towns. I was appalled by the architecture when I first came to Canada. (2.5.2; 14.03.03)

Only later, when she was chastised by a friend, did Marjorie begin reading Canadian literature.

That appeal is a compelling factor in book selection as well as in a teacher’s approach to a literary work was made clear in the study, to such a degree that bonding interfered from being able to see a book in a different light. This was particularly the case when more than one teacher bonded with the book, and their responses within

the circle fed off one another. In such situations, my own preferences as researcher and individual also often came into play. For example, Rankin's (1998) Wow, It's Great Being a Duck evoked an endearing response so overwhelming that discussing the juxtaposition of this book with McKissack's (1986) Flossie and the Fox became a real challenge. I found myself squirming as the conversation fell into an accolade of Rankin's book, almost page by page, illustration by illustration. Yet I myself found the book unremarkable, except for its relationship to MacKissack's, which I found to be a much more intriguing treatment of the proverbial relationship between a child and an animal constructed as dangerous, namely a fox. However, I was also aware of my own bias and tried not to steer the conversation any more than I normally might have in another context; my role in prompting conversation had increasingly receded once teachers had developed a trust and bond with one another within the circle to initiate their own turn-taking. As teachers talked about the two stories, they put themselves in the place of seeing the story through the eyes of a child except that this child was also an adult who could appreciate all of the story's subtler elements. The excerpt begins with Rankin's book:

Ruth: If he had really been a smart fox, he would have gone for the eggs because he would have known that foxes are known to...

Barry: It's like all villains; they gloat too much.

Frances: But I like this: "It's tough being a snail..."

[sounds of commiseration for the snail by all three teachers]

Barry: Yeah, poor snail!

Ruth: Then they could write a book

Frances: About the snail, that's right.

Frances: [imagining the story] He was in his little shell and saw a duck!

Teresa: So what about the fox in the other story? Or what were your impressions generally of the other story?

Frances: [pointing to the book cover of McKissack's book] I love her face!

Barry: Oh yes!

Frances: And the little eyes.

Ruth: You can tell what kind of child she is by the look in her face. Just goes with her baiting the fox.

Teresa: What kind of child is she?

Frances: Well, she put her doll in the hollow log. That's what I wrote.

Ruth: Nobody could see it, touch it, play with it while she's away.

Frances: That's right!

Barry: [laughing] I didn't think of that.

Frances: Oh yes, she didn't just leave it, she knew where to keep that doll.

Teresa: She's smarter than the fox?

Frances: Oh, yeah, definitely.

Ruth: Great twist on Red Riding Hood. (LC2; 24.04.03)

My question about the fox is ignored but the invitation to respond to McKissack's book is not. As in the dialogue around the Rankin story, the teachers enter into a child's point of view except that unlike the Rankin story, teachers also find it easier to step back from this story and notice, for example, that it could be seen as a "twist on Red Riding Hood"; Ruth is the one who makes the metanarrative observations.

A short time later, Frances and Ruth reiterate that they would not hesitate to buy both books for the classroom but single out Rankin's; "kids would love this [Rankin's]." "Why?" I asked, reasoning that my probe would elicit why teachers loved it. What ensued was a conversation largely focused on the book's artistic elements and how children would not feel threatened in emulating the drawing in the duck book. Ruth did read the book to her class and ironically, the book made no impression at all. Rather than being disappointed, she was delighted and intrigued by the idea that they were not: "the books that appealed to me more were not necessarily the books that the children enjoyed... They just thought the duck was stupid... Which is kind of neat because it shows that I cannot project my own likes or dislikes ... that made me feel pleased. That I wasn't pushing them to one type of literature. That when I read it, it didn't come across that I liked it or not" (2.25; 04.06.03). The experience of bonding with the book, "publicly" with other teachers, later became the grounding for a stepping back from her own attachment.

Bonding can work the other way too, by endearing a teacher to a "multicultural" book that they otherwise would not have encountered or chosen voluntarily, such as Terry's "falling in love" with Little Voice (Slipperjack, 2001) as he had done on other occasions with Pippi Longstocking (Lindgren, 1950) and Coral Island (Ballantyne, 1977). Often the bonding with "multicultural" books was a qualitatively different kind of experience than the falling in love with familiar books. Whereas reading familiar books felt cosy or comfortable, like looking in a mirror, the attachment to such stories as The Composition, Roses in my Carpet or No Time to Say Goodbye was to an experience of being awoken. Once such an awakening

happens, teachers become receptive to exploring memories and becoming open to other insights.

### *Touchstones*

A “touchstone” within the study, but also as the name implies, is a cherished or long-held interpretation of a book, memory or experience. Only a finite number of touchstones stood out for any one teacher, and the most enduring were those rooted in childhood or of such an enduring character that challenging the “touchstones” amounted to an assault on a belief as cherished as childhood. The significance of touchstones cannot be overestimated. Whether a teacher is aware of them or not, these touchstones comprise familiar markers within one’s “landscape of learning” (Greene, 1978a). Teachers’ recognition of their touchstones often happened in the final interview, in which they were asked to re-read their literacy autobiography and triple-entry journal in light of three prompts: one thing they noticed; one thing that connected back to their literacy autobiography; one area that they wanted to investigate further. It was the second prompt that turned teachers around, as it were, to look at memory (the literacy autobiography along with the teacher’s recollection of other things he/she had remembered through the interviews and literature discussions) and connect that looking with the present (the 3-way journal, which stood as a record, incomplete but nevertheless documentation, of their on-line responses to literature in the present time). Through that action of re-reading, teachers recognized something about themselves and how they constructed the world through literature.

Helen grappled with becoming and never arriving and in that connection, was fascinated with the crossing of boundaries and all that implies in terms of the gaining

of wisdom, courage or spiritual strength; although outraged by Griffin's (1961) Black like Me, she was nevertheless intrigued to know what knowledge he thought he had carried back. Her relationship with Griffin's book resembled Margot's with Kinsella's, with both "touchstones" symbolizing the paradox of how knowledge and wisdom are accessed.

Barry mentioned The Wind in the Willows (Grahame, 1933) in passing in the literature circle in recalling the first book that he received as a gift. In the final interview, he returned to that book as symbolic of the kinds of conflict that he had encountered in literature in his early reading, and compared it with the difficult situations in which children found themselves in The Composition and Roses in my Carpet, which of all the juxtaposed books, he said, made the deepest impression. For Terry, Coral Island symbolized the epitome of adventure; not absolute freedom, but the freedom to seek out new experiences and travel to different places. His new attachment to Little Voice supplanted Coral Island. Both teachers replaced one touchstone with a new one, yet one that was still linked with the first.

The story of Big Bear, Jeannette's ancestor, was at the centre of her hunger for story when, as a child, her grandmother told her tales, reappeared when a librarian came across a biography of Big Bear and Jeannette gobbled it up, then resurfaced in Jeannette's relationship with her grandchildren. Jeannette has been changing the stories she tells her grandchildren from the ones she told her children. Instead of Rumpelstiltskin and Sleeping Beauty, she has been telling the stories of her ancestors, especially Big Bear. For Yvonne, the fairy tale symbolized a story of disaster: the dressing up of violence, exploitation and patriarchy as fantasy, which becomes a

substitute for human relationships. The touchstone is a story in which childhood was the site of disaster. Fairy tales include stories like Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty but also popular, material culture like McDonalds that keeps us in “la la land.” Like Jeannette, Yvonne has been telling her son different stories than the one she heard and sees perpetuated around her.

While other issues, books or themes were also important to these teachers, my point is simply that at this point in time, these experiences became the central stage pieces in a “story of confrontation” (Greene, 1965, p. 423). Touchstones become the markers that identify the landscape that teachers need to walk back through and encounter if learning is to be dynamic instead of that terrain in the “back of our minds” of which we remain largely unconscious.

#### *Learned Literacy Responses*

Marie Clay (1972), in her theory of beginning reading, talks about “learned wrong responses.” If teachers could develop the observational skills to recognize when a wrong reading behavior is becoming engrained and intervene appropriately, Clay argues, learned wrong responses would be avoided. A learned literacy response, as I am using the phrase, means those habitual ways in which teachers come to read and interpret, without the added connotation of rightness or wrongness. While these ways can be unlearned or supplemented, in transcribing the literature circles, I observed that learned literary responses could be turned around to serve the goal of learning new things. Close reading, for example. Frances was continually quoting passages to support an argument. Not only was Frances a fast and accurate reader, she was a re-reader. Her memory of the books that she read was immaculate. So too,

though, was her memory of her thoughts and impressions during reading, such that once a book had been read, and re-read, and re-read again and again, those impressions were reinforced. I had observed in the literature circle, though, how her impression of the same passage could change if an alternative reading was presented, for example, if someone disagreed with her and said, “Well, I think it says such-and-such.” She would re-read it and stop to think about it again. For instance, through studying the maps provided in newspapers reporting on the United States’ war with Iraq, she began to revise her prior, implicit knowledge of “East” and “West”:

Just before the war, my husband and I were discussing which countries had been Mesopotamia and how you spend all this time as a kid talking about the Tigris River and the Euphrates and the Cradle of Civilization. How many times have you heard that in the last month?! And then it just disappeared after Grade 7 Social Studies. You never heard anything about it until now. At home, we’ve been [asking]: Oh, where does the Euphrates go? I keep poring over all the maps in the newspaper. What an omission for Western culture! No wonder we’re in such a mess, because we just never paid attention to them after 5,000 or 6,000 B.C. (2.1.1; 26.03.03)

### *Classroom Application*

Classroom application is the predilection to become so thoroughly identified with the teacher role that learning becomes for others and not for oneself. Learning is only imaginable within the context of what can be used in the classroom. In other words, learning occurs from the point of view of the professional. The professional looks for new ways to improve their practice, in which practice is defined as the

delivery of a service, the achievement of a mandate or the production of a specified change. Teachers echoed this conceptualization of the teacher when they said that they felt “selfish” for talking about themselves rather than education, schooling or their students or that they anticipated that their participation in the study would primarily benefit students and their personal development as teachers was not the focus.

The kind of “classroom application” that I am referring to, though, occurs in the context of “teacher as learner” learning strategies. This application is a subspecies of an earlier section on “bonding” and describes how certain teachers learn new knowledge by imagining how it might apply to their students. For example, some teachers borrowed multicultural books, read them to their class and in the following interview, reflected on their students’ responses by comparing their own impressions of the book and reasons why they thought students would enjoy it with what actually happened and what they thought about what transpired. Ruth did this consistently over the course of the study. While she anticipated that students would find certain books tedious, she was surprised by the degree of their engagement, thus challenging some of her notions around childhood, “difference” and literature. Margot read and discussed Roses in my Carpets (Khan, 1998) with her young students and likewise concluded that early primary students were capable of much more than we often give them credit for, and that our perceptions as teachers are overly-determined by child psychology theories such as Piaget’s. Virginia, who borrowed the most titles for personal and professional reading, talked at length about her success in generating

discussion about The Long Road (Garay, 1997) in the context of students who listened actively but rarely expressed their thoughts in discussions.

Some teachers reflected on “difference” by recounting student conversations, describing student work or identifying the ethnic composition of their class and how that composition influenced book selection and curriculum. For instance, Helen talked about patterns of interaction among students from different ethnic minorities and speculated as to why those patterns become engrained and what she could do to challenge them. Ruth recounted a conversation she overheard between two students on what colour one of the students was, and the significance of the student self-identifying as white (when the student was not white). Faye reflected on how, though teachers often teach respect for differences, an event like September 11<sup>th</sup> or the war with Iraq can show how deeply polarized racial attitudes are, judging from the kinds of discussions that happen in her classroom. Virginia thought about the roles of empathy and cruelty in childhood and how those played out on the playground. The spark for Tom’s reflections on a topic often began by reflecting on something that he had been just teaching that day or week, such as when he kept coming back to a story he and the class had just read on why it is so important to respect the salmon.

“Stories from the classroom” are like “personal stories” in providing contexts for applied reflection. Such stories, rather than being categorized as detractions from a primary focus on constructions of self and difference, can enhance connections between constructions of difference in lived experience and literary discussion. Both kinds of stories have a common grounding in memory, in which stories are created to explain events and actions (Britton, 1970).

## Conclusion

I see this chapter as one of the most important ones in this dissertation for it describes teachers' own ways of appropriating the subject matter of how constructions of "differences" are created through the telling and reading of stories; by telling and reading, I mean them in their broadest sense as Barthes' (1986) "writerly" and "readerly" modes. This dissertation could be misinterpreted as a celebration of individual or multiple ways of knowing. Rather, the study has tried to address a conundrum within what has proverbially been called "multicultural education," and that problem is teacher resistance, particularly white teacher resistance. This study has looked at the grounds of that resistance, not for the purpose of justifying why it happens and therefore perpetuating a status quo. Instead, I have been concerned by a lack of attention to pedagogy in multicultural teacher education, in particular the move away from a learner-centred pedagogy to teacher- or approach-centred ones, especially when so much is at stake in creating a society in which people can find spaces of belonging. School brings together individual learners from diverse places into a common space for learning. By learning from learners against precisely what "landscapes of learning" (Greene, 1978a) multicultural curricula are being incorporated, valuable lessons can be learned about what learning processes are involved in "entering what one is estranged from" (Morrison, 1992, p. 4) and recognizing the constructions we use to describe that process. This entails reconceiving the teacher as a learner, not absolutely but for the purpose of being allowed to be a learner as well as a teacher. It also involves a shift in perspective, such as the one Morrison made in approaching racism from the point of the view of

the writer rather than the reader. By shifting perspective, new insights can be gained. The chapter identifies how teachers use strategies and approaches of distance and attachment; it is these learning processes that need to be taken into account when creating university courses. This chapter also helps solidify the case for seeing the practicing teacher as a learner, and that more opportunities need to be created in schools and with universities for the kind of professional development that teachers can continue on their own, individually and collectively.

## CHAPTER 7

THE TEACHER AS LEARNER IN INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP CONTEXTS  
(METHODOLOGY III)

How did teacher learning happen in the literature circles? What influence did teachers have on one another's thinking? What kind of learning processes became evident in the interviews? What role did teachers see the researcher playing in their learning throughout the study? In this section I reflect on the significance of the setting to teacher learning, including the significance of the researcher to teachers' learning processes.

Literature Circles

Researchers have analysed the conversations within literature circles by adapting categories arising out of the discourse analysis of Marshall, Smagorinsky and Smith's (1995) work with adult book clubs as well as Flood et al.'s (1994) study with teachers in multicultural book clubs. Although these analyses illuminate patterns in teacher discourse, the coding forces the researcher to place each utterance in only one category, thus turning the emphasis away from teacher learning and towards the discerning of patterns in communication or content. Florio-Ruane and de Tar's (1995, 2001) analysis of social patterns of consensus, disagreement and turn-taking in teacher book clubs with multicultural literature more closely approximates the 'teacher as learner' focus of my study, because they look at movements within the conversation as the participants interact through dialogue. However, because of the focus on classifying the moves within the conversation, there is little sense of the individual teacher as learner and therefore no basis on which to ground any

generalizations about teacher learning when engaged in discussions of multicultural literature. Consistent with the focus of the dissertation on the teacher as learner, I want to shift the analysis towards looking for evidence of processes of teacher learning, but in this context, of ways in which teachers demonstrated that they were thinking about one another's observations or insights on "difference" by their participation in the literature circle.

#### Evidence of Teacher Learning

Teachers showed that they were listening to one another in a number of ways, such as when they adopted another teacher's language or changed their own wording to incorporate a response to what another teacher had said. For instance, in the following example, Helen created a composite phrase that linked her initial understanding of Ellison's (1952) Invisible Man with what she had understood from Tom; the composite phrase stands for movement in her understanding. Helen initiated the conversation by saying that reading the text was "like reading a double-text." The narrator seemed to be engaged in a circular struggle with a world of lightness and darkness; whereas you think you understand what he's saying, she explained, in another passage he seems to contradict himself. She compared the narrator's struggle to Sisyphus' "toil and struggle. It's the same battle" (LC1; 25.03.03). Tom built on Helen's interpretation but in a slightly different way: "He seems to be wearing two faces in this too." Helen agreed and wrote down in her journal what Tom has said. Tom continued: "At one point, he'll be talking about violence, headbutting the guy; he doesn't deny the violence that's passed but he doesn't take any responsibility for it either" (LC1; 25.03.03). Helen comes back to her Sisyphus-like image of a doubling

but instead of using the more abstract “double-text,” which describes the reader’s impressions but misses the Sisyphus allusion, her new understanding is of a “double face,” which better describes the narrator’s struggle and thus, by extension, the reader’s impression of how the narrator constructs the world (LC1; 25.03.03).

Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) theory of language is useful in recognizing shifts in wording that, although they may seem minor, provide evidence of listening to, relating and thus incorporating another point of view into one’s own.

Another example of how teachers showed, on the level of language, that they had been paying attention to and internalizing another teacher’s perspective comes from an exchange involving Faye and Terry in discussing Ballantyne’s (1977) Coral Island and Olsen’s (2001) No Time to Say Goodbye. Every year, Terry looked forward to reading aloud Ballantyne’s story to his class. He was fascinated with Ballantyne’s writing, such as how his descriptions anticipated modern inventions. His love of the book connected to a theme shared with another of his favorites, Lindgren’s (1950) Pippi Longstocking, and his own love of traveling and adventure: “the wanderlust and exploring. The freedom... to do whatever you want but in a very simple way” (4.3.1; 14.02.03). This freedom was linked with an enjoyment of boys’ adventure stories; Terry was taken with “the camaraderie of the boys...foraging around in the jungle and having to survive” (4.3.2; 28.03.03) in Ballantyne’s book. In an interview, I raised the episode between the boys and the “cannibals” who come ashore, in which the boys intervene and correct the Natives’ behaviour:

Teresa: So what do you think of how he [Ballantyne] writes about  
[the Native people]?

Terry: Well, you know, again, it's an older perspective so he's...you know...yeah...sort of...

Teresa: Here's Chapter 20. Intercourse with the savages. Cannibalism prevented. Slain or buried. Survivors depart.

Terry: I did start another book that he wrote—it was more of a Western set in North America—and I noticed it was obviously not contemporary in terms of how he talked about the Natives. We skip over those ones.

Teresa: So do you read those [passages] to the class, too? Or did you skip the chapter?

Terry: If I come across something like that, then I would try to have a conversation about it...Take, for instance, cigarette smoking...we're being brought up...that you don't smoke here and there and be aware of it. But they need to know historically that it wasn't always that way. That we're improving, I'd like to think! (LC4.3.2; 28.03.03)

Terry felt uncomfortable during this part of the conversation. He wanted to disassociate himself from Ballantyne's description of "the Natives" and had already done so on his own with another of Ballantyne's books. However, the difference between the two books was Terry's attachment to Coral Island, and more particularly, his attachment to the ideas of camaraderie and freedom expressed in Ballantyne's books.

To the next literature circle, Terry brought his original perspective on Ballantyne but also a changing one, one influenced by the fact that he had just finished reading Slipperjack's (2001) Little Voice and was enthralled with the story.

In the literature circle, the two texts juxtaposed were Coral Island and No Time to Say Goodbye under the broad theme of “Uprooted”, which attempted to draw together books in which protagonists voluntarily uprooted themselves and traveled elsewhere as well as books in which characters experienced an uprooting because of war, separation from a parent or the effects of colonization, such as residential school. The following excerpts are from LC4; 21.05.03. Petra compared the perspectives in the two books:

The Monica [story in No Time to Say Goodbye] hit far more to the core because it was such a personal violation of herself and her customs and her family promises. The Caucasian teachers became the enemy, whereas in the Coral Island one, the boys seemed more observers who were very interested in the other culture and were watching the violence [between the members of the two Native tribes].

Terry’s initial impression was that he “thought they were both pretty brutal passages...Coral Island being from a, you know, how to excite young boys, get their imaginations going. And the other one I think to show the brutality.” The attachment (exciting young boys and getting their imagination going) sits side by side with recognition of the violence, but at this point with the brutality nurturing and being a part of a boyish imagination. To go back to the former chapter, a contradiction exists here, and will become that ‘fault line’ along which learning happens.

Terry later came back to his response to Coral Island, but drew attention instead to the curious aspect of Ballantyne’s writing that fascinated him. Once his

observation had been made, though, he self-censored to return to the focus of the discussion, which was the juxtaposition of books:

When I was reading it a long time ago, I think that what I thought was really fun about it was this description of the guy with the hair because he's got it in an Afro, right? And...then later on in the book, they describe him riding on a surfboard. It's just funny because I kept looking back and saying, "How could this be written in this contemporary style?" That's beside the point. You've got two dominating: one is Natives dominating Natives and the other is whites dominating Natives.

Would Terry's interpretation from this point onward have been different had he been in different company, for example, a book club composed entirely of men? Possibly, but not necessarily for Terry had been doing his own reading and thinking outside of the circle before hearing Faye's response.

Faye explained her impression of the relationships between the boys and the Natives, on the one hand and the girls and the nuns, on the other hand, and supported her assertion by scrutinizing the language of the text. Terry had said in interviews that one of the aspects of Ballantyne that he loved was the way in which he wrote. Faye was interested in rereading the text to identify the attitude behind the language and therefore combined close reading with a critical stance. She concluded that the boys' and nuns' attitudes were identical:

Faye: I sense the same kind of contempt, superior attitude, from the narrator or the nuns, in the case of No Time to Say Goodbye. The same sort of generalizations and attitudes about people from other cultures are

in both the boys and in the nuns and the priests.

Teresa: Where did you get that impression from?

Faye: In the Coral Island story, even though the boys are detached, they're, um...[rereading the text] there are things like "the most terrible monster I ever beheld" or

Terry: Incarnated. Incarnated fiends.

Terry completed Faye's close reading and, as is evident from the videotape, did so from memory. Later on, it was Terry who identified where Ballantyne's information for his stories likely came from:

Teresa: Where do you think the authors got their information from?

Virginia: In No Time to Say Goodbye, wouldn't it be personal experience?

Stories handed down.

Terry: Interviews with the people.

[sounds of general agreement; "yeah"]

Teresa: It was their interviews; their experiences. What about Ballantyne?

Without hesitation, Terry jumped in and responded:

His imagination.

[general laughter]

Terry's hunch was supported by Faye:

Especially since he's never been anywhere outside of his living room. I don't know where this person lives, but I'm guessing England. Probably never even been to the Coast. [laughs]

By way of counter-example to this kind of interplay in which teachers changed their responses in light of what others said, was that easy camaraderie in which it was as if teachers could predict and complete one another's thoughts, so thoroughly were they grounded in the story's familiar structure. In the following example, teachers are simply reconstructing the story based on their familiarity, especially as primary teachers, with this kind of tale. Barry, who taught intermediate students, wanted to know why the fox did not eat the duck right away in Rankin's (1998) Wow, It's Great Being a Duck:

Barry: The thing that bothered me a little bit about this one is why the fox waited

Frances: Waited.

Barry: And waited and waited and waited.

Ruth: [whispering] Because the duck was too skinny!

Barry: And then it was that the fox wanted his brothers and sisters to come

Ruth: To eat them. The fox was greedy.

Frances: He could have eaten him first. (LC2; 24.04.03)

#### Evidence of Teachers Learning from One Another

What determines whether a teacher's observation is heard by other teachers, is taken up by them and causes a potential shift in how the book is perceived?

Sometimes the felicitous insertion of a question on the researcher's part can build on the existing flow of the conversation in such a way as to deepen the conversation, as in my question above on the authors' probable sources of information. Just as often,

though, my questions were ignored, especially if the teachers saw them as diverting the flow of the conversation. Were teachers themselves successful in not only changing the direction of the conversation but in so doing, making other teachers think? Two sets of related examples follow.

*Example 1*

In Leo Lionni's (1994) An Extraordinary Egg, Jessica is the frog who wanders off from her siblings and brings back interesting things for them to look at. One day she brought back an egg, which soon hatched. "Ah, a chicken," said one of Jessica's siblings. The siblings persisted in calling the hatched crocodile a chicken despite contrary evidence. The "chicken" could swim and the mother with whom it was eventually reunited was a crocodile. The literature discussion focused largely on how assumptions colour perceptions despite countervailing information. Marjorie had identified most with Jessica because she was the character who roamed beyond the boundaries of the frogs' world; like Jessica, Marjorie herself liked to travel, read travel literature and explore cultures other than her own. Marjorie continued to insist that Jessica was different than the others but her attempts to convince the other teachers was unsuccessful, largely because in the story, Jessica went along with the designation of the crocodile as a chicken, even if she may have had her doubts; her broad-mindedness could only be inferred from her roaming. Also, Marjorie's choice of words was a factor; Marjorie's "delightful" was too close in meaning to Barry's "pleasant," even though each teacher meant something different by the word:

Barry: I think I see them as really well-behaved and pleasant [frogs] but they are kind of ignorant of how their section of the world is oppressive,

too.

Frances: Well, they know how the world is. They've made up their mind.

Ruth: And they just organize it. They stayed along the way they wanted it to go. The way they like it.

Frances: Things don't change.

Marjorie: But Jessica is full of delight. She delights people.

Barry: Oh, they're very pleasant.

Marjorie: But she doesn't have her mind made up, does she? ... She's never seen a chicken. But she believes it.

Frances: Marilyn is the one who says it's a chicken egg.

Marjorie: Jessica has never heard of them so she just believes her older sister. So society passes on these conceptions.

Even though Marjorie seemed to accept Jessica's complicity, as the following excerpt shows, she did not relinquish her feeling that Jessica was somehow different from the crowd. I had asked, somewhat rhetorically, what kind of people the frogs resembled:

Teresa: Are these people [i.e. frogs] on the fringes?

Someone: Oh god no!

Barry: They're the core.

Marjorie: Jessica might have been [on the fringes].

Ruth: If she'd got off that island?

Marjorie: She might have been more open-minded.

As the group continued to lump Jessica with the other frogs, Marjorie tried again, more directly this time and with a small measure of success:

Marjorie: I think you're being unfair to Jessica. I think she's just doing what her older brother and sister tell her to do. She's...she's the one who noticed.

Frances: Well, she was all in a temper. She brings all these things, the extraordinary pebble

Marjorie: And they're not interested...If you're told it's a chicken by your superiors, it's a chicken. Very hard to fight it.

Barry: [ruefully] Yeah, I know. (LC2; 10.06.03)

Marjorie's point about Jessica was ignored because the group was focused on those who make the assumptions. The focus had arisen out of the juxtaposition of Lionni's story with Lois Lowry's (1994) "Holding," which tells of a young man who lets people assume that his parents are both heterosexual, even though their separation likely happened (one teacher mused) because his father was gay. Marjorie's perception of another topic, the "outsider within," did not fit with the direction of the conversation, which was centred on the juxtaposition between the two stories. Thus, Barry was much more successful in comparing the crocodile, who has no say in how he is named, with the situation of gays and minorities in Canada, a topic elicited from Lowry's story.

An example of when a teacher's persistence in maintaining his/her view can cause a shift in other teachers' interpretations happened when LC4 considered the character of Raven in two versions of Raven and Snipe (Cameron, 1991; Clutesi, 1967/1994); Clutesi is an Aboriginal author whereas Cameron is not. In both versions, Raven tries to use Snipe to obtain food easily. In Cameron's version of the

story, Snipe is depicted as industrious, which is why she is successful in gathering food whereas in Clutesi's, Snipe appears to be diligent as well as knowledgeable in the ceremonies appropriate to the gathering of food. In Cameron's version, ceremony only enters as a smokescreen that Snipe uses to trick Raven into leaving her and her family alone. The character of Raven did not elicit much sympathy because he/she was transgressing the engrained Protestant work ethic by trying to gain something for nothing, while Snipe came out on top as the more admirable character, even though, in Cameron's version, she had clearly tricked Raven. In Cameron's version, both Snipe and Raven are females, while in Clutesi's, they are males. The following excerpts all come from LC4; 03.04.03.

Faye: Oh I thought that Snipe was wonderful in both stories. Polite.

Hardworking.

Virginia: Well I thought he was polite too.

Diane: And stick it to the other guy when he deserves it. You're going to get yours, Mr. Raven! [Faye laughs uproariously and Diane giggles too]

Virginia began to resist the idea that Raven deserved to be punished and Diane relented a little:

Virginia: I guess I just had this strong bond for her [Raven] so I felt really bad for her when I envisioned her going through the fire. That part bugged me. Everything else I was okay with until he went through the fire and I thought, you [Snipe] keep sending him through the fire, that wasn't very nice! But actually I started out, the very first thing I wrote down, was that the Snipes were very polite and the Raven

was rude. I didn't like him at all. And when he got sent through the fire, I felt sorry for him! [laughs]

Diane: He's kind of more of a bungling idiot than anything!

Virginia noticed cruelty in human relationships; this had come out in her interviews. She had also discussed, in the context of the problem of evil, how she had found herself sympathizing with unsympathetic characters, but without condoning their actions. Here, she also acknowledged that she initially felt unsympathetic towards Raven (thus giving credence to Faye's and Diane's perspectives) but then changed her mind when Snipe used trickery to force Raven to enter the fire not once but several times. Later on, I circled the discussion back to the question of judgment, with the purpose of encouraging teachers to explore the grounds upon which their judgments of the characters were based:

Teresa: Which story do you think judges Raven...does one story judge Raven more harshly or are the stories basically the same in terms of how Raven is judged?

Virginia reiterated her point about Raven "being duped into going into the fire" in the Cameron version as striking her as "much harsher than in the second one [Clutesi's] where he banged up his leg and it got all swollen so he went to bed." She then went on to think aloud about the significance of this difference:

I think the punishment in the second one might be a little more intrinsic in terms of it's left up to him, really, what his feeling is when he has to come back into the community and meet up with the people that he somehow dishonoured himself in front of by

not being able to provide the meal the way he thought it would. So it's a different style. God, I don't know if it's more of a retribution [said in a "wondering aloud" voice] but it's more of an intrinsic thing, you know, the punishment is within himself as opposed to just...

Teresa: Being imposed by Snipe.

Faye: I wondered about the fact that Anne Cameron used a lot of... when she did add some descriptive words, they were mostly in criticism of raven. Raven belching and Raven drooling and Raven slobbering and snuffling and munching

Teresa: And gulping

Faye: And smacking

Virginia: Gorpung

Faye: Raven seemed really gross!

Diane: Sitting on the couch drinking a beer!

The second time around, then, Virginia's perspective was causing a shift in Faye's and Diane's perceptions of Raven. What factors contributed to this shift? The teachers could find textual support for Virginia's view when reading Cameron through a critical lens. However, the critical perspective brought to bear on Cameron's text does not come only by way of hearing Virginia. It comes through both teachers' recognition that they like the "flow" of Clutesi's story better, which Faye articulates later on but that Diane had already identified in response to a probe from Terry:

Diane: I liked the flow of it better.

Terry: Clutesi's?

Diane: Yeah, it just seemed like the whole story was rushed [Cameron's]...

I liked the little, I think it's the Native trait, that things are told slower and in more detail...In this one [Cameron's], there was too much action.

The fact that Cameron's story has a lot of action is what appealed to Petra and Isabel, whereas the two upper intermediate teachers (Diane and Faye) preferred Clutesi's more descriptive style. Virginia's perspective initiates a reevaluation, then, but it happens on the two teachers' own terms.

Another important factor may be the way in which Virginia approached the question of judgment. She acknowledged that she did not like Raven at first before changing her mind, thus implicitly granting credence to the other perspective of Raven. She also engaged in a "think aloud" as she spoke, which had the effect of encouraging other teachers (and myself) to think along with her about the authors' depictions of Raven. Talking in that thinking aloud mode conduces to making the learning process transparent and open to revision. To summarize, then, in considering which shifts take hold and why, the following factors may be involved: a) textual, viz. objective support is possible; b) the ability to make one's own connections, based on experience, history and perspective; c) making transparent a learning process, by publicly searching for the grounds of one's opinion or exploring its implications and d) thus demonstrating a willingness to remain open to alternative conceptualizations.

*Example 2*

The above shifts happened gently, almost imperceptibly, as part of the flow of the conversation, as teachers incorporated new ideas against their familiar backgrounds; such shifts are generally not consciously noticed. For example, both Faye and Diane commented in later interviews on the significance of the Raven and Snipe story but neither teacher connected its significance back to the literature circle conversation, except in a general sense. Disagreement also forced people to think, and teachers tended to remember better the disagreement not only because it provoked and challenged existing ideas but because of how it might have made them feel. Both kinds of learning are important to changes in thinking, even if one garners more attention because, as in Whitehead's (1967) theory of learning, the flow is disrupted, whereas the other form of learning appears slow, subtle or less amenable to being tied to a cause or source that instigated movement.

Disagreement was carried. It was remembered after the meeting, especially by those whose opinions were questioned or challenged. In discussing McDermott's (1993) Raven, Jeannette expressed her view that the illustrations were beautiful but she added a slight doubt: "I found the illustrations were awesome. A little bit...It looked more Oriental however [slight laugh] than First Nations with the people in that book, how they're dressed. Did ya [notice that] or is that just me? [laughs]" (LC3; 31.03.03). Yvonne then asked the group: "Is Gerald McDermott a First Nations author?" Margot looked for evidence in the text, concluding that "Usually if it doesn't say, they're not." Later on in the circle, the following exchange ensued, with

Jeannette coming back to her initial impression that some of McDermott's illustrations seemed strange:

Teresa: What about the illustrations? What would you do with that in a classroom situation? Would you do anything with it or would you just pass over it?

Maxine: Well, considering the idea of First Nations people coming from, originating in, Asia.

Jeannette: A! [the sound a person makes when they are correcting someone else]

Maxine: No?

Jeannette: That's the Bering Strait...! [Lots of mixed sounds, laughter]

Oh my God! Don't even go there. They had that on TV the other night and I was so...I was like, What??!!

Even though the conversation softened afterwards, with a lot of laughter, Maxine left thinking about the conversation and probing why she had even brought up the Bering Strait theory. The Bering Strait theory is a scientific theory that postulates that the first peoples in America came by way of a piece of land that once connected Asia and North America. The theory is repudiated by Aboriginal creation stories. In our interview almost a month later, Maxine began with the disagreement: "I was driving in my car...the comment that I made about the Asian-looking Native [we laugh]. I'm like, Oh golly! ... I should have known" (3.2.3; 25.04.03). She went on to recount how her grandma had also criticised the Bering Strait theory, and how she had often heard origin stories that combined the Bible with traditional local stories, saying that

her grandmother “has a mix of the Bible plus her own way of...Native people just right from the earth, just [motions up from the earth] right here in [name of Aboriginal community]. So I should have known to not go there” (3.2.3; 25.04.03). This example shows the risk involved in presenting one’s perspective. Whether disagreement was apparent on the surface of the circles or not, it was there, running deep in terms of teachers’ looking more closely at their own attachments, such as Frances’ wondering whether Indian Captive (Lenski, 1941) was racist, Isabel looking at the sources of attachment and detachment with stories like Kingsolver’s (1998) of a patriarchal missionary in Africa, Tom wondering why some books struck him as “gender-specific,” or Ruth exploring her acrimonious response to Sterling’s (1992) My Name is Seepeetza.

While some forms of disagreement went “underground”, as it were, in forcing teachers to think again or become quiet so as to think, other forms of disagreement were sustained longer but only in the interest of hearing another’s perspective. The bond the teachers shared while in circle was reaffirmed by shifting and finding common ground. In discussing Olsen’s (2001) No Time to Say Goodbye, for example, LC1 teachers reached a point of not being able to construct bridges from one perspective to another. That was not only because of differences in identity (with one of the teachers being white European; two teachers being Aboriginal) but of their differing standpoints on identity, such that three different views were on the table. The discussion was instigated by Helen’s taking to heart the phrase “squeezing the Indian out of him [Nelson]” and wondering what that phrase actually meant and whether she unwittingly imposed a white European view in the classroom: “That

really upsets me, that idea of draining somebody of everything that they are” (LC1; 25.05.03). In the interviews, she had talked about her beliefs around the importance of group identity but against a background of what she called “individuation,” of the existence of an essential self worthy of being respected by others. Rather than adopting Nelson’s point of view as an Aboriginal boy in a residential school run by priests and nuns, Tom preferred to focus on Nelson’s punching of the priest, saying that “he grew up with this stuff...I saw Native kids punching out teachers all the time in regular schools.” His interest was more on violence in human nature rather than condoning “bad” actions as “good” because they represented a reversed racial motivation: “Is it happening because this is a Native kid and a white person, or it is the Christian religion? Is it racial? Is it cultural? Who’s to say? My comment would be that the virtues and vices are not confined to a particular culture plotting to, say, “squeeze the Indian out of him” (LC1; 25.05.03). Along with her belief in the value of the individual, Helen expressed her belief that “we are more than ethnicity” but within the context of being sensitive to the racial history being enacted in residential school and schooling, generally.

Lee took up Helen’s assertion that “we are more than ethnicity,” which set off a lively discussion of how identity is constructed and in particular, Aboriginal identity, with both Lee and Tom agreeing that “we’re the result of...the values that have been taught” but with Tom saying that these values were “fundamental” and Lee saying that values are passed on intergenerationally, even genetically, through culture. The debate was deflected by Helen’s question, once more, of whether as a white person, she was unconsciously squeezing the Nativeness out of her Aboriginal

students, with Lee and Tom lining up, from an Aboriginal perspective, against the dominant culture and education system, but from different vantage points:

Lee: Well, I mean the potlatches and canoes and all that stuff, are a part of culture. They're not culture itself. They're not ethnicity. [Tom: Yeah].

Culture, it's rooted in the values that you're taught .... We're the result of the best of what our ancestors had to offer of what the culture is and of the values that have been taught. That's centuries of mistakes being made, lessons being learned, only to be passed on.

Tom: So there would be something innate if there were that many generations. Something that is almost instinctual. I mean, if I was to have my memory of only First Nations culture wiped out, would I still have this .... [motions with hands] First Nationness? . . . Any differences between any of us are very superficial: skin color. Very superficial. Two generations would change that. Any other things, like art, technology, are very superficial. So if you squeeze these things out, what is left is something fundamental that we all share. (LC1; 25.05.03)

Lee dropped the issue and they moved on to something else. Even Helen, who was left with the perplexity of whether she as a white teacher was doing the right thing, found reassurance from the other teachers who likewise spoke of their uncertainty in teaching students, including Aboriginal students.

### Interviews

At first, many teachers saw the interviews as extensions of the literature circle; in other words, as a public discussion continued in a more private setting.

However, increasingly, the teachers interwove elements from their literacy history, lived experience and teaching into the interviews. The first two interviews played a critical role in encouraging teachers to view their literacy history within the broadest possible perspective by taking into account not only the actual books that they read, but access to books and family attitudes towards literacy as well as evidence of perceptions or attitudes towards “difference” in family, school, neighbourhood and community. These initial interviews were the most delicate to conduct because, in the absence of any literature shared, the questions were based on what teachers had selected to speak about from their autobiographies in the literature circle. In the first two to three interviews, I used prompts as well as probes to encourage teachers to make whatever connections they could between their literacy history and their lived experience. The probes played a critical role in prompting teachers to construct connections among their memories. I could also tell when a probe had failed, because the teacher would resist by becoming terse in her replies, her body language would communicate that she was beginning to feel uncomfortable or she would change the subject. And yet even if the teacher chose not to answer the question except in the most perfunctory way, asking it tested the boundaries. Some teachers did not forget that feeling, as Petra attests in this exchange during our final literature circle meeting:

Faye: I don't think we as teachers get enough time to do this kind of thing. Talking. It's always two seconds in a staff meeting and then on our way to this and that. Rushing here and there.

Teresa: Or it might just always be focused on preparation, of what you have to do next period or tomorrow, instead of mixing some of that up with your own responses as people.

Terry: Or answering to the principal, how you are applying this in the classroom.

Virginia: Exactly.

Petra: Well, she's been asking that. Sorry, not she. Teresa.

Teresa: I've been asking it in a kinder way.

Petra: Not so much pressure there.

Terry: Not asking for statistics. Not that that's bad.

Petra: Oh no. It's important. (LC4; 05.06.03)

Whereas Terry found accountability in the form of statistics-gathering potentially intrusive, Petra could discern the reason for it and was therefore willing to accept it as necessary. The purpose of the interviews, on the other hand, was not as clear. On average, I had four interviews with each teacher. Petra was one of two teachers with whom I only had two. For the teachers who were more reserved, four or five interviews were necessary not only to build trust but for teachers to take back the interview as a mode of reflection. This transfer did not happen automatically.

The interviews always began with the same prompt: "What have you been thinking about/noticing since the literature circle?" In the beginning, teachers would often say: "I really haven't had a chance to think about it" or "I forget. What did we talk about again?" In the initial interviews, my prompts and probes were therefore drawn from a combination of three sources: a) the literacy autobiography prompts; b)

the teachers' own words in literature circle transcripts and interviews; and c) prompts and questions based on what the teacher said, such as asking the teacher to elaborate or give an example, as well as those prompts that encouraged teachers to see literacy in a broader context. For instance, I often asked teachers to describe their access to literacy (eg. libraries) and the kind of neighbourhood or community they grew up in. The interviews at first reiterated what the teacher had said during the literature discussion, or extended it only slightly. As the interviews continued, teachers became more willing to share personal details relating to community or family or, in connection with the literature discussion, of impressions they had not shared in the circle, or of other connections they had since thought of. By the final interviews, teachers were integrating observations and stories drawn from lived experience, literary experience and classroom experiences. The most personal details shared by teachers usually related to community and family.

Two aspects of the interview content are especially notable, and are in fact related to one another. The first aspect is the contradictions or tensions within a teacher's discourse (Grumet's "interstices where the light shines through") are much more apparent in the interviews than in the literature circles. This is an important finding given that, from a methodological standpoint, research involving teachers in literature circles often focuses on the public discussion, with either no interviews done or not in a manner that tries to relate the content of the interviews with the content of the literature circle. The second aspect, building on the first, is that one of the most persistent tensions involving "difference" happened in the context of community or family, but particularly family, such as recalling rituals or everyday

actions that, in a broader context, signified more than just a community or family practice; recalling whether “differences” were accepted in the family, or which kinds were, and which were not; or recalling specific words or phrases that parents commonly uttered that now struck a discordant note for the teacher as disclosing racism or narrowness of view. The “crack” that signaled a teacher’s dawning awareness of how the construction of “differences” begins early was usually initiated by a family memory that had otherwise been forgotten.

#### The Role of the Researcher

The researcher played a key role in teachers’ learning during the study. Through the dissertation journal, I was able to monitor that role. I also reflected on the transcripts as I transcribed and re-read them, which meant that the field notes for each literature circle, which were kept in separate files, provided an ongoing system for monitoring my role across and within circles. My rationales for the selection of the literature were contained in the annotated booklists for teachers as well in a table arranged by teacher for each group; that table was revised often and overwritten, which makes it difficult to produce as an artifact in an appendix.

The most common comments from teachers were that the researcher provided teachers with books and stories that they had never seen before, used prompts that got teachers thinking, juxtaposed books in ways that teachers would likely not have thought of, and provided a context for teachers to converse around books. Another comment made by two teachers was that the researcher should have been a counselor or therapist. Excerpted below, then, are some of the teachers’ comments that specifically address the researcher’s role in their learning process:

- “You bring things I haven’t seen before”, “You should be a psychiatrist”
- “You’ve got me going on this multicultural thing”; “I’m grateful to you, and this whole business, to bring all these things forward, because I’m not sure I would have found them”; “...only with your prompting...”; “I find it good when you ask me questions”
- “I think what was interesting, though, was having you come in with a different perspective. Because with us being kind of entrenched in: ‘This is what we do. This is our world.’ The 40 books or whatever. We wouldn’t make these links.”
- “Thanks for this work. It really does make us think about literature. Sometimes life just gets so busy that interests like this get little time or energy. Much appreciated”
- “You really did open a door for me” (regarding introducing her to books by First Nations authors);
- “Part of the magic of this one [book club] is having you as sort of leader in a way, guiding us ... So it becomes a bit of an obligation. I don’t mean that in a negative way. I mean that in a positive way. You’re here for a reason and it’s beyond the scope of just doing the reading.”

All of these comments need to be seen in context with the scheme that I outlined in the first chapter (see: Table 2), which identified the strengths and weaknesses within approaches that were: learner-centred, teacher-centred and approach-centred. I situated my own study within a predominantly learner-centred approach. The following table summarizes the relationship between the study elements and the three

approaches (learner, teacher, approach) (see Table 5) as they became evident through the conducting of the study and the analysis of the data. Within the table, some of the elements fall within more than one approach, for example:

a) the literature circles, which the researcher had initiated with teachers, were initially led by the researcher, who modeled how to do a check-in (in 2 of the 4 circles), initiated the discussion, signaled turn-taking and managed transitions; this role was assumed because the teachers requested that guidance.

b) the researcher's leadership role was faded out for some aspects while for others, it remained dominant. This is reflected in the table using bolding, in which the bolded X stands for where (that is, in which approach) that element predominantly fell by the conclusion of the study. For instance, the teachers increasingly led or monitored their literature discussion, with little input from the researcher but the researcher played a major role at the start. Over time as teachers anticipated the closing question in the literature circle ("What difference are the circles making?"), they "took back" the researcher-instigated question as significant to their own practice and relationship to one another as teachers.

Table 5

*Study Elements Categorized by Approach (Learner-, Teacher-, Approach-Centred)*

	Learner	Teacher	Approach
Literature Circle			
check-in	X	X	
mini-talk on resources	X		(X)
literature discussion	X	X	
juxtaposition of literature	X		(X)
summary	X		(X)
closure	X	X	
Literacy Autobiography			
writing/discussion	X		
identifying themes based on commonalities & absences	X	X	
selection of literature	X	(X)	X
Interviews			
literacy autobiography prompts	X		
prompts based on literature circle transcripts	X		
prompts to seek clarification, etc.	X		
probes	X	(X)	

*Note.* Bolded Xs indicate the predominant approach by May and June 2003. X's in bolded brackets indicate elements whose position remained the same throughout the study.

### *Discussion*

All of the elements were introduced by the researcher. All were taken up on some level by the teachers. The researcher initiated a particular context and even though, as the Preface makes clear, teachers were the ones that made the context a possibility, the researcher played a key role in sustaining and maintaining that space for teachers. Several elements were consistently learner-centred throughout the study, in that they were designed to reflect back to the teachers language that they had constructed themselves, such as their writing of the literacy autobiography or when the researcher drew on the teachers' own words from the literature circle to compose interview prompts. The researcher was the one to notice those words, however the words were the teachers' own.

Based on the table, the study has followed a certain pattern, in which researcher authority has been gradually relinquished or transferred to the teachers. This approach is consistent with learner-centred approach discussed in the first chapter. By "relinquish," I mean that researcher's role became minimal or nominal; minimal in that the researcher's turns within literature circle decreased over time, and nominal in that teachers anticipated or expected the question with which the interview began or the literature circle ended. The researcher repeated the question but teachers already knew the question and were actively thinking about it. By "transfer," I mean that evidence exists that teachers increasingly took ownership for particular elements; how

they did so was discussed in chapter six on learning processes and strategies. The letting go of authority, on the part of the researcher, or the taking up of study elements, on the part of teachers, happened more with some elements than with others. Based on the table, the following patterns emerge:

a) Elements that began as teacher-centred, with the researcher initiating, modeling or explaining, tended to become increasingly transferred over to the learner, for example the literature discussion, check-in and closure. These were elements that several teachers envisioned adopting for their own classrooms, and can therefore be likened to a kind of procedural knowledge in that, if a person knows the procedure for how to lead a literature discussion, or conduct a check-in, an analogous context can be created elsewhere with different learners and for different purposes. However, since the context also influenced teacher learning, the learning taken away was not only procedural.

b) Elements that began in an approach-centred mode were also taken up by the learner, but in a different way.

#### *Mini-talk on Resources*

The mini-talk on resources offered books other than the literature selected for that session, but both the selected literature and the additional resources supported a particular theme. The theme had emerged through the discussion of the literacy autobiographies and the collective data for each group drawn from the autobiographies. Teachers recognized the theme as something that one or more of them had expressed an interest in, and they borrowed literature from the additional resources to read in their own time. This literature was often discussed during the

interviews, but also teachers reported back to the literature circle if a particular book had made a strong impression and why.

### *Juxtaposition of Literature*

The juxtaposition of books became teacher-owned in one sense, yet also remained as approach-centred in another. As an intertextual strategy, it was one that teachers may have either been using before the study or that they adopted increasingly during the study because it was being modeled. The specific juxtaposition of familiar with unfamiliar literature, though it exerted a powerful influence on teachers (see chapter six), was a strategy rooted in the particular theoretical approach that the researcher had developed (outlined in chapter four) and although plenty of evidence exists to show its indirect effects (for example, the intertwining of lived experience with literacy history), only time will tell whether teachers would do that on their own. For example, in pursuing literature circles with one another, would they conduct a literacy autobiography to find out what teachers had already read and base their selection on both familiar and unfamiliar books? Or in selecting literature for the classroom, would they recognize that the story was familiar in structure, theme or message even though it was not identical to one they read as a child? The first possibility seems more remote, based on what teachers have indicated about beginning their own literature circles. The second seems more possible, since teachers have come away from the study with a knowledge of which books were not only familiar to them but also to others, which creates a base for an understanding how certain stories become privileged within a culture and others are excluded or remain unseen. The teachers were also introduced to some of that “excluded”

literature and therefore are less likely to teach on the assumption that because it is often not easily accessible, that such literature does not exist. They now have a list of books. At the conclusion of the study, each teacher also chose from the titles in the study a book for themselves and one per group for the school library. Most of the titles chosen were from “multicultural” or alternative literature. As an incentive for teachers to use these books, as well as to thank them for their participation, the researcher will be ordering these books and sending them to the teachers in the Fall of 2003. To assess the influence of the juxtaposition of unfamiliar with familiar literature, a longitudinal perspective would be needed. As the researcher, I plan to keep in touch with teachers so that they can keep me informed of their activities coming out of the study and I can continue to advise them of new resources.

#### *The “Summary”*

The summary was phased out fairly quickly in the study but used periodically. The literature circles were intended to end with the question, “What difference are these circles making?,” however in practice this question seemed premature for the first and second circles because not enough time had passed for a difference to be felt. For the first two circles, then, I closed with a summary-like statement of what we had discussed, however I never felt comfortable with summarizing because it felt as if I was taking ownership of the circle back to myself as the researcher. In one instance, after the discussion of Indian Captive (Lenski, 1941) and My Name is Seepeetza (Sterling, 1992), I moved at the end of the literature circle to fill in a perceived gap. Indian Captive had generated animated discussion, whereas Sterling’s book was surrounded by silence. The summary tried to address the discomfort of that gap,

although a better strategy would have been to launch into the “What difference are these circles making?”, which is what I did with the next group. Especially in the beginning, what I learned from my interactions with one group, I applied to the next one. Sometimes, though, teachers requested an explanation but if so, I deferred it to the end, as in LC4 when I used the term “terra nullis” in the annotated book list. One teacher read the list before the discussion began, so asked for clarification, which I provided later and in relation to their literature discussion. I therefore included the summary as both approach-centred and learner-centred, since it was based on themes that the literature group had discussed.

Two more elements of the table remain unexplained: the selection of literature and the probes.

#### *Selection of Literature*

In a previous chapter, I have already explained how it felt to have to choose a finite number of books from the information gathered from the writing and discussion of the literacy autobiographies. The selection, as that chapter makes clear, was approach-centred, in applying a criterion of combining familiar with unfamiliar literature. However, it was also learner-centred, because the literature was familiar to a learner, or related to a theme collectively agreed upon by the group as a focus for their learning. The selection of books was made in light of the teachers’ literacy histories. The researcher played the central role, though, in coordinating which literature the groups would read.

*Probes*

Like the prompts, the probes were based in ideas or language that the teacher had already uttered in a literature circle or interview. However, the probe differed from the prompt in continually bringing teachers back, not only to their own language, but to their own constructions. For the purposes of the study, I acted as the teacher's memory, reminding them of what they had already said, juxtaposing those words with something they had said more recently and exposing the area inbetween yet to be explored. I was also persistent in returning to the same topics, but from different angles, thus using a strategy that performed Greene's (1965) "story of confrontation" (p. 423). Once a teacher had identified, however allusively, a story or topic that seemed important to the context of the study, namely, literature and "difference," I kept coming back to that topic in some form in every interview or every other interview. That is why the interviews were so important to the study; what would have been an inappropriate method in a public space was consistent with a more reflective, private space, even if the discussion extended the public discourse and did not focus on purely "private" matters. Some teachers welcomed the opportunity to explore that territory or be confronted in that way. Others were more guarded and it was not until the fourth or fifth interview that those walls began to crumble and the teacher took ownership back for that story by raising it and talking about it him- or herself. One of the biggest surprises that I experienced in the study was the change in Isabel. She was quiet in the circles, although always contributed her perspective at least once or twice. She listened a lot. In the initial interviews, she wanted to be helpful but was not sure how, therefore her responses tended to be

vague. I felt triumphant every time I was able to elicit a specific detail, for it is in the specifics that the history, memories and experiences lie. One strategy that I had used with several of the teachers was to read a piece of literature that they had fondly remembered and then we discussed it in the interview, probing the reasons for their attachment. Because I had read the book, my prompts and probes could be more specific. This is the strategy that worked best with Isabel. I returned Isabel to The Poisonwood Bible (Kingsolver, 1998) time and again, until she began to do so herself, without needing to refer to the book, because its topic overlapped in so many ways with her own history as well as her thinking about that history, which had obviously begun long before her participation in the study. Elsewhere, I have quoted parts from her final interview in which she raises the questions emerging out of her own lived and literacy history, but connected to so many of us, of how it is that neighbours can be strangers. Probes felt more intrusive to teachers who had fewer interviews and more comfortable to those who were able to benefit from monthly opportunities to explore the sources of their lived and literacy histories. This finding is significant, I believe, for what it says of the value in combining the literature discussion with the interview, in other words, of public with “private” settings. The literacy autobiography provided a bridge between the two settings because teachers shared in the circle only what they wanted to reveal (although there was a high congruence between what they shared and what they wrote) and yet the autobiography, in addition to the triple-entry journal, also provided them with a document for personal reflection, especially in the final interview when they re-read their autobiography and journal.

### The Significance of Group Composition to Data Analysis

In chapter one, I critiqued Strickland and Smith (2001) for failing to consider the racial and cultural composition of the literature groups when such an interpretive lens was warranted. The cultural and gendered composition of the groups (and thus, the interaction among teachers) has been central to my study but I have addressed it in a fashion different from interpreting teachers' words through ascribed gendered or cultural locations.

Throughout the study, and particularly in chapter four, I have reiterated the significance of Aboriginal issues in education to Canadian multicultural discourse. The composition of the groups in this study was shaped by the historical and contemporary context of Riverton. The non-Aboriginal community inhabits lands that belong to the ancestral territories of Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal reserves are located within the boundaries of Riverton as well as in surrounding areas. Aboriginal teachers, counselors and teacher aides teach throughout the Riverton school system, however the Aboriginal staff belongs to two organizations: the Riverton School District as well as the Aboriginal Education division within the Riverton School District, which is devoted exclusively to Aboriginal education. Within the district, some schools have a greater proportion of Aboriginal students than others because of their proximity to the Aboriginal communities. The Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers in those schools (which are well known) regularly confront the implications of race and culture within the school system and pedagogical practices. In order to protect teachers' anonymity within the semi-public context of the study, I have

deliberately refrained from linking teachers to a particular school. Given the context of Riverton that I have described, it was not surprising that all four literature groups expressed an interest in engaging with their understandings of Aboriginal peoples through the reading of literature. In LC3, the goal of discussing literature, especially Aboriginal literature, took on added importance because all of the teachers were Aboriginal. It was at one of the Aboriginal Education Division staff meetings that I recruited the group of teachers who comprised LC3. One literature group of white teachers wanted to join with LC3, however this request was denied because the Aboriginal group of teachers wanted to meet among themselves.

Throughout the study, I have been careful to refer to LC3 as “the Aboriginal group of teachers.” This was the group who elected to form a literature circle of only Aboriginal teachers. LC1 was also composed predominantly of Aboriginal teachers however it was not an “Aboriginal group of teachers.” The fact that two of the three teachers were Aboriginal was important to the discussion but secondary in that the group was not formed explicitly for that purpose. Instead, the teachers were linked because they taught in the upper intermediate or secondary levels. Moreover, the Aboriginal teachers did not necessarily agree with one another; this was apparent in LC3 and an illustration is provided earlier in this chapter. Nor did teachers, even if they were Aboriginal, necessarily conceive of their identities in the same way. However, unless they brought this matter forward into the literature circle, the only way to address questions surrounding identity was through the interviews.

While one of the most salient points of comparison among the four groups was in terms of Aboriginal and European ancestry, this theme has been subordinated

to the study's purpose, which was to encourage teachers to reflect on and bring forward constructions of "difference" in relation to their own literacy and lived histories. One of the distinguishing characteristics of this study has been its focus on the teacher as learner. On several occasions, I have mentioned that one of the male teachers in LC2 was gay. I was able to do this because he brought this marker of identity forward and in our first interview, we established that he was open to including literature on gay or alternative families within the literature circle discussion. It was left up to the teacher to make explicit in what ways their identities were connected to their constructions of "difference." Several of the European or European Canadian teachers, for example, talked about themselves as being constructed through a white identity, however some did not, thus revealing differences among teachers' "landscapes of learning." Even among those who did name themselves as "white," they struggled with the ascription or the implications of the ascription for their practice. However, the focus on the "teacher as learner" precluded the researcher's judging of teacher response except through an ethnomethodological lens, by reflecting words back to the teacher. This included my response as a white educator engaged in my own learning process. I recall one interview in which I felt very uncomfortable because of the views that were being expressed on the subject of Aboriginal peoples. My involvement with Aboriginal communities has deeply affected my life; my children are half Aboriginal. However, I deliberately refrained not only from saying anything corrective but (through reflection in my dissertation journal) in making a judgment on or about the teacher for, I reasoned, one of the purposes of the study was to see whether and how teachers took

up constructions of “difference” for themselves. In fact, this teacher later did come back to those constructions, thus showing a process of reflection rooted in discomfort with prejudice even while manifesting it. Nor did identities remain tied to group formation. For example, one of the Aboriginal teachers, as I attest in the Conclusion, said that she would like to participate in more literature circles but this time with teachers from within her own or neighbouring schools and not exclusively with Aboriginal teachers. Her logic was that the one gathering had served its purpose but that she now also wanted to engage in conversations around literature in a mixed group.

On the subject of gender, since there were three male participants, more might have been said had the three been in the same group but since they were scattered across different groups, I had to work with the conversations as given. I have already discussed how gender was a pertinent difference from some teachers in their literacy formation (see chapter five) and how for the gay teacher, the dominant discourse of heterosexuality in Canada was a key issue for himself, both personally and in his teaching practice.

Circling back to the role of the researcher in teachers’ learning, the researcher played a key role in the selection of literature in relation to teachers’ literacy backgrounds. The group composition was therefore an important factor, from the researcher’s point of view, in creating a context for learning in which teachers could be confronted with books familiar to their cultural background juxtaposed with those perspectives that were omitted or were less accessible. The interviews constituted an

extension of that provocative context. How the teachers responded, individually and within groups, to that context has been the subject of chapters five through seven.

### Conclusion

In summary, then, both teacher and researcher played key roles in the study. The teachers influenced one another's responses in the literature circles, teachers explored their responses in the interviews and the researcher influenced the direction of the teachers' learning by the approach taken in the study to literature and "difference." The centrality of the researcher role need not detract from the learner-centred focus. To return to Freire's point, to begin with the learner does not mean beginning there and staying there. It means to chart paths that begin from where a learner starts but go somewhere else. The teachers' comments on the study attest that the study brought them "elsewhere," literally and figuratively; literally, in joining with teachers from the same school and different schools; figuratively, in providing an "escape" from the pressures of teaching and living into a collegial space organized around common texts. My own purpose was to encourage teachers to bring "elsewhere" home, *even though "elsewhere"* (often called "the vicarious" within reader response circles) *does not exist*. Although I believe that the study did go far in that direction, more could be done to track that journey and help teachers sustain professional development that focuses on themselves as learners who play society's role of strategically-placed storied intellectuals.

## CONCLUSION

*It feels like a beginning, not an end.*  
(Terry, LC4, 05.06.03)

In the final circle, a teacher thought to request a brief list of the study's "outcomes." She did not say it in those terms. She thought it would be useful for teachers in all four literature circles to know what ideas each group had come up with in response to the question, "What next?" The study had focused on teachers' investigation of the construction of "differences" through reading, listening and responding to texts. The researcher brought children's and young adult texts, some prompted by teachers' memories, others that introduced material new to teachers. Teachers created texts as well by writing a literacy autobiography, keeping a triple-entry journal and participating in monthly interviews. In wrestling with the subject matter of "difference", teachers applied various learning strategies and approaches, some of which relied on establishing a critical distance, others that depended on negotiating relationships with past formations or attachments. Teachers had opportunities to talk about the literature and their literacy history and explore the connections between the two in the company of other teachers as well as by themselves with the researcher. But what actually came of all this talk? What did teachers themselves want to do as a result of what they learned? Do those actions include conversations with other teachers? What role, if any, do teachers envision for the researcher or more broadly, the university? Teachers proposed the following initiatives. The ideas are grouped into categories and for each category, examples are provided.

### Beginning a teacher book club

Teacher 1: “Well, it obviously takes some energy and effort but I think that we have gotten a lot out of it.”

Teacher 2: “It would be a shame to...”

Teacher 1: “Quite honestly I think that we might sell ourselves short to think that although you’ve given us such a wonderful model to use ... I think each one of us might learn something of how to do that if we did take it on and found a really interesting book and talked about it ... We could just brainstorm ideas and bring them all together. That’s what you [the researcher] did. I don’t think we as teachers get enough time to do this kind of thing. Talking. It’s always two seconds in a staff meeting and then on our way to this and that. Rushing here and there.”



“I liked doing it this time with the First Nations group because I felt we had a lot that we needed to thresh out and if you’re in the midst of a larger group, you can’t always have a focus on First Nations. I think we needed that. But I would like to do it with the non-First Nations group and hear their ideas.”

### Applying a Similar Approach but in a Different Context

“What I would like to see happen is expanding some of the things we’ve seen into other teachers, other schools. The idea of the connections. The idea of connecting what might seem like very different topics as a way of dealing with issues. Because we mostly dealt with social justice issues. And how social justice issues can be dealt with without it being, like, Bible bumping, hammering on the head ... I feel a certain responsibility with having been a teacher here, seeing it as an opportunity for building something that can be used by teachers in a way that is going to be comfortable to

teachers, for teachers. I can see that some of this would be an approach to do some of that. Is taking a book like this, and going through, and how can discussion come out of it, of books that might be about different social justice issues, one of them being “difference” as sexual orientation.”

#### Continuing the Fellowship of the Circle

“I love the fellowship we have when we’re together. I truly, truly enjoy that. And the laughter we share. For me, that would be the biggest thing ... The circles will always continue. In my life, they certainly will ... I really enjoyed sharing the time with you girls. It’s been a lot of fun and you’ve taught me a lot. You may not think so but you have. By sharing those words. So, I appreciate that.”



“I liked listening to the other comments because we kind of all think on the same level when it comes to dealing with kids and stories, but our own perspective, I like sharing that. It really opens your eyes to what other people are thinking. You say, ‘Yeah, I can relate to that!’ Or ‘No, you are wrong!’”



“I liked the little check-in routine. I often thought I’d like to incorporate that into the day.”

#### Selecting Less Familiar Titles

“I find now that when I’m out in a bookstore, I go to the children’s books and look for anything pertaining to Aboriginal stuff ... I am going to take time to start reading these stories. I mean, I used to read Harlequin romances, historical novels—I just love them! I stay up all night reading them! [laughs] But I definitely have decided that I’ll be checking more of these books out and buying them and saving them for

my grandchildren. I really want to practice the Cree in Thomson Highway so that I can read that to the grandchildren.”



“I’m going to buy a whole bunch of books for our library ... Why don’t they [Red Cedar Awards for children’s books] have more First Nations titles. I’ve been thinking that as I’ve been doing this [study]: Why didn’t this book [Little Voice] show up on my Red Cedar?”



“Helping parents make more informed choices, or using the books to involve parents in schools, classrooms and literacy programs.”



“It’s cool that you find them [these titles] from all this searching, and I would like a bibliography! To go and find all these books and read some of them ... You start noticing everything, noticing what the messages are, what the cultural messages are and the teachings. I’ve learned that you really have to be careful about what message you are giving. It’s not just a harmless little story. There’s a lot to them.”

#### Classroom Applications

Teacher 1: “I wondered about this book [Dear Whiskers], has anybody ever asked you [the researcher] of taking the idea from this story? Wouldn’t it be fun?”

Teacher 2: “That was my immediate thought too.”

Teacher 1: “I like that idea of creating a relationship with someone that they might never create a relationship with... They could be two people who never would be caught socializing and then when they realize who it is, they think: Oh!”



“[Participating in the book club] certainly made me look at books in a different way. Certainly I will do more reading of the story really carefully before I actually present a book to my class. Because I think there is a lot going on in stories that I haven’t paid attention to.”



“This might be a difficult thing for us to do but [writing] what we would like to see in literature. What we as educators would really like to see. What types of tales would we like to see. What kinds of issues would we like to see [written about].”



“I think that’s the one thing ... that I really really got out of this. I mean, it’s always something that I kind of thought in my head, that this has to be meaningful, blah, blah, blah but bringing forth some of the books that you brought and doing some of the stories we did, it really made it kind of more... It hit me that I really have to work at doing this; this has to work for the kids in the same way, because that’s how they’ll get drawn in. Instead of just getting the story and reiterating it.”



“There’s very little transference of empathy or acceptance or inclusion by saying: we like people who wear glasses, or people who write with their left hand. Those are very visual and open things. They learn not to make fun of those things but I think if there was transference from that to what we’re really trying to teach them...”

#### Teacher Reflection

“I want to examine further this whole idea of whether or not, in my ignorance, I am actually doing that squeezing out [of the Indian] thing. I keep thinking of my kids

and being two-faced. Am I doing that? I need someone to call me on it when they see it.”



“If we say, “I’m dead set against racism,” that doesn’t do anything. Wearing anti-racist pins, that doesn’t do anything. You’ve got to find every moment, you can’t miss a moment, when you can demonstrate that. Because if you can’t do it with authenticity, you shouldn’t do it at all.”



“By making it an issue in my classroom, and bringing it to the forefront, am I....? You know, when you try to do something right and it just backfires on you (“First Nations! I’m sick of First Nations!”), am I doing the same thing? It’s a hard one.”



Pursuing a M.A. in Education, or seriously thinking about it



“I think I appreciate the opportunity to sit down; it’s like exercise, you know. Sometimes I don’t feel [inaudible] but yeah, I’ve really enjoyed doing it. . . I’m glad I signed up for it because it reminded me to read for pleasure... It’s actually so uplifting and it changes your thinking.”

Staying in Contact with the Researcher

Remaining in contact with the researcher who can provide support for initiatives as well as share new resources and titles.

Beginning another book club on-line with interested teachers, starting with teachers from the study.

Establishing a longitudinal perspective by following teachers or a teacher over time to see what changes, if any, come about in their reflective practice around “differences.”

The actions that teachers identified stand for beginnings. “Starting out means setting off down the road, getting going” (Freire, 1994, p. 70). Education is often criticized for wallowing in beginnings; new curricula, new approaches, new this, new that. Other reasons no doubt exist for this phenomenon, but perhaps it is also because of this necessary association of learning with beginning. As Terry said about participating in the book club, “it feels like a beginning, not an end” (LC4; 06.03).

#### Summary of the Study’s Outcomes

A distinction needs to be made between the learning that happened within the context of teachers’ participation in the study and the learning that teachers took away at the end of the study. Theories of learning often rely on the metaphor of the iceberg. The learning that is outwardly represented (as in an exam, an essay, a study) signifies a portion of the learning that may have actually happened. A longitudinal perspective on the study would be required to explore the connections that teachers made between their participation and their lives as readers and teachers. Before identifying future directions for research, what were the study’s outcomes, as they were articulated in chapters five to seven?

1. *Teachers remember more about their literacy and lived history than may at first appear.* These “landscapes of learning” provide the topography of memory (eg. “touchstones”) against which learning occurs. These landscapes are often associated with childhood but also with the formation of self in relation to others in childhood.

2. *Teachers' constructions of "difference" occur against the background of other social, political and cultural constructions* (literacy, lived experience of "difference", literary response, story and childhood) therefore the most effective pedagogical method of addressing "difference" may not be to address it directly or on its own but in the context of these other constructions, for example through examining stories.
3. *Teachers bring their own learning strategies and approaches*, some based on a perspective of "distance", others in "attachment." These strategies and approaches need to be looked at more closely in teacher education for both are conducive to new learning.
4. *Recognition of contradictions occurred against the background of the teacher's own memories, specifically of family*, which meant that the teacher was more likely to take up that learning for herself and pursue its implications. From methodological as well as pedagogical standpoints, the interviews provided teachers with an opportunity to examine their own literacy and lived backgrounds, and it was in these settings that contradictions tended to come to light.
5. *Teachers need time to converse, grow and learn with one another* without the pressure of applying material to the classroom and some teachers indicated an interest in creating such contexts.
6. *"Bringing memory forward" is unlikely to happen completely on its own and requires a sustained context*, as served by the important role of the researcher in using prompts and probes like, "What have you been noticing?" and infusing material for the express purpose of bringing memory forward, for example through the

juxtaposition of familiar with unfamiliar literature. Teachers were interested in undertaking this work with support from others.

#### Future Directions for Research

The most promising area of research coming out of this study lies in developing “critical” pedagogies that begin from the learner while also taking account of the social, political and cultural contexts of discourse, power and society. It is hoped that this study initiates such a conversation, which could be begun with other researchers and teacher-educators, as well as through continuing efforts to establish such professional development with practicing teachers of the kind in which the teacher does not remain dependant on the outside expert as well as exploring learner-centred pedagogies in the classroom with preservice teachers. The study also provides support for infusing the discussion of the construction of “differences” into discussions of early childhood education, constructions of childhood, literacy and language, children’s literature, in short, all of those preservice education courses that are generally unmarked by “difference” except incidentally. More research needs to be done on how these discourses intersect, such as the work that Norquay (1999) has been conducting on discourses of “difference” and early childhood in teacher education. This would be an alternative to consistently focusing the energy and oftentimes the tension of teachers confronting racism and prejudice primarily within required courses on cross-cultural or multicultural understanding. On a similar note, one of the issues that Yvonne (one of the participating teachers) raised was how the publishing industry influences the production of “difference” and which stories teachers have access to. How are “multicultural” books produced and marketed? How

much control does an Aboriginal author, for example, have over the text and illustrations? The whole argument of access needs to be examined more closely, both for what it hides (the “had I known I would have acted” argument) as well as what it reveals about the stories that are valued within a society.

The role of story structure in fashioning the imagination also has direct applications to research and teaching. How children’s intertextual connections are formed and what influence teachers have in that formation is an area of research that Harris, Trezise and Winser (2002) have already begun to investigate. Such studies would provide teachers in my study, for example, with opportunities to pursue their inquiries through teacher-researcher collaborations. Peer-reviewed journals such as *Research in the Teaching of English* as well as more practice-oriented journals like *Reading Teacher* could provide forums for publishing such work. In general, the connections between intertextuality, literacy and education in the context of multicultural literacy education have been underexplored, as have the links between intertextuality, memory and the construction of “difference.”

One obvious connection in education to the role of memory in learning is schema theory. My approach in this study has been more literary, with its emphasis on cultural constructions of story, rather than in the psychology of how “the mind works.” Nevertheless, one future direction for research is to systematically gather together the insights from various fields within and outside education, including cognitive psychology, to explore the role of memory in teacher learning, particularly in the context of “difference.” What can be taken away from these studies that is

applicable to the classroom setting? Historical studies of the role of memory in learning would also provide a valuable background to such work.

From an action research perspective, more attention needs to be paid to supporting contexts for teacher learning, but from a longitudinal perspective (LeCompte, 1993). A future direction for this particular study would be for the researcher to continue her association and involvement with the participating teachers to see what came of their learning, both in the form of concrete actions, such as through the creation of literature circles, as well as individually. Such a longitudinal perspective on the research would also support the learning that was begun.

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Appendix I  
Literacy Autobiography Prompts

These are only suggested ideas for the content of the literacy autobiography that we'll write next time in our literature circle. Please bring your own ideas! We'll write for 15-20 minutes but only after spending some time discussing these questions and any others that teachers bring.

(Literacy often means books, but it could also mean visual media and oral stories as well as feelings, sensations, places or people (such as teachers) that you associate with literacy).

What do you look for in a good book for the classroom (reading aloud, centres, novel studies, literature circles, or silent reading)?

Name some books, authors, or genres that you enjoy using in your class. Why those books, authors or genres?

What do you look for in a good book to read in your own time?

Which stories do you remember best from childhood? What is it that you remember about them?

Which memories stand out in your childhood and adolescent experiences of reading or writing?

Were there any literacy experiences (books, people, places) that you wish you could have had?

Do you recall feeling dissatisfied with any of the books you read in or out of school? Why?

Appendix II:  
Condensed Lists Compiled from the Literacy Autobiographies

Teachers read aloud these lists in the literature circles. The following lists represent condensed versions of the ones used in the circles.

**LC1**

*Family literacy:* Comics: Archie, Conan the Barbarian, war comics, newspaper funnies

National Geographic & other literacy materials around the house, including catalogues, shopping lists, magazines, newspapers, condensed Reader's Digest

*Early Reading:*

Fairy tales, in the original version: Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Twelve Dancing Princesses, Grimm's Fairy Tales; Peter Pan, Heidi, Anthologies, as in bed-time stories, Bible stories, Disney stories, Winnie-the-Pooh

*More independent reading:* Pippi Longstocking, Beverly Clearly, Five Little Peppers and How They Grew, Judy Blume, esp Tales of a Fourth-Grade Nothing, Anne of Green Gables

Adventures: Bobbsey Twins; Enid Blyton, Secret Seven; The Hobbit; Trixie Belden; Nancy Drew; Hardy Boys

Books of manners: Little Women, Jack and Jill, Little Men, Jane Austen, Edith Wharton

*Books read in adolescence and college:*

The Chrysalids, Lord of the Flies, Who Has Seen the Wind, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, To Kill a Mockingbird, Black like Me, The Good Earth, by Pearl Buck, The Snow Goose, Pardon Me, You're Stepping on my Eyeball, I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Farewell for Arms, The Great Gatsby, Homage to Catalonia, The Pigman, Ethan Frome, Crime and Punishment, Our Town

*Popular culture:* movies, comics, magazines (teen), Book-of-the-Month club (Stephen King, etc.)

## Themes

Access to books: borrowing them (owning a library card; quality of school and public library book collections), buying them (Scholastic Book Orders); owning own books: Christmas, birthday gifts, owning collections of books, eg. comics; gift certificates.

Availability of literacy materials in the home

Who read in the family

Whether read aloud to (bedtime, Sunday funnies, school)

Parents' attitudes towards literacy/books

Rituals (personal, family, community, societal) surrounding reading

The reading experience (caught up in another world; escape; absorption)

Inclinations

*Teacher 1:* war comic books, the underdog, politics, fanzines, First Nations authors and poets, Central American authors, esp. Paulo Naruda, Black authors, eg. Langston Hughes; biographies

*Teacher 2:* fairy tales and the subterranean; books of "manners"; historical fiction; biographies and autobiographies, esp. Frida Kahlo & Diego Rivera); theology & theosophy; Jewish "Hasidic" tales

*Teacher 3:* humor (books with weird titles); stories that could apply to real life; relationships; FN lit (esp. spiritual/environment); biographies and autobiographies

## LC2

### Books that Stood Out in Childhood, Adolescence, College

A Town Like Alice

Animal Farm

Anne Frank's Diary

Beverly Cleary

Black Beauty

Bobbsey Twins

Borrowers

C.S. Lewis, Narnia

Children's encyclopedia set

Enid Blyton, Secret Seven

Huck Finn

Indian Captive

Jungle Book

Just So Stories

Kipling

Little House on the Prairie

Lord of the Flies

Lord of the Rings

Man in the Iron Mask

Mazo de la Roche

Nancy Drew  
Old Yeller  
Of Mice and Men  
Peter Pan  
Scarlet Letter  
Shakespeare  
The History of Rasputin  
The Other Side of the Mountain  
The Wind in the Willows  
To Kill a Mockingbird  
Tom Sawyer

Trixie Belden  
Where the Red Fern Grows

Books Used Now in the Classroom

Carle, Eric  
Cleary, Beverly (Ramona books)  
Clifford  
Dr. Seuss  
Franklin  
Gilmore, Phoebe  
Henry, Marguerite  
Island of the Blue Dolphins  
Jiggs, Jillian  
Julia of the Wolves  
Lionni, Leo  
Pied Piper of Hamelin

## Genres

### *Adventure and Fantasy*

#### *“Boy” books*

“Against odds” stories, survival books, “Boys doing things” books, boys’ adventure stories but not Hardy Boys

Adventure stories like *Old Yeller* and *Little House on the Prairie*

Science fiction, or creatures living in different worlds

*The Hobbit*; *Lord of the Rings*

#### *“Girl” books*

Girls’ [books] of Betsy this and Betsy that (Betsy and Tacey stories)

Romantic stories

#### *Borderlands between “Girl” and “Boy” books*

Boarding school stories. Girls had adventures but in boarding schools

Swordfights in Shakespeare (fairy tale)

### *Other Genres*

Animal stories, esp. horse books

Stories that felt connected to real life (history, biography, drama, including

Shakespeare and the acting out of plays)

### Experiences

*Rituals*: Bedtime story; being read to or reading to younger siblings

*Reading Habits (Personal)*: reading certain books cover to cover; rereading books from childhood; voracious appetite for reading

*Reading Habits (Social; Family)*: Social rituals surrounding reading (Sundays; formal time; formal dress); Receiving books as gifts (Christmas)

*Involvement with Stories*: Compassion (animals, humans); Visualization; Acting out stories; Comparing oneself with characters; Emotional response (crying at the end of stories, especially animal stories)

*Experience(s) as a Reader*: predicting the plot/ending from the first page; noticing genre/audience conventions, especially gender; seeing how badly people could treat each other (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Scarlet Letter*)

*Cross-cultural Experiences with Books:* Indian Captive, Uncle Tom's Cabin, The Scarlet Letter, A Town Like Alice, Gone with the Wind

#### Other Observations

Access to books/book choice

differences in public library/school library collections

books able to borrow from public library and not school library

constrained by gender: boys books, girls books

White European culture as common to all books read

even the books with non-white characters in them written by white authors

Little or no representation of First Nations peoples' stories in school

Reading literature as opening a door onto a broader world

### LC3

#### Themes

*Stories that Stand Out:* oral stories about ancestors, about the everyday, with an important message; stories that are real or feel real; literacy experiences with parents or siblings, including bedtime stories

*Other Themes Noticed:*

the stranger in *James and the Giant Peach* and *Cat in the Hat*

differing perspectives on stories that vary with age, eg. as a child, you read stories like *Little Red Riding Hood* unaware of the real harm/danger out there in the world; as an adult, you read the same stories and see danger.

Questioning whether to teach certain kinds of stories to kids and when eg. fairy tales in gr 1?

"Big time values" invested in the telling of certain stories

*Things Missing:* Canadian content in school textbooks and curriculum specifically, teaching about other FN in Canada

#### Books Read in Childhood

*At School:* Little Red Riding Hood, The Hobbit, The Secret World of Og, The Mr. Happy books, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Where the Wild Things Are

*At Home:* nursery rhymes, fairy tales, sci fi/fantasy, The Hobbit, “knock knock” jokes  
Cinderella (deluxe edition), Little House on the Prairie, Judy Blume books

*Books Read as an Adult:* Michael Creighton, historical stories, romance stories,  
Shakespeare, Open House, Stoney Creek Woman, Rigoberta Menchu, The Crippled  
Tree

*Books Read to Kids/grandkids:* Skysisters, Childcraft Encyclopedia, Cinderella, Peter  
Pan

*Books Used in the Classroom:* Charlotte’s Web; Storm Boy; Frog Girl, Rosie’s Walk,  
The Paper Bag Princess

#### LC4

##### *Early childhood*

Anne of Green Gables  
Beethoven  
Blyton, Enid  
Bobbsey Twins  
Book of Knowledge  
Byars, Betsy  
Children’s Ency.  
Cleary, Beverly  
Grimm’s Fairy Tales  
Hardy Boys  
horse books  
Little Women  
Nancy Drew  
Pippi Longstocking  
Secret World of Og  
Tom Sawyer

##### *High school*

Chrysalids  
Animal Farm  
Historical fiction  
I Never Promised You  
a Rose Garden  
Island of the Blue  
Dolphins  
Lord of the Flies  
“Boys fighting” stories  
Shakespeare  
Steinbeck

##### *Adult reading*

Alienist  
Angel of Darkness  
Coral Island  
Creighton, Michael  
Deptford Trilogy  
Glass Bead Game;  
Hesse, Herman  
Hamlet  
Herriot, James  
High action story  
Historical fiction  
History; German, Jewish  
Hobbit  
Kingsolver, Barbara  
Life & Teachings of  
Masters of Far East  
Michener, James  
Mrs. Mike  
mystery stories  
Places You’ll Go  
Pocketbooks  
Poisonwood Bible  
Princess Bride  
Romance  
Trollope, Joanne  
White Oleander  
*Books used in the  
classroom*  
Big Red  
Breadwinner

Brett, Jan  
Christopher, John  
classics  
Coral Island  
Cougar Cove  
Dicey’s Song  
Dr. Seuss  
Dust Bowl  
Fairy tales  
Fur and Feathers  
Grandma & the Pirates  
Harry Potter  
Island of the Blue Dolphins  
Lawson, Julie  
Little House on the Prairie  
Little, Jean  
Maniac McGee  
Me and Mr. Maw  
Polar Express  
Sadako and the  
Thousand Cranes  
science fiction  
Shadows on the Wall  
social messages  
Spalding, Andrea  
Three Musketeers  
Treasure Island  
Velveteen Rabbit  
White Horse Talisman  
White Jade Tiger  
Willow and Twig

## Themes

Not being able to remember specific titles or authors, or only remembering them gradually (“Now that you mention it . . .”; “I’d forgotten all about that until now . . .”)

*Family History:* whether parents were readers; access to books (libraries, bookmobiles, books by mail); attitudes towards books (as things, as other worlds, as shared, eg. family bonding; experiences of moving

*Memories from School:* (high school) depressing or tragic books; no choice.

*Personal Habits:* signing out books but not reading them; reading before bed; reading a mix of books (“fluff”/heavy); keeping boxes and boxes of books

*Literacy Experiences:*

falling in love with books or characters in books and books that didn’t engage

connecting stories with life

A lot of what we read, I think, the setting and the place, has a lot to do with what is going on in our life, don’t you think?

books as fulfilling needs (i.e. escape)

Appendix III:  
Teachers' Interpretations of Literacy Autobiography Discussion

In each of the four literature circles, we read aloud the notes from the transcripts (see Appendix II). I then asked teachers to interpret the notes in terms of what was familiar, present or there; what tended to be absent; and based on the answers to those two questions, what directions they wanted to pursue in the literature circles. Often the last two questions became collapsed into one (i.e. the books that were missing were ones that teachers wanted to learn more about)

**LC1**

What Was Present

books as treasures  
 reading as an escape (especially in childhood)  
 love of learning (other worlds, other perspectives, other lives; other styles of writing)  
 increasing interest in biographies and autobiographies  
 reading as moving away from indoctrination (a concern with how to make people behave) to reading on the margins, the “downtrodden,” the quirky

Missing/Directions

the spiritual (theosophy; spiritualism and social realism in Aboriginal literature)  
 social engineering (other possible worlds)  
 contemporary Aboriginal literature, and other literature in which people are reclaiming their lives, including the shift from third to first person and the importance of hearing certain experiences because of the times we live in  
 Middle Eastern perspectives in literature  
 Immigrant experiences  
 The aging person  
 Jewish perspectives and culture  
 The classics (eg. Virginia Woolf)

## LC2

### Commonalities

books tended to fall into category of girl books or boy books

White European culture as common to all books read

even the books with non-white characters in them written by white authors; little or no First Nations representation in books

many adventure (genre) books, or ones that involve a struggle

settings of stories tended to be not in cities but instead took place outside of cities, eg.

Nature, the wild, farms (eg. animal stories; adventure stories)

stories took place “away,” in a place different from growing up in one’s hometown

stories contained traditional moral lessons (“Golden Rule”)

common plot structure: things turn out all right in the end

common ends for characters: characters could be mischievous but things always turned

out all right in the end

common characters: good people; stable families

access to books mostly from public libraries

not bookstores

no recollection of “Children’s Literature” (as there is today)

### Missing

Canadian children’s literature

a sense of world and Canadian history (for example, in school)

multicultural literature and other voices

immigrant voices

### Directions

Multicultural contemporary literature (everyone)

literature that feels real instead of contrived for a multicultural purpose

Canadian literature, esp. First Nations (moving beyond the myth)

local histories and stories (eg. of coal mining)

rereading familiar literature, esp. *Little House on the Prairie*

### LC3

#### Already there/familiar

a focus on and commitment to FN literature

history/oral history, especially real stories

stories of family and relationships

fairy tales and nursery rhymes

#### Missing/Directions

spirituality (books that have lessons, deal with emotions and have a cultural basis)

young adult books (told from the perspective of their own experience)

stories about staying in school

more on First Nations literature: appropriate and worthy literature, FN authors (eg.

Thomas King, Thomson Highway), non-FN authors writing on FN,

books that would tie in with classroom themes (eg. animals); alternative

versions of fairy tales; myths

books on other indigenous cultures

eg. Maori, Aborigine, Peru

including colonization experiences across indigenous cultures

books on other cultures

Chinese New Year (eg. Lion Dance)

what children do in different cultures

### LC4

#### Commonalities

Human interest stories, for example, story about somebody's life

Something in the story connects to or validates personal experience or feelings

Stories in which there is a problem, and the problem is getting solved

Seeking stories that offer another perspective on the situation or problem

Stand-bys or beloved favorites that remain popular through time (eg. Dr. Seuss; Pippi Longstocking; Coral Island)

Many classroom stories that have cultural, social or multicultural aspects or messages

### Missing

when younger, little or no books in the form of diaries whereas popular format now

when younger, little or no books based on films (eg. Disney) nor were biographies of actors and actresses available

### Directions

First Nations legends and myths (the ones that have actually been handed down by a nation or tribe)

Multicultural literature

- by multicultural, mean books that show an empathy for differences, allow the reader to walk in another's shoes, and that make difference as not scary
- specifically, Muslim, Black, First Nations
- engaging for children

Specific historical issues in children's books, eg. slave trade

Any engaging books for children

Appendix IV:  
Example from Annotated Book Lists

Annotated Bibliography  
Sticky Situations; Happy Endings?

If the author is writing from within the perspective of their own race/culture, the book is marked with an asterisk (\*).

*Picture Books*

English, Karen. (1999). Nadia's hands. Boyds Mills Press.

When Nadia's hands are painted so that she can be a flower girl in her sister's Pakistani wedding, will her classmates tease her?  
(additional background: film, "Monsoon Wedding")

\*Garay, Luis. (1997). Pedrito's day. Stoddart. [Nicaragua]

Pedrito was entrusted with an important errand and some money. But he got distracted on the way there and lost the money. What should he do?

\*Gilmore, Rachna. (1999). A screaming kind of day. Fitzhenry & Whiteside.  
(Governor General's Literary Award) [Indo-Canadian]

Should Scully go outside to feel the rain on her face when her mother has told her not to? She will have to take out her hearing aides...

Heide, Florence Parry & Gilliland, Judith Heide. (1990). Sami and the time of troubles. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

What can children do to end war?

Innocenti, Roberto. (1985). Rose Blanche.

What can a French schoolgirl do to help children in a detention camp during WWII?  
There is barely enough food in the house for her family.

\*Khan, Rukhsana. (1998). The Roses in My Carpets. Toronto: Stoddart.  
[Muslim]

How can a child who lives in a refugee camp (in the Middle East) hang onto his dreams of a better life?

\*Skarmata, Antonio. (2000). The composition. Groundwood Books. [Chilean]

Should Pedro write a composition on what his parents do in the evenings? If he does, he might win the Chilean government's writing competition and get a new soccer ball.

### *Novels*

Carlsson, Janne. (1987). Camel bells. Groundwood Books.

How can Hajdar make a way for himself in the world when there are rumours that his country (Afghanistan) may be invaded? Takes place on the cusp of the Russian occupation of Afghanistan.

\*Curtis, Christopher Paul. (1999). Bud, not Buddy. Delacorte Press. (Newberry) [African American/Canadian]

How can Bud, who moves from foster home to foster home, find his true family? Comical yet serious. Bud creates his own rules to survive in the world of adults, eg. "Rules and Things Number 83: If a adult tells you not to worry, and you weren't worried before, you better hurry up and start 'cause you're already running late." see also Curtis' The Watsons Go to Birmingham--1963

Ellis, Deborah. (2002). Parvana's journey. Groundwood Books.

Can Parvana be reunited with her family in a war-torn Afghanistan?

Ellis, Deborah. (2000). The Breadwinner. Groundwood Books.

How can Parvana help her family when the Taliban does not allow girls to appear in public?

\*Park, Linda Sue. (2001). A single shard. Dell Yearling. (Newberry Medal)

How can Tree-Ear help himself and his friend Crane-man to stay alive from day to day in twelfth century Korea? Being an orphan on the margins of Korean society, can Tree-ear achieve his life's dream, which is to become an apprentice and eventually a potter himself?

Snicket, Lemony. (1999). The reptile room. Harper Collins.

How can an orphaned family of children deal with life's calamities of villains and sheer bad luck?

Appendix V:  
Literature Selected for the Literature Circle Themes

LC1:

1. Images of blackness/whiteness: Little Black Sambo (Bannermann); Little Babbaji (Bannermann); Black Like Me (Griffin); Invisible Man (Ellison)
2. Making the transition from third person to first person narratives: Journey to Lhasa (Berger); Hana's Suitcase (Levine); When Marian Sang (Ryan)
3. The underdog: The Composition (Skarmata); No Time to Say Goodbye (Olsen)
4. With LC3 (Whose story is it?)

LC2:

1. "Indian Captive" stories: Indian Captive: The Story of Mary Jemison (Lenski); My Name is Seepeetza (Sterling)
2. European/African American plots and characters: Wow it's great being a duck (Rankin); Flossie and the Fox (McKissack)
3. Multicultural literature (oppressive situations): The Composition (Skarmata); Roses in my Carpet (Khan)
4. Alternative situations and families: "Holding" (Lowry); The Extraordinary Egg (Lionni)

LC3:

1. Traditional Aboriginal literature: Raven (McDermott); A Man Called Raven (Van Camp)
2. The Stranger/Fairy Tales in Aboriginal lit; Authenticity: Hartley Bay Red Riding Hood (Hartley Bay School); The Rough-Faced Girl (Martin); The Boy Who Went to Live with the Seals (Martin); Skysisters (Waboose)
3. Multicultural literature (oppressive situations): Roses in my Carpets (Khan), The Composition (Skarmata)
4. Whose story is it?: Myths and legends of Aotearoa (Ake); The Bone People (Hulme)

LC4:

1. First Nations oral traditional literature and the Western folktale: Raven and Snipe (Cameron); Raven and Snipe (Cameron)
2. Sticky situations, happy endings?: The Composition (Khan), Roses in my Carpets (Skarmata)
3. Uprooted: Coral Island (Ballantyne), No Time to Say Goodbye (Olsen)
4. Breaking the Barriers (Friendship): Bat 6 (Wolff)

Appendix VI:  
Prompts for Re-reading of the Triple-entry Journal and Literacy Autobiography

- one thing you notice
- one connection back to your literacy autobiography
- one thing you wonder about or would like to investigate further