

**Finding Voice:
A Teacher's Articulation of Her Subjectivity in Power Relations and Health**

by

Deborah Lyn-Marie Miller
B.Ed. University of Victoria, 1971


A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for the Degree of

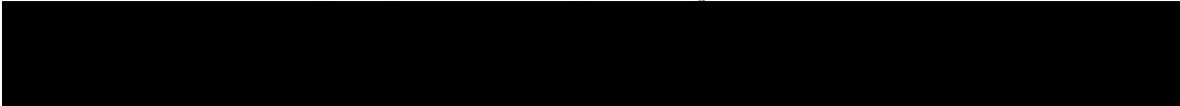
MASTER OF ARTS


in Curriculum Studies

in the Department of Communication and Social Foundations

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard


Dr. Antoinette Oberg, Supervisor (Department of Communication and Social


Dr. Margaret Robertson, Departmental Member (Department of
Communication and Social Foundations)


Dr. Anne Marshall, Outside Member (Department of Psychological
Foundation in Education)


Dr. Isobel Dawson, External Examiner (School of Nursing)

© Deborah Lyn-Marie Miller, 1997

University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or part, by
photocopy or other means without the permission of the author.

Supervisor: Dr. Antoinette Oberg

Abstract

In this thesis I acknowledge and articulate the power relations in my life as a teacher and I use the voice I develop for myself to extend opportunities to students to develop their voices. Located in the middle of the educational hierarchy, a teacher has more power than students and less power than administrators. Located in a patriarchal institution, a female teacher also has less power than male teachers. Power may be used autocratically to isolate and control or democratically to recognize and support others. When it is used to control, conflict and inconsistency result and create unhealthy relationships.

Becoming aware of the discourse of power has enabled me to work toward an articulation of my own subjectivity. By acknowledging feelings and body condition and altering my patterns of language, I have provided a healthier way of being.

This thesis is about recognizing and changing my participation in relationships of power from a position of dominance or submission to one of reciprocity and sharing with both colleagues and students. The method entails the use of narrative which benefits from, but is not limited to, the immediate and natural resource of memory to make incidents available for reflection.

Examiners:



Dr. Antoinette Oberg, Supervisor
(Department of Communication and Social Foundations)



Dr. Margaret Robertson, Departmental Member
(Department of Communication and Social Foundations)



Dr. Anne Marshall, Outside Member
(Department of Psychological Foundation in Education)



Dr. Isobel Dawson, External Examiner
(School of Nursing)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
ORIENTING THE READER–AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY	1
OUTLINING THE THESIS	10
ORIENTING MYSELF–A PRELUDE	13
FEELING ISOLATED	15
<u>At the Photocopier</u> and other short scenarios	16
 APPROACHING THE THEORIES	
Thinking About Power	
Power Relations	26
Power in Discourse	32
Gender Is Constructed Through Discourse	35
Power and the Hierarchy	37
Thinking About Self	
Subjectivity	41
Thinking About Others	46
Thinking About My Project	49
 DESIGNING THE METHOD	 53
 WRITING AND READING THE STORIES	
Introduction to the Stories	59
The ProD Meeting	61
The Tape	80
 SHIFTING DISCOURSES	
Learning About Democracy in the Classroom	85
Thinking About Class Meetings	89
<u>The Class Meeting</u>	91
Re-socializing Myself	101

Avoiding Cynicism, Living with Hope	103
CLOSING THE THESIS	
In the Milieu	106
POSTSCRIPT	
"Power"	108
AFTERWORD	109
BIBLIOGRAPHY	111

ORIENTING THE READER – AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I've been thinking about my brother's child by a young woman, a native woman. My niece. I do not even know how I learned of her, my family never speaks of her. My mother's first grandchild.

Last summer my sister was gathering information for a family reunion. "June," said my father in answer to the question "When were you married?"

"What does he know?" my mother scoffed when asked for verification later. "It was January."

I was born that year, in November.

Recently, two of my younger sisters, at separate times, have told me of uncomfortable moments they experienced with my former husband, both around the time I was pregnant with my first child and right before they stopped visiting me on a regular basis. They had never mentioned the incidents to me before. (Journal entries, February, 1996)

*

*

*

It was a hot day but I was cold inside my brother's house where I was writing. I went out to take a break and warm up by lying on the only patch of grass in the sun at the edge of the property, near the road, by the blackberries. Two young women came onto the grass with pails in their hands.

"Can I pick?" one woman said.

"Oh sure," I said, realizing she meant the blackberries. Then I added, "I don't live here either."

"Do you know Reed?" she said.

"He's my brother," I said, curiously. "Do you know him?" She was much younger than he.

"Yah, I know him. I saw him the other day at the restaurant where I work." Then she added, "I'm Rick's daughter." I was startled, shocked, Rick was my brother too. Here was the flesh and blood "child" I had been thinking about lately, the one no one in the family either talked about. She had been invisible to my family all her life.

She told me her name was Tammy. She is twenty-six years old, my brother's only child.

She invited me to tea at her home where she lives with her grandmother who raised her.

Before I went to her home I imagined her mother/grandmother blocking my comments at every turn. For example, if I said I was sorry for the way my family had ignored Tammy, I imagined her saying, "Don't give us that bleeding heart stuff." If I said I thought we should go on from here, not dwell on the past, I heard her saying, "Don't patronize us."

When I met her what she said was, "Thank you for recognizing Tammy," in a gentle voice.

"Thank you for recognizing Tammy." Such forgiving words. I am thanking her for raising my niece when my family should have taken a part. I missed her being a little girl. I never knew her when she was a teenager. I never got to visit her when she was sick. And why not? How did we effectively block this child out of our lives? How did my mother? My brother? (Journal entry, August 15, 1996)

This thesis is about learning to give myself and others voice. Through example and story about power relations, I illustrate that by paying attention to the voices within me, the voice of my physical body, the voice of my ethical sense, I show respect for myself and remain healthy. I show that when I know democracy within myself I can extend democratic opportunities to others through my discourse with them. I can allow students and colleagues their voices. I can encourage a "response-ability" with my students and staff.

I entered the university graduate program to think more about ethical living. "Ethical living," as I understand it, has to do with being respectful with others, regardless of our positions in hierarchical structures. After many years in the education system, I was often frustrated with contradictions between what we as educators espoused and what our actions were. For example, though I had heard educators espouse care for students or care for education, I would observe a persistent focus on discipline and control. Also, in the schools in which I worked, although we spoke of consensus and democracy, we did not use a process of decision making which allowed for any but the dominant voices. Even in my teaching I felt uncomfortable because I saw contradictions in my own behavior, such as the way I might handle a problem with a student, but I could not articulate them. I wanted to work with others to be different, but in the process of thinking more about relationships I found I had to change myself.

Documentation about my teaching ability and experience offers no evidence of frustration. Administrative reports from my school district note I am a creative teacher, dedicated, caring and supportive of my students. I was president of the Environmental Educators' Provincial Specialists Association. I worked with the Ministry of Education on various committees and projects.

I was involved in my local association in several capacities. But when I entered the university graduate program I was not the same person I had been when I started teaching in 1971. Although I had always worked at being an effective teacher, implementing curriculum which was based on caring for my students, at the beginning of my career I had not recognized inconsistencies within the system. Naturally my frustrations developed given these unrecognized and therefore unacknowledged inconsistencies.

My gender, social history, language and position in hierarchical institutions positioned and informed my particular patterns of power and subjugation. The following description of family values, expectations and behaviors will help to demonstrate how my background led to my present situation. I am a woman from a middle class Anglo-Saxon background, where gender roles were clearly differentiated. My father, a Navy pilot, often away on course or flights, was the head of the household when he was present; my mother, left with seven children, tried to assume that role when he was not. The children were not to question the parental authority. It was typical for either parent to resort to anger. My mother would sometimes cry. I was given no say in the proceedings of the family and I was not encouraged to speak my opinion about family matters. I was expected to be responsible and care for my siblings, not only because I was the oldest child but also because I was a female. As a female I was expected to behave politely and respectfully. I was expected to fulfill my parents' wishes with respect to achieving well in school and at work.

I accepted my responsibility and achieved well but I felt insecure compared to my brother, and men in general. These feelings of responsibility on the one hand and inadequacy on the other are in keeping with research about

family position. "[The firstborn] represents their [parent's] dreams and ambitions. In general he tends to be responsible. The firstborn child may lack personal security because he measures himself against adult levels of accomplishment. He may not hold up well under stress (Dreikurs, Grunwald and Pepper, 1982, p. 59). "If the first child is a girl and the second is a boy over whom the family fusses and if she draws the conclusion that boys are preferred, she may develop a feeling of inferiority and may try to overcompensate through achievement, charm, cooperation" (Dreikurs, et al. , 1982, p. 60).

My parents, with only a year or two of post-secondary education, were proud if not intimidated by my school achievements. I was encouraged to go to university. Marriage and children were expectations I perceived from my family sometime after high school, but there was no expectation from them that I would work after marriage. My choices were in keeping with family and cultural expectations. I was encouraged to set high goals for myself for school and work. I became a science and English teacher. In the science department, with our focus on rational thinking and drawing specific conclusions from observed data, I was the only female. I rarely noticed the mixed messages of the culture I had taken up. For example, my father left my mother, though marriage and family were values he espoused; my brother and a young Indian girl became parents, but neither he, nor my mother ever spoke of his daughter, her grandchild. Acknowledging the inconsistencies between what is said and what is done, is a recurring theme in my thesis.

In my career I worked on many projects with other educators to develop an ethical way of being in the schools. We thought about our relationships with students, the effect of our actions on the environment, and how we as a

school staff made decisions. We developed workshops and conferences for and with students, initiated a recycling program, and encouraged a school nutrition policy. The goal was to have our practice reflect our values. I created a locally-developed course on environmental education where the students and I designed and developed our program together, democratically. We tried to be honest and ethical with ourselves and our students, we tried to make our actions consistent with our beliefs.

Administrators were cautious about some of the projects. We were allowed to proceed if no one complained, but, in general, there was little interest and no enthusiasm from most of the staff. I thought that by not taking a position on some issues as a staff, we were in fact taking a stand through our unspoken actions, or lack of actions. For example, by not recycling, our staff said recycling wasn't a priority; by selling unhealthy food we said that promoting healthy eating was not as important as the money provided by the sales; by posting signs that said "No Students Allowed" we modeled a disrespectful attitude toward students.

Many of our school policies contradicted themselves and I suspect they probably confused students. They demonstrated a separation of thought and action, body and mind. Discouraged, I spoke up about the contradictions I observed at staff meetings or during staff room informal discussions.

I began to notice other inconsistencies between what people said and the way they behaved toward each other and their students. Even curriculum directives from the Ministry of Education were contradictory. For example, I was asked to evaluate students using an exam based on informational content which did not allow for individual ways of learning. This was inconsistent

with the responsibility I was encouraged to feel towards students as individuals by other Ministry directives.

I began to question authority. Jones (1988) defines authority according to the dominant discourses as "a set of practices designed to institutionalize social hierarchies" (p. 120). Where I had not questioned the practices by which we operated as a school and an institution before, I began to doubt their authority, and that of the people who promoted them.

While I tried to encourage the staff to look closely at some of our policies, few others were prepared to think about the ethics we presented as a school. In one case, after a few teachers initiated a school nutrition policy and the staff accepted it, a teacher's wife wanted to sell hot dogs to students. At a staff meeting several people spoke about the issue, some for, some against the idea. During the course of my speech I passed the teacher a book with some current information about nitrates in meat. He responded by throwing the book back at me. It struck me in the face. I was shocked but said nothing. No one else said anything about the incident then, and only a few staff ever acknowledged it later.

I did not try to antagonize, but I knew I had become very visible when almost everything I did and said brought a reaction from certain people. For some, perhaps, my questions came too close to questioning personal values. Certainly, I noticed and felt the ire of several colleagues, often male.

Because I wanted to encourage changes and did not wish to incur the anger of my colleagues, I learned to become very cautious about how I approached issues. I began to consider that I was not held in equal regard, as I had previously thought myself.

By contrast, my experience in the graduate program, even part-time, was invigorating, energizing and encouraging. I encountered people and literature that questioned present paradigms, for example, writings by Foucault (1980), Deleuze (1987), Haraway (1989), Grumet (1988), Berman (1990), Dinnerstein (1969). Here, I found support for an ethical way of thinking, a way of thinking which encouraged me to make connections and take responsibility for my thinking and actions. I developed more understanding of myself as a teacher in a changing hierarchical system. I found respect for myself and my ideas. I was encouraged to continue to take democratic responsibility for creating the learning I wanted with others. In my course work I received high recognition for my work.

From my experiences in teaching and in university I learned it was important to encourage students to share in the responsibility for their learning by making decisions and experiencing the effects of their collective power. I came to value and encourage the democratic voices of my students as partners in education.

Though I valued my students' voices I did not recognize the degree to which my voice was rejected by my colleagues and how much that affected my sense of well being in my job. I did not pay attention to the signs in my body and my language which indicated I was not well. Eventually I became too sick to teach, that is, I did not respect myself, I did not value myself. I left teaching for a period during which I had to ask myself some important questions. Can there be a direct connection between how a person perceives her or himself, how he or she is perceived by others, and physical, emotional and spiritual health? Can the way we recognize our power of authority in a hierarchy affect the wellbeing of those we work with, both students and staff?

Can I accept the family and cultural patterns which define me, to effect the change I need to maintain my own health as well as the health of the students with whom I work? Can the recognition of the contradictions that one observes and tries to bring into balance become too overwhelming to deal with? The kind of conscious struggle I am engaged in here, to be aware of the inconsistencies between theory and practice, to lift them out of invisibility and into the light of scrutiny, as with my niece Tammy, to "make sense in a world of contradictory information, radical contingency and cultural forms," (Lather, 1991, p. 118) is the focus of my work. What is important on the personal level can be transferred to the public.

OUTLINING THE THESIS

I have started my thesis with the preceding autobiographical piece in order to provide the reader with some insight into my background, to prepare for what is to come. Following this outline is "Orienting Myself--A Prelude," which describes how my students and I share power. The language of power is constituted in the incidents of the story, that is, the way I am with my colleagues and my students, my actions, speak for me. They are me. Then, a section on illness and health called "Feeling Isolated" describes relationships with others which are unhealthy, and therefore isolating, and attempts to define health as the basis for cognizance. Next, "Approaching the Theories," summarizes the important concepts about gender, social history, power and subjectivity I studied for my inquiry. "Designing the Method," outlines the significance of using narrative and writing as an act of research. In succeeding sections I give examples of how recognition or isolation can be constituted in the discourses of the system of education. The next section of the thesis, "Writing and Reading the Stories," contains two stories. Because narratives offer an immediate opportunity for reflective practice, (Van Manen, 1990), the telling and reading of the stories are concurrent, that is, I have presented them simultaneously on the page, the narrative in the left column, the reflection in the right. My stories show how I think and respond in particular situations, including during the process of recording a story where I experience the inconsistencies of power. The second story is also rewritten to demonstrate a more healthful process of interaction with others. By writing narratives and by thinking about my interactions with individuals in the educational institution, I show my struggle to be aware of conflicting

discourses and to recognize the way I am with others. I try to reclaim the ownership of authority which I allowed others to have over me, an effect which led to ill health. I explain and demonstrate by the stories I tell that health is constituted in the language I am engaged in with others and depends on being conscious about discourse in relationships.

Following "Writing and Reading the Stories" is the section called "Shifting Discourses." In this section I relate stories which demonstrate the politics of the educational and social hierarchy, as well as stories which demonstrate some things I have learned by reflecting on my subjectivity within the hierarchy of the school. This section develops the concept of health as a respectful acknowledgement and acceptance of self and other.

The stories in "Writing and Reading the Stories" provide the raw material, the data, to show what is at work in situations of authority. In "Shifting Discourses," the stories constitute an explanation of the effects of those situations where I do not relinquish my own authority. They demonstrate health and ethical discourse at work. Stories serve as a succinct way of explaining, of deepening understanding. The stories about teaching demonstrate procedures and behaviors which allow a healthy way of being between myself and my students, allow us to redistribute power more equitably as we create a democratic classroom together. Comments are interspersed within the stories or follow them.

A poem by Adrienne Rich in the section called "Postscript" epitomizes the ideas presented in this thesis. My friend and I performed this poem in the first class I took in graduate studies. Because it involves power, health and a woman scientist with some authority in a text which is deliberately not clear, it is significant for me.

Finally, in the "Afterword," I revisit an early story and represent it from a more healthful, democratic perspective.

ORIENTING MYSELF- A PRELUDE

I walk around the middle school and speak to several students. I listen for their reactions. Some are shy, some are indifferent, some are enthusiastic. It matters to me that they speak. In response to my "Hey Jason" I hear "Hey Ms. Miller, how's it going?"

I like students speaking to me in a friendly way. I feel comfortable, recognized, accepted. Being accepted is an accomplishment in a place where acceptance is clearly known and shown. I am an authority figure for them, and students often question authority. I do not dispute respectful questioning and because I do not they can accept my authority more easily.

Here, in this place of learning, we learn together.

How we are with each other matters.

My social history did not prepare me for some of their culture—the rap music they turn down immediately when they hear me coming; the swear words they use with each other, albeit generally without conviction; the racist comments they make; the homophobic names they call each other when they are angry or teasing.

Usually I joke with them or just look at them, and my rebuke is accepted pleasantly.

Sometimes I get angry. I revert to old responses learned at home.

It is right to speak about my anger, to explain why I find something unacceptable. But when I resort to angry actions or words I lose their respect, and my own.

I am of a privileged class in the school hierarchy, one with the power of authority. I began teaching at a time when the hegemony attached to the title "teacher" was expected and accepted.

But now, because students are part of a generation which knows about rights and about ethics, respect must be earned to be kept. It must be felt, by students and teachers.

Sometimes I ask myself why I gave up a job as senior biology teacher in the high school.

There were many students. I saw them once a day, for an hour.

I didn't know them very well, they didn't know me. It was a safe place, that place of not knowing.

Now I know my students, all too well at times. They are responsible to me, and I am responsible to them.

Knowing that is a tremendous responsibility.

I am trying to live my life thoughtfully, in full consciousness, accepting the privileges, acknowledging the limitations, of my social history, of my gender, of my position in a hierarchical system, staying respectful.

FEELING ISOLATED

In the preceding section, "Orienting Myself," I used narrative observation to demonstrate when I felt powerful in interaction with others. In this section I discuss the isolating effect which can come from an inability to recognize the discourse of power in these interactions. I clarify why I felt disregarded by colleagues and abandoned by policies of the Ministry of Education enough to take a leave of absence from teaching. I explain how recent reports on teacher health suggest wellness is problematic at best. In subsequent sections I will explain some very deliberate and effective ways which I use to work with students in a conscious, respectful way which foster my own sense of wellness and promote a healthy interaction.

Working independently from colleagues can encourage self-reliance and help a person recognize her voice as a teacher and as an individual. In this case the positive isolation of independence might affirm identity. However, it can also have the opposite effect. When isolation is imposed, or is perceived to be imposed by colleagues or by a system, then there is a feeling of loss of power.

In high schools, particularly, many different programs operate independently from each other. The teachers in charge of them become self-reliant. After many years in the classroom I gained my voice as an individual and as a teacher. As I did, I felt less inclined to work with my students in the traditional teacher-directed method and I embraced ways to involve the learner more actively in the programs I taught, in spite of restrictive demands of Ministry of Education directives such as provincial exams.

As long as the changes I made were inside my classroom and still accommodated the Ministry guidelines I had few repercussions from the education system. When I made attempts to encourage more holistic thinking and action in the school, I began to feel a difference in my acceptance with staff. I met with more and more resistance and hostility as the discourses of the established teachers and administrators made it difficult for innovations to be introduced into the establishment. I and a few other teachers and students lost enthusiasm and confidence.

Evelyn Fox Keller (1983) makes a study of the time between when Barbara McClintock developed some of her revolutionary genetic theory and when she was finally widely recognized for it. It took thirty years for McClintock's theory to be accepted by her colleagues, in spite of several efforts to bring it to their attention. She came to feel isolated and alienated from them. Like Barbara McClintock, I began to feel more and more isolated from my colleagues.

I am not an inexperienced teacher. I have been on staff for longer than most. I have developed curriculum in both my district and the province. I have many supportive colleagues, I have created innovative programs in my class and in the school and district, and I know about current curricular notions.

And yet, I began to feel an attitude, against me, mostly by male colleagues.

At the Photocopier

"Okay Darcy, so you want me to copy this section here?"

Darcy and I were on our way into the photocopy room to get her some research material for a science project. There were three men standing around the teacher boxes. One was leaving as we came in, he looked at us strangely.

"Wait outside," one of the other men said to Darcy, interrupting our conversation.

Surprised, I looked at him as Darcy left, and said nothing, preferring to discuss this without her present.

"The staff decided students were prohibited from the photocopy room," he said to me aggressively, when she was gone.

"I'm part of the staff and I wasn't part of that discussion," I said, annoyed at his interference.

I noticed the sign posted above the photocopier for all to see: NO STUDENTS ALLOWED! On the door of the room facing the public hallway another sign said: STAFF ONLY, NO STUDENTS!

Suddenly the other teacher demanded of me: "So, you don't think you have to follow the rules, eh? You think you are exempt?"

"Really professional, eh," the other teacher said.

"There are times when rules . . ." I started to say.

With finger pointing at me from a distance of three feet away the first one nearly yelled "Well, I'm notifying you now, that I am going to the staff committee about YOU!"

"I find both your attitude and behavior . . ." I said, trying again to speak.

"You'll see you can't make your own rules!" His face was set; his finger continued to point.

I tried to speak again but this time he turned his back on me and left the room. (1994)

* * *

At a parent meeting at which I was present the other grade eight classes were described by a colleague as "structured," leaving parents to assume that my class was unstructured. I was called the "creative" one.

* * *

Privately a parent was told by a counselor he wouldn't put his child in my class.

* * *

I am called in for a 'talk' by the principal. As I enter the room he gets up and closes the door behind me, an act I find intimidating. He wants to let me know that two different department heads have complained about me- one for leaving a mess in a sink in a science lab and the other for leaving classroom furniture in disarray.

One of my students had left some dirt from his terrarium in the sink.

My class had not been in the classroom with the disorganized furniture.

Neither teacher had spoken to me before they spoke to the principal.

* * *

In the story about the photocopier I am overwhelmed and silenced by a man who wishes to "exchange the uncertainty of human relationship for the certainty of rules." (Jones, 1988, p. 123). Both my student and I are isolated by the discourse of the men. The signs telling students to keep away isolate the student body from the staff.

In the other examples I feel as if I am invisible or unimportant to the others at the school. In fact, I am too visible and because of this I am isolated from them.

A school could be described as a community, the staff and students its citizens. The process of feeling ostracized by the community can be very subtle, can come on slowly. Some of the examples above could be described as subtle, some are clearly less subtle. They involve teachers, administrators, and department heads who did not support their colleague, whose actions did not allow healthy interactions with others.

I became less and less able to accept at face value behaviors and decisions from hierarchical authorities who accomplished their ends in these ways.

As the politics of the school became unacceptable to me, and unaccepting of me, the politics of provincial education became the same. The work I was doing in isolation in my classroom was at first validated by the 1988 Report of the Royal Commission on Education and the subsequent Ministry of Education draft Primary and Intermediate documents. They encouraged innovations like the revolutionary concepts of alternative assessment, lifelong learning, continuous progress, integration of curricula, and a general democratic atmosphere in the classroom where all participants, students, teachers, and parents were encouraged to have an active role in education. When the final reports, like the Year 2000, were released from the Ministry of Education there was a shift from a focus on students, back to economics and business (Harker, 1992).

The Ministry of Education's response to the Sullivan Commission report on education in British Columbia, called the Year 2000, came out in draft

form before the draft Primary and Intermediate documents and in final form after them, with little change.

The Year 2000 represents a movement from the expressed anxiety of the Royal Commission report to a determined attempt to impose a paternalistic notion of social and economic security on British Columbia through its school system and the assessment program embodied within this system. (Harker, 1992, p. 8)

Key statements in the Year 2000 such as in the description of the educated citizen as: "skilled and who can contribute to society generally, including the world of work," (Ministry of Education, 1990b, p. 3) and the Mission Statement

The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy. (Ministry of Education, 1990b, p. 2)

illustrate Harker's claim and demonstrate the true focus of the "change" in education.

During the time the province was in the process of educational change I worked on local and provincial committees enthusiastically, hopefully. When the Ministry of Education changed focus again, I felt abandoned.

Conservative teachers and administrators demonstrated little faith that change would ever happen after the Sullivan Royal Commission on Education was released in 1988. When the Ministry's revised documents reverted to pre-Sullivan philosophy in 1991, in the high schools, where the resistance to the initial Ministry documents was strongest, the "old boys"

settled back into their comfortable positions and the rest of us shook our heads and wondered how we could go back. Some of us did not, could not. I found it difficult to accept that I would no longer have the support which had validated my teaching.

Between the politics of the school and the politics of the province I was disappointed, frustrated, un-healthy. I felt overcome by the power of others and powerless to make the changes I felt were valuable to the education process.

In other provinces the mood was similar. An Alberta teacher (cited in Jevne & Zingle, 1996) observed

The curriculum designers continue to go with the flow, or to shift with a whim, to the next trendy topic on the educational horizon. Parents, it seems, are dictating their terms with greater fervor than ever. And why not? Like me, they only have the best interests of their children at heart! Administrators, in my opinion, are growing more fearful of public demands, and in their haste to maintain their public image, they are sacrificing the human relations aspect of their primary resources- the teachers! (Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 28)

I did not find encouragement anywhere in the system, except from a few teachers. My anxiety increased.

Another part in the Jevne and Zingle report suggests that administrators would not only be difficult to work with but would also contribute to the problem by blaming teachers for their health problems. One Alberta administrator said, "The system is NOT at fault. Almost always the cause of the disturbance is in the teacher's personal life. It's just like children who cause problems in school- the reasons nearly always lie in the home." (Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 155). By not being willing to look within the system of the

school and the province for problems which can cause a decline in teacher well-being, this administrator provides little support for those under his or her influence.

I came to a point where all levels of the educational hierarchy seemed out of focus. I was willing to be responsible for my thinking and actions but I felt alone, isolated and alienated. Isolation and the imbalance it imposed led to a personal fragility which was directly job-related and contributed to ill health.

A 1986 report from Health and Welfare Canada supports what I have said about my feelings about ill health. It says "health must be viewed in terms of our personal and social resources for actions." (Health and Welfare Canada cited in Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 3). It speaks of health as "a resource which gives people the ability to manage and even to change their surroundings . . . a basic and dynamic force in our daily lives, influenced by our circumstances, our beliefs, our culture and our social, economic, and physical environments." The report

. . . accords greater prominence to the mental and social determinants of health. It also impels us to think of health as something which is experienced not only individually, but collectively. Most significantly perhaps, this new understanding of health dwells less on people's traits as individuals and more on the nature of their interaction with the wider environment. (Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 233)

The system had become unhealthy for me. I was unhealthy in it. I did not have a dynamic force within me, nor did the group with which I worked. Everywhere I looked I saw illness and inconsistency. In my teaching I first felt constricted by the educational hierarchy, then, elated by the change in curriculum direction which set a democratic model, and then crushed by the provincial reversal and the attitudes of many colleagues who had attempted

little change and now said "I told you so." I felt unable to continue in my work. I applied for and received a leave of absence.

Absence means "being away, a being without, a failure to be present, lack" (Barnhart, and Barnhart, 1990, p. 7). I was other than healthy, as was the system I worked in. I felt lacking in my life, my body reacted powerlessly. I was absent in my mind and body.

Lately, I fear I have become "not present, lacking," in teaching. I am "invisible" to my colleagues and yes, my students. (Journal entry, November, 1994)

Though I developed some procedures for encouraging student voice in my classroom, that dynamic force needed to make things shift was lacking. I suspect my students became aware of the lack as I became aware of being a teacher who was doing certain parts of my job without humour. I was struggling more with others, with the people I worked with most, my students. And my students were more often in conflict with each other, and with me.

Changes in my family contributed to my unsettled condition, as well.

I have been on a leave of absence from my teaching job for almost six months. I get up in the morning, get my fourteen year old son off to school, then I go to the gym. When I come home I am usually ready for a nap. I might read some, sew some but mainly I wait until my son returns from school. Then I am a mother again.

Last year there were two sons to get up for. And my job.

The year before that there were three sons to get up to. And my job. (Journal entry, April, 1995)

I felt weary and debilitated. "An invalid, one who has been invalidated. No valid passport. No exit." (Atwood, 1986, p. 210). As Atwood demonstrates in her novel, I felt deprived of efficacy, value-less, in-valid.

In a system where I had little control over my situation I had lost my will to self-assertion. (Nietzsche cited in Hubben, 1952, p. 103). Jevne and Zingle (1996) acknowledge in their study that the ability to make meaning in one's life is important. "This study supports the conclusion that the presence or absence of control in one's life may affect health, that people need the power to define their own needs and to act on that understanding." (Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 237).

My health confirmed the truth of this statement. A realization of the extent and nature of the problem and the opportunity to examine my experiences in the school system for meaning would be necessary before a return to health was possible. "Issues related to teacher health are SYSTEMIC: an acceptance of this reality is crucial to seeking solutions at all levels. These levels include the individual, the family, the classroom, the school, the school district." (Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 235).

Considering the definition of health and the conclusions of this study, I wonder how long I had been sick. I wonder how many others are sick also.

Reports from teachers who are "healthy" do not differ much from their unhealthy colleagues. Jevne and Zingle's report says, "The distance between health and unhealthy is small. As groups, teachers do not demonstrate extremes of health. Healthy teachers are not substantively healthier than their ill counterparts. The margin is slim and it would appear that a large portion of educators are potentially at risk" (Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 237). The authors explain: "It is possible to think of a continuum of health. At one end of the continuum, there is a sense of a *wholeness* and an overall well-being. At the other end, a sense of brokenness or *dis-ease*. Between 'wholeness' and 'brokenness' lie variations in degree of dimension." (Jevne

and Zingle, 1996, p. 3). I had slipped down the continuum without realizing it.

Healthy teaching requires working with people in emotionally positive, ethically supporting ways. Renee Brimfield in her paper (1992) says, after experiencing a broad perspective from her reading: "I came to understand that my dissatisfaction with the systems under which I had taught and had been taught was justified. These systems ignored the person, both the teacher and the learner, and the immense potential of their interactions." (Brimfield, 1992, p. 384).

I couldn't change the educational hierarchy but I could develop an understanding of what contributed to my isolation and ill health, of the workings of power relations, and then apply my knowledge to my work with those people in my sphere of influence: my staff and students.

My leave lasted seven months, the rest of the school year. When I returned to teaching I changed schools and changed teaching venues. I moved to a situation where I could focus on a smaller number of students and a curriculum with which I could work at connecting with my students by integrating teaching methods and content. I continue to empower and give voice to my students as I try to listen to my own voice. In this democratic setting I can retain my health and authority and encourage the health of my students and staff.

In the next section of the thesis I develop the idea of wellness, and a way to write about it, by considering ways to think about power imbalance in relations with others and by thinking about how power and my acknowledgement of self works through discourse.

APPROACHING THE THEORIES

Thinking About Power

Power Relations

Thinking about the way I am with my students and desiring to live healthfully and ethically encourages thoughts about power, authority and democracy in relationships. I am interested in how people behave with each other. I am particularly interested in how I behave with others when there is an imbalance of power. I may become controlling with students, or submissive, angry or frustrated with administrators, teachers (usually male but sometimes female), or even students who assume a power over me.

Institutions in our social system are based on a hierarchical distribution of authority (Jones, 1988). Foucault (1988) observes, "It's obvious that in an apparatus like an army or a factory, or some other such type of institution, the system of power takes a pyramidal form" (p. 159). The metaphor of a pyramid is useful to think about power and authority. Those with more authority are in higher positions and those with less authority in lower positions. In the educational institution, the school board, the superintendent and the school administrators occupy the upper positions, while teachers and then students occupy the lower positions. Within an assembled group of people from the same position in the educational hierarchy, certain people sometimes assume more authority than others.

Jones (1988) describes authority "as contingent on conflicting individual (and primarily male) wills" (p.126). My social history, including family and gender, has modelled an imbalance of power. I have noticed that in relations

power can be fixed and unequal, fragmenting and disintegrating; or it can be whole, cohesive, and have multiple ways of being expressed. "Power" can be inadequate to describe the many different situations for which the one signifier is used. I would like to introduce two French words, "pouvoir" and "puissance," (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. xvii), which define more clearly certain aspects of our understanding of the English word power.

Pouvoir refers to the "plane of organization, . . . an instituted and reproducible relation of force . . ." (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. xvii). Pouvoir is always present. The 'truth of power' is what society needs us to act out in order for it to function (Foucault, 1980). Institutional power suggests the binary of dominance and submission because institutions are about hierarchies but the power of pouvoir is neither positive nor negative. For example, TV has a power with people. It draws us in, it controls. The terms negative and positive are inappropriate to describe the force of the power. It is on the plane of organization, it exists.

Puissance describes power relations where there is a possibility to escape the effect of the institutional power. It exists at the same time as institutional power. "It has been defined by Deleuze as 'a capacity for existence,' 'a capacity to affect or be affected,' 'a capacity to multiply connections that may be realized by a given 'body' to varying degrees in different situations. It may be thought of as a scale of intensity or fullness of existence (or a degree on such a scale), analogous to the capacity of a number to be raised to a higher 'power.' It is used in the French translation of Nietzsche's term 'will to power'" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. xvii)). In contrast to pouvoir, puissance is not restricted to situations with people holding or assuming authority in a social system. It does not occur when there is dominance and submission, rather it

is outside that, it exists on another plane, one of "potential" (p. xvii). Pouvoir and puissance can be in operation simultaneously, that is pouvoir is always operational, but within pouvoir there are moments when the language between the people provides a "capacity for existence" beyond the institutional power. In a general discussion of power I will use the single word "power" to refer to situations of control. In a discussion where there is a need to distinguish the types of power I will use the French words. In the following story I illustrate both types of power:

I came back to the class after the recess discussion in the staff room. I was stunned. We were told about a student who had been taken to the hospital with an overdose. She had consumed a combination of LSD, marijuana and alcohol and then her behavior became erratic enough for someone to notice. I couldn't think about the lesson I had planned. As I stood in front of the class I wasn't sure what would come.

"You probably know about the grade seven girl who has been taken to the hospital," I began.

"Oh you mean, Rachel," Meg said.

"What an idiot," someone else said.

"I thought we should talk about it," I said.

"Oh, you've probably tried drugs, haven't you?" Jake said with a grin.

"Everyone probably experiments a little in their life, but when you do you have to really think about what is involved." Part of me was ready to start into my "science teacher talk about drugs" but my emotions were strong. I surprised myself when I said, "You are the people in the school I know really well. When I hear things like this I really worry about you." I expected a

reaction from these fourteen year olds. Their voices were still. I looked around to see their faces were attentive, their eyes were watching. I went on.

"You may be experimenting but are you thinking about what it might mean? Many of you are athletes. There are many chemicals in marijuana whose effect is unknown. When I think about you experimenting like that I am afraid for you."

What I did by revealing my fear was healthful for my relationship with my students. I took a risk, surprising myself and them, and by being honest I increased the capacity for our relationship. Students were able to recognize something beyond the institutional role. My concern for them, my fear, put me in a vulnerable position, out of my authoritarian, dominant position which they were used to. Suddenly I wasn't all powerful, I couldn't protect them. Because our relationship was expanded this is *puissance*. *Pouvoir*, the institutional power, never changed. This way of considering power will be useful in the reflection section of my presentation in this thesis.

Power is located differentially, according to gender, family and position within the hierarchy. For example, males traditionally hold more power in relationships involving both sexes (Hartsock, 1990). Adults in a family, primarily the male adults, hold more power than children. Although my husband and I both brought home teachers' salaries, my husband took charge of finances in the family. At various times I attempted to share in that responsibility but I was shown lists of figures and basically told there was no need to worry, I should let him do it. I came to feel money issues were a complex thing beyond my capability, and rather than resist I deferred to him, although my lack of involvement in this kind of decision making in the family eventually became a part of why my marriage ended. As a child I was

not allowed to know or talk about money in the family. Now, my twenty-one year old son, who lives with his father and goes to university, lets his father control his finances.

Power differences can be rigid; historically they have been. When power differences persist there is a system of domination where some people have more power than others. The others are oppressed. The work of Foucault and other "postmodern" philosophers on the nature of power in society possesses profound implications for understanding the social control on our bodies and our minds. Foucault believes that the oppressed hold relations of power in place as much as do the powerful, that power must not be seen as a single individual or as one group or class dominating others (Foucault 1990). Some feminist writers find his definition of power problematic because he does not allow for domination, including domination in gender relations. Hear Nancy Hartsock (1990): "He has on the one hand claimed that individuals are constituted by power relations, but he has argued against their constitution by relations such as the domination of one group by another. That is, his account makes room only for abstract individuals, not men, women and children" (p. 169). In thinking about myself, my staff and my students in power relations I must consider which aspects of Foucault's work are useful.

Other readers have had difficulty relating to Foucault. Simon (1986) explains how he offered a reading from Foucault to a female doctoral student. She returned the reading and commented that she found Foucault "disembodied, disassociated, beyond knowledge, beyond human frailty" (Lewis and Simon, 1986, p. 468). Simon was surprised and reported that he liked the type of discourse associated with Foucault, that he found it

stimulating. "Within the political/ethical project out of which I teach, I identify it as a discourse that can make an important difference in how we understand our world so as to make possible practices of justice, caring and solidarity" (p. 468). However, he and Lewis see the need for literature which will encourage "a counter-patriarchic pedagogy in the mixed gender institutions within which we work and study" (p. 469). Though Foucault's writing does appear to contradict his intention by being disembodied and disassociated, I find the discourse associated with Foucault informative and illuminating. His observations about the maintenance of power in the institutions are useful in my own thinking about institutional power.

I would agree with Foucault that power relations are held in place by both the oppressed and the powerful. I also believe, like Hartsock and other feminist writers, if we are to create new societies there must be an opening in our understanding of power to talk about oppression in terms of relations such as gender and to "engage in the historical, political, and theoretical process of constituting ourselves as subjects . . . of history (Hartsock, 1990, p. 170).

At present, women are considered subordinate to men in most societies. (Lewis and Simon, 1986; Jones, 1988; Weedon, 1987). Previous to the 1600s this was not necessarily the case. Carolyn Merchant, in a critical reassessment of the Scientific Revolution (1989), presented research which demonstrated that in the early Middle Ages, society made a definite shift towards domination in its attitude toward women and nature. Previously there had been two contrasting yet co-existent attitudes: that nature was to be revered because it provided for and nurtured human life and that nature was to be feared and controlled because it brought floods and storms, and destroyed

human life. Eventually the latter attitude was emphasized and cultivated in order to justify the destruction of nature necessary to the development of the industry of mining in the European world. Women were considered closely connected to nature, in fact both views of nature were identified with the female sex and nature was referred to by the pronoun "she." When attitudes of society changed toward nature in the 1600s because of mechanization, attitudes towards women changed as well. Women became less revered and were associated with emotionality, irrationality, weeping and tears. Men were considered dominant over the subordinate women (Merchant, 1983, Jones, 1988).

Both views of women (and nature), the one to be revered and the other to be dominated, are patriarchal, patronizing and essentialist, privileging male over female, but the historical value of the example of change in attitude toward women is useful to demonstrate how women were regarded in history and how that history is reproduced in the connotations encoded in language. In my thesis I will look at my language and the language of others in specific incidents. I will attempt to tease out the assumptions about women made by men and women, and to show how this contributes to their lack of voice in relations with others.

Power in Discourse

Language is more complex than words or signs we use in speaking and writing. It can refer to a particular mode of being which involves words and even practices of conscious or unconscious communication. To understand language more fully it is important to consider the concept of discourse. In

1982 Tannen described the study of discourse as an interest in "words in sequence, and the mysterious moving force that creeps in between the words and between the lines, sparking ideas, images, and emotions that are not contained in any of the words one at a time—the force that makes words into discourse" (Tannen, 1982, p. xi). Language has many discourses. Discourses of power refer to the forms and modes of context which have come to be associated with the term power. A high school discourse refers to the forms and modes of context which have come to be associated with the term high school. Weedon notes "language . . . consists of a range of discourses which offer different versions of the meaning of social relations and the effects on the individual" (Weedon, 1987, p. 85). Lather assures us that "no discourse is innocent of the Nietzschean will to power" (Lather, 1991, p. 110). Since the word "puissance" is used by Deleuze to translate power in this phrase, the implication is that a will to power, as described by Nietzsche, can be considered multiple and full of possibility.

Some language theorists note culture is shaped in language with the system of binary opposites contained within it. Deleuze observes "language is profoundly wrought by dualisms and dichotomies, divisions by 2, binary calculations: masculine–feminine, singular–plural . . ." (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 34). Deconstructionists, following Derrida (Culler, 1979), note that the form of binary opposition within language privileges one binary term over the other. The privileged term is dominant; that which is not privileged becomes "other," defined by its difference. For example, in our society men are often privileged over women, as I have demonstrated by the Merchant example about the history of mining and the development of the current dominant attitude toward women by men. In the discussion of my teaching

health is preferred over ill health, though what ill health is is not exactly known, especially in the education system. Does health mean being "in control," being "unemotional," being "objective?" And is ill health or illness the opposite of health? Other examples of binaries include science privileged over nature, the rational over the irrational or the emotional, the mind over the body and dominance over oppression.

Dealing in binaries is part of the culture which has shaped us in language. In an earlier draft of this thesis, for example, I tried to define power relations in terms of either *pouvoir* or *puissance*, until I realized I was caught in a dualism. Deleuze encourages us: "We must pass through dualisms because they are in language, it's not a question of getting rid of them, but we must fight against language, invent stammering, . . . to trace a vocal or written line which will make language flow between these dualisms. . . ." (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 34). Here Deleuze suggests if we work at understanding language, if we try not to be caught in one or the other of the dualisms, if we see the pluralness, the plurality, the multiplicity of language and its possibilities, we may mesh the dualisms within us.

"Social relations are always relations of power . . ." (Weedon, 1987, p. 94). *Pouvoir* and *puissance* are constituted in language and language is the medium in which we construct the discourse of reality. Thinking about *pouvoir* as an aspect of institutional power which is always present and *puissance* as power which is a sharing of power in spite of the mechanisms of *pouvoir* avoids the bad/good dualism. Consideration of how power works in the discursive practices of our lives may encourage language to flow between the dualisms.

Gender Is Constructed Through Discourse

Current gender order and social structures are maintained by certain modern language discourses. Cox (1986) demonstrates this by examining some examples of terms used by people, most often men, in discussion. He begins by recalling the term "eristic," a label given by Aristotle, to express "a distinctive view of what reasoning is." Eris means strife. Characteristic of this type of reasoning are military and pugilistic terms: "We 'defend positions,' 'counter-attack,' make 'charges,' offer 'ripostes.' We adopt 'strategies' and 'tactics' in order to 'win' and emerge as 'victors' in argument. We seek to 'defeat opponents' by 'outmaneuvering' them with alternative 'lines of attack' and by 'nailing' them when we spot an opening in their defense" (p. 33). The term and concept of "defense" used to describe the final procedure in a Master's program is one such metaphor.

Communication is the production of the self. That is, our discourses communicate who we are. The dominant discourses can be interpellated by us if we do not remain aware of them. Metaphors are part of how we give meaning to ourselves and understand the world. "These metaphors do not just ornament our speech. They structure our understanding of what a rational argument is and they guide the way we reason" (Cox, 1986, p. 33). The metaphors reproduce "assumptions about truth, meaning, feeling's relation to reason, and the individual's relation to the community" (p. 35). The eristic type of language noted by Cox describes the dominant discourse I observe in high school staffrooms. The gender of the group most often in this mode of speech is male. Though I can use the dominant discourses, and might even encourage this way of thinking and speaking in the classroom,

particularly the science classroom, I have often been in awe of, and even silenced by, speakers who spoke in this militaristic way. The dominant discourses trap males and females with conventional meaning and modes of being, perhaps to the exclusion of others.

Other researchers analyze the difference between men's and women's language. Bergvall says the task of gender researchers is to "examine the 'communities of practice' within which gender is constructed . . . through discourse" (Bergvall, 1996, p.175). Jones (1988) notes :

Rhythms, nuance, emphasis, and assertiveness, in tone and syntax, appear to vary with gender. Nevertheless, we define the masculine mode of self-assured, self-assertive, unqualified declarativeness as the model of authoritative speech. "Female" hesitancy and other other-oriented language patterns, considered as the marks of uncertainty or confusion, are derogated. (Jones, 1988, p. 122)

The lessening of authority shown by this "female" discourse is governed by social factors in the Judeo-Christian society of the subjects. "Gender identities are constructed through the everyday actions and discourse of participants within a certain social order, influenced by societal expectations" (Bergvall, 1996, p. 175). For generations men have held the dominant positions in the hierarchies. They tend to deal with life in very rational ways and women have generally accepted this way of being as valuable, some women have emulated it. As educators we must each decide if this language reproduces the ethics we subscribe to. If the answer to the question is that it only benefits certain people to the exclusion of others, then one might decide it is more ethical to avoid using this language.

The language of rationality is different from, and valued over, the language of emotionality by institutions and social practices in our society

(Weedon, 1987). Before he began his study Cox (1986) reported thinking this way about the women he observed: "So far as I could see, these people did not appear to rationally discuss things. They were simply babbling along in an irrational way" (p. 35). After his study he had a different understanding of a way of being than his familiar language, informed by dominant discourses, and he was more able to mesh the two.

Other behaviors like indirectness and deference, observed most often in females, leave an impression of indecisiveness. They give the option of decision to the other. Tannen observes these characteristic strategies have been shown by research to be "the strategy of choice of those in positions of powerlessness" (Tannen, 1984, p. 14). She further comments that "each person's notion of what strategy to apply is influenced by a combination of family background and other interactive experience" (p. 14).

Power and the Hierarchy

Pouvoir can involve maintaining the binaries of dominance and submission; for puissance the binaries are meshed. Pouvoir, like the eristic way of speaking, involves people with more authority and people with less authority. Puissance is when power is shared between people; it is a dynamic force which I associate with health. Therefore, since language constitutes power, power can be shifted if the language shifts. My project, as a human being who is trying to live consciously, is to try to shift my language from a separating, disrespectful discourse to a democratic, consensual one, to one of puissance. I am trying to bring the emotional way of communicating together with the rational, to merge the binaries.

In a hierarchy, a person possesses more power or less power than others, depending on the position he or she holds. In spite of the assigned power differences that exist in any hierarchy, it is possible for a person with more power in the system to use language with people with less power in equitable, respectful ways. A balance of power between people who are in the hierarchy is possible when individuals with more power remain aware of the effect of their power and develop equitable discourses, so as to allow others to maintain their power.

As a teacher I am in the middle of a hierarchical system. In this middle place I have a legal responsibility to the official curriculum-as-plan together with an ethical responsibility to attend to the living worlds of those it is my responsibility to lead. Between these two is often a tension, where difference creates a site vibrant with pedagogic possibility, a space of uncertainty and vulnerability.

By recognizing and not ignoring the "hidden curriculum" of self I accept that I am in a vulnerable place, but it is that openness to vulnerability which can allow growth and change.

And I do not profess to know everything there is to know about encouraging students and parents to find their voice in the classroom. Though I have learned much I know there will always be opportunities to learn more.

Between myself and the students there is a place where the curriculum dance occurs. The dance can continue consciously when I know I am not just a deliverer of curriculum content. Rather, it is who I am that makes the subject content I care about acceptable to them, or not. Students are not just

receivers of content, they are individuals who understand a broader curriculum with their teacher.

Bowers and Flinders (1990) suggest

It is therefore essential that we adopt a view of the student that puts in focus the interconnectedness, rather than the separateness that characterizes the dualisms of Cartesian thinking: mind as separate from the body, rational thought as separate from the world that is to be understood, and the reflective individual as separate from the influence of tradition and culture. (Bowers and Flinders, 1990, p.93)

Foucault speaks about elements in the structure of the hierarchy and explains that they are held in support mutually (Foucault, 1980). Though this does not leave room for the discussion of oppression and submission, as previously stated, it is a useful concept to encourage certain understandings of how power works. In the middle position, I have more power of authority than others. I must realize, as administrators must, that when I deal with students, no matter how equitably, an imbalance still exists. It is in the way I deal with students and others, my language, that affects our relationship, which can give it potential for greater existence. I have some agency in what occurs, more so if I work to comprehend my social and family history.

Within my body and mind I know the effect of an imbalance of power. I can use this knowledge to empower myself and others, I can work to shift the balance to allow a sharing of power in circumstances which allow it, such as in the classroom and with staff. In other situations, where the hierarchy positions are less in my control I can at least be conscious of the force of *pouvoir* and not enter a power struggle.

In my role of teacher there are many opportunities to encourage others to develop their own voice, for students and parents to share power with me, to develop respect and health.

Thinking About Self

Subjectivity

In recent years of my teaching career, I have paid particular attention to the intricacies of power relations. I have thought about why I have felt and acted powerlessly, why I did not have the voice to articulate the imbalance I felt. Different discourses reinforced my lack of power. I was taking my part in "the relationship of mutual support and conditioning, [of] mutual hold" (Foucault, 1980, p. 159) of the hierarchy in an unhealthy way, both for myself and the relationship.

Tensions and instabilities like the ones mentioned above are part of an understanding of subjectivity. Subjectivity is the way I see myself in the world, "the particular ways [I] give meaning to [myself], others, and the world." (Davies and Banks, 1992, p. 2). The tensions and instabilities which characterize subjectivity arise because subjectivity is constituted through discourses which are contradictory. An example of competing discourses within are the patriarchal notions I was raised with, of the "good" daughter, the "good" teacher, the "good" wife, the "good" mother, compared to the feminist discourses which also construct my subjectivity.

If we are thinking about the source of our ideas about ourselves and the world, we might try to fix a meaning from our experiences, but experience is constituted in language and language offers us a range of ways of interpreting our lives. Weedon (1987) says "meaning can have no external guarantee . . ." (p. 85). Different versions of meaning of social relations are available to us in a range of discourses. The way we interpret these meanings, the choices we make about them, can have various consequences. Weedon continues about

conflicting discourses within ourselves: "our sense of ourselves . . . may be at times contradictory and precarious but only a conscious awareness of the contradictory nature of subjectivity can introduce the possibility of political choice . . ." (p. 86). Herein is the possibility of change for which I search.

Haug's study of female sexualization (1987) had to consider the value of individual experience for fixing meaning. The group chose to work with the notion that human experience is collective and therefore subject to universalization. Specifically she writes, "We chose to work with a more precise notion [than just recognizing sociality]: what individuals feel to be appropriate to and useful for their personal needs is pregiven in the form of dominant cultural values. In their efforts to make their lives meaningful, individuals attempt to resist the encumbrances of the dominant culture. It is however virtually impossible for them entirely to abandon traditional norms and expectations. On the other hand they can—and indeed do—find compromise solutions that extend the limits of their capacity for action" (p. 44). In thinking about my subjectivity I will use personal experience as Haug and others have, with a consideration that we experience life collectively within given conditions of history and culture.

The notion of subjectivity, my subjectivity as a woman living in this North-American, Judeo-Christian society as a teacher, is an important concept for my work. As a teacher I am interested in examining power relations and in living consciously, both of which require reflection on the discourses I have taken up to construct my subjectivity. My "study" occurs in moments when I am conscious of these conflicting discourses, within myself and between myself and others. A story can serve as an illustration:

My leave of absence began in November. Though I had given up my duties as a teacher, as a mother I had some activities to perform which took me into the public. In the grocery store I often met parents of my former pupils. I was conscious of feeling guilty for having abandoned their children, for not having fulfilled my duties. I felt I should be home sick or lugging around a big bandage or cast to legitimate my departure from my duties. I knew I was sick, sick enough to leave my job, but the conflict of "good" teacher with what is appropriate for sickness provided me with further tension.

In thinking about where my ideas about myself and the world came from I have considered myself a particular person with a specific set of characteristics. Subjectively, I saw myself as a unitary, fixed entity. Weedon (1987) suggests we are encouraged to do this from an early period. "From early childhood we learn to see ourselves as unified, rational beings, able to perceive the truth of reality. We learn that as rational individuals we should be non-contradictory and in control of the meaning of our lives." (p. 79). She continues, ". . . hegemonic conservative discourses deny the possibility of changing social relations by appealing to the essential fixity of human nature. Women, for example, were long prevented from entering education and public life on the basis of unsuitability of their nature to such spheres and are still assumed to be naturally fitted for particular types of work" (p. 82). Rather than thinking of my identity as fixed, I now believe identity is constructed in the process of our lives. Subjectivity is itself an effect of discourse (Weedon, 1987). Understanding the complexity and fluidity of subjectivity has important implications for perceiving possibilities of change. As a woman I have been able to enter education and public life because society has changed

over time, but there are many discourses within me which I find problematic, such as being a "good" mother, a mother who is expected to stay home and selflessly devote her time and energy to her children. If I can think of subjectivity as complex and fluid then I have established hope for change.

Subjectivity is constantly developing and changing (Weedon, 1987). Certain ways of being, social positions, that I find myself in because of my social circumstances, historical circumstances and gender, give rise to my sense of identity. "Subjectivity is largely the product of discursive networks which organize and systematize social and cultural practice" (Davies and Banks, 1992, p. 2).

Weedon (1987) has worked with women to help them take a view of their subjectivity which says that rather than seeing ourselves as fixed by nature we can interpret "difficulties, problems and inadequacies not as the effect of individual, personal failings, but as a result of socially produced structures which maintain a division of labour by sex, together with particular norms of femininity and masculinity, and which subordinate women to men" (p. 84).

If the modes of discourse shift, as previously mentioned, then understanding of self shifts and the patterns of relations among people shift. It is not that a change in discourse happens before a change in subjectivity, or the other way around, or that one incident will mean a permanent shift. The process is long and complex. The important thing is to remain aware so that a shift is a possibility. Fluidity of meaning leads to the possibility of interpretations different than the ones I assumed from my social and family history. Within this thesis, I work at making a shift to more quickly understand, within my body and mind, what is at play between myself and another. I want to be able to change the relation from oppression or

dominance toward puissance. The language learned at home involved patterns of oppression like dissolving into tears when a situation seemed difficult to overcome, or patterns of dominance like resorting to anger and a loud voice to gain control of a situation when I perceive a loss of control of a group. The language of puissance, in contrast to some of the language learned from my mother and father, from society, is a different way of being, a different language or discourse, a more democratic one where all voices are heard, one where mind and body merge.

In a relation I desire to be conscious of my body and mind, of how my subjectivity, "formulated through discourses, given substance and pattern through storyline [is] deployed in social interactions" (Davies and Banks, 1992, p. 3). Living consciously, in the moment, "the moment when we blink," described by Deleuze as when movement happens (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 1), is a difficult, demanding process. The moment can pass quickly, before we have an opportunity to act the way we wish. If we are not paying attention, the opportunity is gone.

Living consciously means being aware, noticing language and thinking about assumptions. Accepting responsibility for myself in relationships with others, by being conscious of my language, of assumptions and contradictions, will support ethical living with others.

Thinking About Others

Who I am, who I think I am, my subjectivity as I have (re)constructed it, makes up part of the curriculum of my classroom (Clandinin and Connelly, 1992, Rakow, 1991). An awareness of social construction, and an understanding that I am an active subject, affected by social, cultural and personal historical forces of language, gender, and culture in the declining hierarchies of school, of home, can provide more openings for the curriculum dance I engage in with my students and can allow me a healthy, productive way of being with them and the other people I engage with in the school.

As a classroom teacher, I interact with many people besides students: parents, staff, administrators. We meet for particular purposes and when we meet we may already have taken a position on an issue. In this unequal social context power relations are sustained. As a meeting continues, individual motivations, sometimes unsaid, sometimes unconscious, the result of discursive struggle, may cloud the openness to others' ideas needed for creative interactions. When I speak with someone, I want to feel involved, relaxed, supported and supporting. I want to encourage others to feel the same. Different discourses can enforce different behavior. I am a no-longer-young, middle-class woman. My own subjectivity, determined by my history with certain social relations, including gender, race, class, age, and cultural background (Weedon, 1987) may support tension and provoke a language I consciously dislike, though I aspire to relationships of puissance. Working with staff and students will involve tense moments. I might

handle the tension by treating students respectfully, by not trying to control them, by being honest about my emotions.

Or, in response to an action, or perceived reaction, of an other, I might feel frustration, anger, the threat of loss of authority. If I ignore or deny my emotions I may resort to certain behaviors like raising my voice, staring angrily, or threatening to remove a privilege.

When a teacher becomes involved in power struggles the desired outcome may be achieved, but the oppressive behavior encourages students to reproduce this dominant discourse.

"How will students position and "read" the professor and the text of the classroom....?" (Rakow, 1991, p.10). The classroom is not and never can be a neutral site "for the production and reproduction of knowledge. Those of us who step into classrooms as professors and as students do not shed our identities at the door with our coats. We enter these rooms as humans situated as subjects . . . of discourses that give us the identities we claim for ourselves . . ." (Rakow, 1991, p.10) With an awareness of myself as subject, as Rakow suggests, and of my students as subjects also, I can make my non-neutral classroom a place of awareness and becoming.

When I am in the midst of an interaction, I want certain actions to trigger a part of "me" to take up a position as an observer of myself and others. I want to take up a different language than the one which supports an imbalance of power, one which will allow me, my students, parents and staff to create solutions together, respectfully, healthfully.

My most satisfying moments come when I am working creatively with people who respect each other and who do not try to control or allow themselves to be controlled by another. My well-being as a teacher is

dependent on those moments. They need not happen serendipitously. They can be encouraged, deliberate, conscious. My reflections and the following discussion about health, curriculum and the democratic classroom will show how this might be possible.

Thinking About My Project

The dynamics of my relationships with others and my subjectivity are constituted in language and are the focus of this paper. By looking more closely at the way I and others try to fix meaning in language I can perceive possibilities of change. For example, in the writing of this paper and in my life I have used words and phrases like "non-emotional," and "without letting emotions affect me." This rational and controlled discourse is an important part of my subjectivity and, by thinking more about it, one of which I can be aware.

In this section I will state the purposes and intentions of my work. Though my work is a process which I engage in daily, in my efforts to be conscious of the power relations at play, I have chosen to think further about two stories involving dominance and submission and through them to reflect upon why my health deteriorated and how I might work to support health for myself and others.

In narrating and interpreting stories I focus on interactions between myself and others. I deal with the challenges I face in relationships that affect my life as a teacher. I write about my work of owning, recognizing and integrating emotions. I work at reconstituting my subjectivity in my writing.

I write about oppressive interactions which I recognize by observing my own or another's discourse: choice of words, tone of voice, body movements. I write about how the way I have constructed myself from the dominant historic discourses can be debilitating, unhealthy for myself and others.

When someone is asserting their power over me and when I am asserting my power over another I clarify for myself that these interactions are the

product of conflicting discourses. When the discourse of another invites me to dominate or submit, if I succumb, I have not recalled to memory the language of puissance I wish to be in, nor have I recalled what it is to be dominated, or to dominate another, or to struggle for dominance.

Because I wish to live consciously, it is my project, when an invitation or provocation appeals to some element of my cultural background or some other social structure, to bring to memory what can occur in a moment of puissance. I try to reach some understandings about power, *pouvoir* and puissance, and to articulate what I know.

By analyzing my stories I illustrate that it is at the moment when someone is trying to assert their power of authority, when I notice reactions, that I have an opportunity to understand how discourse constitutes oppressive power relations. In my writing I work toward shifting these power relations through language, in order to monitor and change my mode of participation.

In the reflections on the stories I explain why the language of puissance is desirable to reconstitute my subjectivity. Puissance is a non-oppressive power relation, healthier for myself and others than being either dominant or submissive. In my writing I explain how my good health depends on moments of puissance.

By reflecting on stories I show how I struggle with emotions and with language. I explain, by examples, how the action I make in response to an action by another can support or not support puissance. I demonstrate that when I respond in any coercive way, except for situations of safety, I am modeling disrespect. I think about how an ethical discourse can produce more respectful behavior. I demonstrate by example in story which actions are thoughtful and respectful and which are not.

In all, I demonstrate a way of shifting my subjectivity from sometimes either submissive or confrontational to more often ethical, cooperative, democratic.

As a teacher working with young people I reproduce what and who I am as I teach (Grumet, 1988). In this paper I demonstrate in my reflections ways I can allow my voice, and I come to know what will enable students to develop their voices (Belenky, McVicker Clinchy, Rule Goldberger, Mattuck Tarule, 1986). I demonstrate how I try to encourage their understanding of the power and control their voices can have with and over others.

Also, I articulate that the effect of this more ethical way allows for more moments of *puissance*, between students and teacher.

All of the interactions I have with my students, consciously or unconsciously, create part of the text of the classroom. They are part of our curriculum. To be fully aware of what that curriculum is, to make it democratic and respectful, what I know is healthy, in the most intense moments we have, about the smallest issues, is my "reason for being" in this work.

In situations with students and others, when I might previously have acted in anger, without having acknowledged it, I can be aware of alternatives. By reflecting in this manner, I work toward the language of *puissance* coming to mind more readily. Speaking and relating democratically refers to not being provoked by the invitations of the discourses of others toward dominance or submission, it means feeling relaxed and confident that when an invitation arises I will have the constitution to handle it well, it means initiating procedures which encourage an understanding of respect in a group, it means living

consciously, being healthy. It also means knowing that to be healthy everybody has to have a feeling of being able to shift their circumstances, everyone must feel, collectively and individually, that they have some agency for change. As I reflect on my actions and continue to interact with people, in effect I am reconstituting myself as the subject of my own actions, I am working on my subjectivity.

DESIGNING THE METHOD

My reflection on power relations in language leading to a reconstitution of self and an improved curriculum in my classroom begins with the telling of stories. Stories are a natural form of remembering and they make life available for reflection (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). Le Guin (1989) talks about narrative as a way of gaining our voice when she says "To learn to speak is to learn to tell a story" (p. 39).

Because I am in the middle of the hierarchy I have chosen to work with two stories in one section of the thesis called "Writing and Reading the Stories." The first one reproduces an interaction with individuals who are equal to me or have more authority than I do in the hierarchy; the other involves students in a situation where I hold more authority than they. Both kinds of situations, involving dominance and submission, are about power and yet, because I hold a different subject position in each, they are different. Both stories hold out opportunities for healthful, collective interactions which are missed in the process. I work at seeing parallels between these stories, in my reflections called the "Subtext," so I can transfer the understanding I have of power and health to how I relate to others. During moments when domination is preeminent I do not speak as I would wish, or I respond without conscious thought, or I am silenced. These actions are unhealthy. When I am the person with greater authority others may act in these ways. I want to think further about my behavior and that of others at these moments. Other stories in previous and subsequent sections of the thesis demonstrate the language of puissance, a language of power which contributes to emotional, spiritual and physical good health.

The stories help me clarify that in situations where I am most sensitive to dominance or submission, when someone is inviting me into a power struggle, or I am inviting another, there are particular things I can learn to keep in my mind and body. This different discourse will allow me to shift away from the language of domination or submission toward more democratic, healthful forms of participation.

The shift is produced through my writing process, since writing, for me, is a process of reflection, a chance to gain insights about myself and others. In describing theory, method and application of insights, as well as writing narratives and reflections on the narratives, I think I can produce a shift. By this method my process of inquiry, and the presentation here in the thesis are the same. That is, the writing in this presentation, whether I am recording stories and reflecting on them, or explaining theory and process, is all part of the process of inquiry. The other part is the reflection I do in the moment, any moment when I am being conscious about the discourses informing my subjectivity.

In the reflections, then, there are three related foci: my feelings and emotions, the conflicting discourses within myself and others, including words and body clues, and, from observing language, the assumptions I think are contained within language. The discourse is written or described in the left hand column, and it is my cue to reflect in the right hand column.

During an interaction with others, where dominance and submission are at play certain feelings, emotions and language will encourage reflections about them. Here I will outline more precisely what causes me to begin reflecting and what may be the start of a shift to more healthful, democratic discourses. I may notice myself feeling anxious, uncomfortable, irritated,

aggressive, or angry. When others try to assume authority over me and I feel myself giving in to that power, I may readily express such emotions as shyness, hurt, and anger. I may notice the outward manifestation of feelings in my body. My hands may be clutched tightly. My face muscles can set in a particular expression. I may feel my eyes staring, glaring. I may cry.

I may notice my ability to speak and the language I speak. With students I may raise my voice, threaten to remove a privilege, speak without clarity. In situations of power inequity, where I feel another is trying to control me, I may lose the ability to speak coherently, confidently, and comfortably. I may speak haltingly, awkwardly. My voice may quieten. I may not be able to speak at all. Belenky, et al. (1986), define silence as one of five ways women know the world. "Silence [is] a position in which women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and subject to the whims of external authority" (p. 15). Also, "Many women told us of the anger they felt when no one listened or when their 'womanly voice' was dismissed as soft or misguided, a particularly common complaint of women working in a setting where men predominated" (p. 147). Though I am generally far from "mindless and voiceless," I can demonstrate this behavior in a situation of power inequity or when the dominant discourses encourage silence as in the stories at the beginning of this thesis. In this work I try to clarify for myself when the language of dominance is present and when it is avoided.

Besides trying to recognize myself, I may notice the language of others, including tones of voice, body movements, gestures, glances.

I may also notice my language, and that of the other, when I am in puissance. These are the actions I desire, even if the discourse of the other or

my subjectivity, informed by my discourses, invites me to dominance or submission.

In the reflections I focus on assumptions made by myself and others, assumptions which can maintain certain subjectivities. These assumptions are indicated by discourses, including words and practices, of myself and others. I notice the language of a person with more authority who is in an interaction with people with less authority, and then I consider what assumptions might have contributed to certain actions. In my relations with others, for example, I might make assumptions about what people want, or what a person knows, or how students learn, or what is correct behavior for a certain gender. Other people might make assumptions about me. In trying to decide what is ethical I ask myself what assumptions are being made about a situation or individual in a situation by myself or another. If one group or individual is benefiting over another, which is equally affected, then the behavior, the language, might be unethical, disrespectful.

An experimental format of writing, in the part of the thesis entitled "Writing and Reading the Stories" and practiced in journal writing throughout my course work at the university, is part of the methodology of this work. Experimental format in work by Orom (1992), and Underwood (1994) have influenced my own. In "Writing and Reading the Stories" the text of the stories is written on the left hand side of the page. There are reflective comments in a column on the right side of the page, called the "Subtext," running parallel to the narrative on the left. These comments were made after the events of the story had taken place. The comments interrupt the flow of the incidents in the same way that noticing and thinking about power relationships interrupts the flow of my life.

The stories are written in italics and the comments are in plain text to distinguish them from the stories.

The formatting demonstrates the way I work at my subjectivity. It models life as I experience it, where I pay attention to the power relations during or at least after an experience. I try to reflect on my experiences as they occur, and as an interaction continues, I try not to ignore or deny what is occurring. I try to be conscious of my actions and those of others.

The writing process is used and recognized by many as a formative process (Goldberg, 1986; Haug, 1987; de Beauvoir, 1960; Pratt, 1984; Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Underwood, 1994). My writing process is the methodology of this thesis. Writing is a suffering process for me. I do so awkwardly, struggling for expression of things I know within me but which I find difficult to put into recognizable language symbols. The signifier may not represent what it is I am trying to signify. When I write an idea, initially the words come out haltingly and a rereading brings many changes. During the process of drafting and redrafting, working with encouraging editors, rewriting, I am forced to struggle for clarity, for definition, not only of complex terms, but of self. I may create a new language which becomes my own.

As I experiment with ideas, as I reflect on my subjectivity in writing, I create a flow, a movement which might not otherwise be possible. When I write and rewrite ideas, in an effort to make them acceptable, understandable to myself and others, I can come to new understandings of myself, I can reconstitute myself as someone who can more easily act ethically with others.

In struggling for clarity and coherence in my writing, I learn to articulate better what I am struggling for. An ability to articulate, write and speak the language that connects me to my situation helps to clarify, to shift the power

in my language from a discourse of dominance or submission to one of puissance, to increase my personal power and authority. As Haug suggests, "The dominant culture deprives us of power in two ways. Meanings generated within it, as well as its way of life, are doubly alien to us: derived from the culture of agents of domination, they arise by extension from the culture of men. Women's relations to language and modes of thought, emotions and attitudes, is one of subordination. In setting out to write, we must in this sense become involved in the 'destruction of culture.'" (1987, p. 38). My writing is a process of reflection and reconstitution of self, a taking apart of the culture that is me.

When I came to the university to study I brought with me a certain understanding about the subject of power relations, based on my reflection and experience. I had taught for many years and I noticed power relations almost as long as I had been teaching. In university I learned many things about scholarly language, words I could use to describe what I had been thinking about. In this thesis my methodology includes validating my ideas, with quotations and references from the works of others and acknowledging the authors who have informed me, both in the text and in the bibliography.

WRITING AND READING THE STORIES

Introduction to the Stories

The following section of the thesis contains two stories; one involves me with colleagues and the other with students. They are both examples of situations where I notice oppressive power and where my ill health increases. They are both about how power relations work and about what constitutes health. One situation describes a staff Professional Development meeting which, in our district means, by contract, that teachers plan events for other teachers involving issues which concern teachers. In this story called "The ProD Day," a group of teachers and an administrator have the opportunity and the intention to develop an educational philosophy together. However, instead of providing the "resource which gives people the ability to manage and even to change their surroundings" (Health and Welfare Canada cited in Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 233), the group contributes to a feeling of ill health by interacting in an unhealthy way. In the first part of this story I am not the main character, but the situation involves a person who notices power as I do, and might well have been me. I am a member of the group in that part of the story. In later parts I am more actively involved in the drama.

In the second story, called "The Tape," I have the opportunity to interact with a student. Rather than collectively creating "a dynamic force" (p. 233), I deal with my annoyance in an unhealthy way. Being involved with students is different from being involved with adults. I am in a position with more authority in the hierarchy than students, though I may remember this only after the interaction. In this story I reflect on the situation which occurs and I create a new story in the language of *puissance*, a more healthful story for me and my students.

On the left hand side of the page is the text of the stories. Here I have recorded the details as I remember them, including language of myself and others, my feelings and emotions. However, the names have been changed for reasons of privacy.

On the right side of the page is a column titled "Subtext." These comments are an effort to think about the events, language and emotions after the initial situation, and to recognize the power relations at work. I am a subject who has interpellated the discourses I have adopted. I try to recognize my discourses, which originated in my social and family history, so as to mesh the binaries in my language and to encourage the "dynamic force" needed "to manage and even change [my] surroundings" (Jevne and Zingle, 1990, p. 3) and to shift my subjectivity to a more democratic one.

The writing illustrates the process of reflection and recognition I involve myself in daily, a conscious process which could occur moment by moment during which I focus my observations on my feelings, body and language at particular moments of an interaction.

The ProD Meeting

The Subtext

It is our middle school professional development day. In our district a professional development day is planned by teachers for other teachers and is about issues which concern teachers. We are a new school, only one year in operation. The rhetoric which brought us together promised cooperation and collegiality, a chance to develop a philosophy of our own making, all of which would support the healthiness I have talked about. The staff is meeting to talk about an exploratory program which will work for all grades in the middle school.

Exploratories are courses which fit with Ministry guidelines, which are not core courses and which could allow for a high student interest. Courses like jewellery making, art, journalism or cooking might be offered. The day is to start with a discussion of middle school philosophy with regard to the exploratory programs for grades 6, 7, 8 students. We are reminded by one of the organizers that research about these middle school years suggests students should be offered some choice in their program. Mixed grade groups of teachers are to say what is important to them, using the guide questions, after which the whole group will try to put together a statement of the purpose of

the exploratory program. The afternoon time was dedicated to grade meetings.

As each group spokesperson reported back to the larger group it became apparent that some of the groups had merely summarized what was already being done with the exploratory programs for each grade of students in the school.

Liz, one of the organizers reminded people to focus on the questions the organizers developed for the day. Questions like "How often should the exploratory courses be offered for each grade?" "To what extent should student interest determine the course offerings?" were to guide discussion.

One group, which included one of the two administrators, presented a completed philosophy statement to the group, something the whole group was scheduled to complete together. Their statement read "The exploratories are a diverse set of activities offered to students and based on teacher interest, expertise and available resources."

"That's great, you guys," Rob said. Others responded by thumping on the table or applauding.

Liz raised her hand. "I have a suggestion to make about this statement. It doesn't seem to fit with what other groups have stated is an important aspect of exploratory programs. The

statement doesn't include the idea that exploratories should be student focussed,"

A teacher, Tom, demanded, "How can you say that? Just what is it about that statement that is not student focussed?" Tom was sitting beside me. His arms were folded on his chest and his body moved more upright, stiffly, when he spoke. I moved back from him and did not look at him.

Liz replied, "It isn't student centered because of the words 'based on teacher interest.' If we changed that phrase to 'based on student interest and dependent on teacher expertise and available resources' we'd be reflecting more of what the consensus seems to be."

Tom sat back quickly and unfolded his arms. His hand landed loudly on the table. Other teachers began to voice their opinion about the statement, mostly in favour of it.

A break was approaching so we agreed to stop and then go to our individual grade meetings to carry on the discussion. We would report back to the main group after lunch.

The grade eight teachers consisted of myself, Tom, Liz, an administrator who was also a grade eight teacher, and three other teachers.

When we assembled in our grade group the administrator brought out an agenda and announced, "You have all

seen a copy of this agenda.”

Liz, the teacher who helped organize the professional development day, said, “Wait a minute. We have to discuss the exploratory program.”

“We’ll put it at the bottom of the list,” the administrator said and prepared to carry on with his agenda.

“I haven’t seen this agenda before,” I said.

“I put it in your box a week ago,” he said quickly.

Since I had checked my box for mail just the afternoon before and found it empty I was angry at being brushed off by the administrator’s statement that he had distributed the agenda a week ago. Actually the first time I wrote about this I explained that I “didn’t appreciate” what he did. My language is unclear. It does not recognize an emotion, it denies or controls emotion. Now I realize I was angry at him. By recognizing my anger I can make choices about what to do about it.

The administrator may have missed my box by mistake but his attitude suggested it was my omission. Because I had no way to check, I could not say anything, I was silenced.

Why did I even mention the agenda? It would be normal to mention it if I didn’t have it, perhaps, but I remember being aware that there was already some tension between the administrator and Liz. I think I was trying to “run interference” for her. I knew of the

Liz said, "We only have forty minutes and then we have to report back to the staff about what is working well about the exploratory program and what we could improve on."

"We'll put it at the bottom of the list," continued the administrator, his face muscles tight, his eyes narrowed, his hands shuffling papers on the desk.

effort she had put into the day, and I knew some staff were already antagonistic. I think I was protecting her and, perhaps, subconsciously, setting up sides. What does this do to the group situation? I recognize it polarizes the group and is part of what makes the situation unhealthy.

The administrator came to the meeting assuming he could set the agenda. Why did he make that assumption? The discourse of schools says that administrators set the agendas and chair the meetings. If the staff wanted to change that notion we would be going against the dominant school discourse and the subject would have to be approached cautiously.

His discourse is often a very paternal one. He has been the father figure we could turn to for assistance. Because he is sometimes understanding and other times disagreeable I do not feel I can trust his reactions.

He set Liz up, almost giving permission for others to treat her disrespectfully by his reluctance to follow the set agenda of the ProD committee. If I had recognized what emotion I was feeling about the group interaction and had said something which addressed the situation, rather than saying something which allowed him to silence me, I may

have helped diffuse the problem. Sometimes though, very little can diffuse a dynamic between people once it has begun. Wasting time and energy wanting things to be different is just that, a waste.

By demonstrating his annoyance at Liz for questioning his control, his authority, the administrator modelled the disrespectful behaviour others could, and did, now imitate.

Mike said decisively, "I think we should go with this agenda. We have a lot of things to discuss."

Male discourse often dominates in our school. What assumptions are these people making which allow them to dominate? What discourses inform their subjectivity? I notice, in this profession where men and women do equal work for equal pay, that the style of taking and keeping control, of directing and assuming authority is most often present and enforced by men. When some of the other men stated their support of the idea of carrying on with the administrator's agenda there was an assumption that his authority was predominant, and that their opinion about it was predominant. The dominant school and male discourse is difficult to change. I wonder what would happen if other voices could be heard on a more regular basis. In staff meetings the time is often occupied by reports which might be presented in other ways. I think we would be a

Liz tried again. "In forty minutes I have to report back to the whole staff for this group. We will never finish this large agenda so it is clear we will have to meet again anyway. This is a professional development day, and according

to our contract it is planned by teachers for teachers. We should be focusing on the Pro D agenda.”

The administrator, Joe, said, “Fine,” sat back in his chair and looked directly at Liz.

more healthful staff if we allowed other voices more often.

When a teacher becomes an administrator he or she moves to a position in the hierarchy which carries a greater authority. The discourses of a person in this position can support others, or not.

The administrator’s language did not allow contradiction, even though it was a teacher’s professional development day. Did Liz’s statement about the day being “for teachers” anger him? Experience is open to “contradictory and conflicting interpretations” (Weedon, 1987, p. 84) so we may not know ourselves why something irritates us.

The acceptance on the part of some of the others that the administrator should direct the meeting to his different agenda demonstrates the assumptions made by them about authority.

The way the administrator gave up the chair encouraged others to be disrespectful and created an unhealthy situation. Something different might have happened instead if he had been aware of his emotions and his discourse of power. I am a person, like him, with authority over others. If I have a particular activity in mind and some students do not agree, or if I have been irritated by someone or something, I may lose the opportunity to create a healthful situation, one on the side of

Liz, her voice tentative and her face solemn, carried on. She asked each person to say first, what she or he thought worked well about the exploratories schedule we had now. When it came to Joe's turn he said, "Oh, can I speak, since I'm not a teacher?"

The group carried on for a short time but with little enthusiasm. We did not arrive at a philosophy statement. When we met with the other grade groups after lunch the discussion indicated that a clear statement would be difficult with the group, partly because we had not followed the original plan of developing the statement together from our philosophic needs and partly because we could not easily agree to adjust the suggested one from the morning group. A committee was established to draft a statement and return to the next monthly staff meeting.

In the afternoon when we were back together for our grade eight general meeting, Max said: "I'd like us to follow Robert's Rules of order and take

puissance.

A healthier way to conduct a meeting than having one person direct the proceedings would be to encourage the voices of others. Having only one voice in control prevents the multiplicity of voices which can be more healthful.

Liz and I spoke up in this meeting and it took a great deal of energy to go against the dominant discourses. If certain people regard women as "other" then they will not be listened to or taken seriously. If the dominant discourses could allow other voices, for example, of women and children, a more healthful relationship would be established. In our staff meetings the voices of students are almost never heard, and when some people speak their comments are often disregarded; they are not recognized.

turns speaking to avoid any further problems.” Everyone agreed and Liz suggested Max be chairperson. He accepted.

Not too long into the discussion Liz was expressing her opinion when Tom, interrupted her with a comment of his own. Liz turned to him and said:

“Please don’t interrupt me.” She continued, “If you interrupt me I get distracted and I can’t finish my thought.”

“Why can’t I interrupt you?” Tom returned quickly, throwing his pencil down on the table and leaning back in his chair. He looked directly at Liz, his body stiff.

“Because we agreed to follow rules of order” Max said. “You’re out of order Tom.

“O phffff,” he retorted.

I found myself making excuses for Tom after the morning meeting where he was having an obvious personal problem with Liz. “His wife is ill, his daughter is doing poorly in school, he does not have a permanent job.” Why did I make excuses for him? When I took my leave of absence from teaching two years earlier I was happy when Tom was hired to be my substitute. I felt I could leave my students with this person.

I made many assumptions about Tom. I thought of him as my rescuer, my saviour. Now I know he is a creative teacher who has his own conflicting discourses.

I do not know why he reacted the way he did. Probably he did not either. I do know he never discussed the incident with me or Liz and he never apologized.

It is difficult for others to know exactly what we are noticing. What Tom

Liz looked at him and said “You know, I spent quite a few hours of my own time organizing for this day. On top of that I don’t feel well right now, I’m sick.” At this point her face became contorted in an effort to stop tears from flowing.

“I’m leaving now,” she said. She picked up her things and left the room.

was upset about was not clear to me. I do not know what assumptions he had made about Liz. I found his behaviour rude and inappropriate. Perhaps if he had tried to explain what he was thinking about he may have persuaded the group to think or act differently. If he was interested in the social implications of his discourse and in “transforming [his] practices and the social power which underpins them” (Weedon, 1987, p. 96), then the meeting might have proceeded differently.

Though I am trying to encourage different discourses in myself, I know when I speak strongly about my concerns I can sometimes alienate other staff members.

Liz told me afterwards she was angry because she cried in the meeting. Later she said she did not feel badly about crying but she would like to have been able to say to the group that she felt hurt by them. Since the group had gone beyond the opportunity to “manage and even to change [their] surroundings” (Health and Welfare Canada report cited in Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 3), as would be necessary for a healthful interaction, Liz’s comments might only have affected a few of us, but she would not have gone away angry at herself as she did. What happened made her unhealthy, and it was

unhealthy for the group.

When I am feeling overwhelmed by the discourse of others or my own discourse telling me I can not cope, I might cry. If I can recognize my emotions I will stay more healthy. Crying has a way of controlling others as well as myself. Recognizing the emotion and changing to a different discourse would be preferable.

Not recognizing emotions like anger, fear, guilt, tears can use energy. We repeat culturally ingrained patterns of behaviour, based on the discourses we have interpellated (Davies, 1990). In spite of my efforts to be respectful, the reactions of others may overwhelm me and I may resort to a discourse which will be in conflict with what I want to achieve as far as creating a healthful situation in the group is concerned.

Sometimes I do not understand why I cry. I might feel unsupported or incapable of handling something, but I do know the dichotomy of either thinking of myself as bad or good is a discourse I wish to shift from. The dualism involved in that way of thinking can consume my energy. Tears encourage paternal or maternal feelings in others, another discourse which does not support a balance of power.

There was a pause. I waited.

"I think we should have extra time for exploratories because we teach the grade eights," Gail said.

"We are ignoring what has happened here," I said, making an effort to remain calm, refusing to go on with the meeting, as if nothing had happened.

"This is not right. This is disrespectful. We need to discuss this."

"Do you think I was disrespectful?"

Tom asked quickly, sitting forward and looking directly at me.

“I don’t want to point fingers Tom,” I said, “I want us to figure out a way to talk to each other.”

“Let’s get on with the meeting,” Max said impatiently.

Adrian said nothing, as usual.

When the 3:30 deadline we had set for ourselves came, I excused myself and left.

Tom gave me an opening, a chance to say what I thought about his behaviour. Why couldn’t I speak? If one of the discourses which constituted my subjectivity was a familiarity with speaking about my emotions then I should have told him, in a non-confrontational way, what I felt and thought. I wonder what might have happened with the group if I had been able to do that?

Instead of continuing the discussion I let the issue go. Though nothing would have made up for the “dis-ease” Liz and the group felt, the ill health we had encouraged was sad.

The reactions of the other teachers, including the woman who sat there, who sits there, continuously, without comment are interesting. Why are people willing to ignore? If only they realized it could just as easily have been them in Liz’s position if they were questioning authority. I remember an English teachers’ meeting long ago when there was obvious conflict between two teachers and I felt very uncomfortable. I wanted things to go well, but I did not think I had any role in making them that way. My colleague asked later why I had not spoken. At the time I could not have. I did not have an understanding of the politics

The school is but a manifestation of public life. As educators we must be political activists who seek a more just public world. The alternative, of course, is to be school people—satisfied with the existing social order—the silent majority who embrace conservatism. (Pinar, 1975, p. 280)

“We need to figure out the exploratory schedule.” It is the next meeting of the grade eight teachers and Max, as usual, is anxious to get to the point.

“Before we get started I’d like to figure out how we’ll decide who will talk next and how we’ll make decisions,” I said.

“Well, I find teaching takes up a lot of time and these meetings take up a lot of time too,” Mike said, “so I think we should discuss the issues, make sure everyone has a say and then vote on them.” He had often shown an interest in not “wasting time,” a desire he seemed to express when either I or Liz was talking.

Gail spoke next. “I basically agree with Mike,” she said.

I said, “I think we should take turns talking, using a speaker’s list. Also, I

involved. The woman who never speaks might be like I was, except she has been a teacher for a long time.

Now I can speak, usually. Being able to speak might help keep the group healthy. When I speak I want it to be non-confrontational and with an honest recognition of my emotions. I also want to be aware of what makes a group healthy.

When I left feeling I had inadequately attempted to bring the group together to discuss the problem I had been effectively silenced, as had Liz. I was not encouraged to speak. Students may also be in the position of being silenced by a dominant voice. I have observed others laugh or get angry at students as they tried to speak. If I do not think about the power I have with students I may miss opportunities to allow them their voice. I can encourage as well as model language and practices which allow students’ voices.

think we should discuss how we will make a decision on each issue separately. Everyone should have a say about the issue and we should try to reach agreement. If we can't do that, then we should discuss whether we should vote or do something else." As I spoke people shuffled papers or moved uncomfortably, and looked elsewhere.

Tom said "We can't just keep going around in a circle until everyone agrees because we might never agree. I think we have to have a fast, efficient way to make decisions." His looked at me, his lips were pressed together. I looked away but I could tell this was a dividing issue and his side was not mine.

Adrian said nothing, as usual.

"I will keep the speaker's list," I said.

"So it sounds like we should try to reach consensus and if that doesn't work then we should vote on the issue. Because we have to get to completion on these things, that's important." Max emphasized this last point, smiling,

"I agree with the first point that we should try to reach consensus," I said, "but I can't agree that if we don't reach consensus we should then vote. At that point I think we should then discuss how we think the problem should be solved. Voting might only be one of the options." I gave an example using Adrian's situation of Home Ec, "If we tried to out vote her as the rest of us easily could, since we wanted a

shorter exploratory period than her, then we might be satisfied but she could not complete her program and more problems might develop."

From their reactions I could see I was not convincing them. I let my voice trail off.

The following statements were my first reaction to the text:

"I tried to make a clear, non-emotional statement of why I thought the process of voting was inadequate. It was disappointing that I did not convince my colleagues. I wanted to be able to say something and be respected for it. I really wanted to be successful at encouraging them to make amends and get along well."

I used the word "non-emotional," which makes it seem like I am trying to ignore my emotions when what I want to do is acknowledge them. Instead it is a "non-confrontational" response to the actions of another which I want to make.

Why did I want the respect of my colleagues so much? If this was my desire I would be allowing it to constitute me, to make me subject. I probably will not have the respect of certain people in the group. Trying to maintain a respectful discourse myself, in spite of others, would be more healthful.

Our personal problems are the result of socially produced structures (Weedon, 1987). Instead of wasting energy wishing they would change, I might acknowledge the situation. Noting my bodily signs of frustration and adjusting my behaviour and actions to the discourse of puissance would be more healthful.

My aim is to reach a point where I

“Why don’t we go around the table and hear what others think?” I said, trying again.

“It is already 3:45,” Gail said and she held up her watch to emphasize her point.

“We have spent twenty minutes on this topic already and we haven’t even started on the agenda. I don’t want to have this discussion every time we meet.” She said this and looked directly at me. I was nodding my head in agreement, as were some of the others. I did not want to have this discussion at every meeting either. If we could work out how we make decisions we could save time later.

“It seems we have most people who want to go with one way of making a decision and one person who wants to do something different. But I don’t know what.” By now she was looking at me steadily.

“What I want to do, if we can’t agree, is figure out what would be most appropriate. We might want to wait until another time to complete the discussion.” I could feel

“no longer see myself through the eyes of others.” (Haug, 1987, p. 36). We may make many mistakes as we try to shift our identity. As Frigga Haug (1987) said “Hauling ourselves out of the water taught us nothing about flying, but a lot about gravity” (Haug, 1987, p. 39).

The fact that a woman was directing her frustration at me made me angry. I thought she was an “ally” to the democratic process. My language here is interesting. The word ally suggests a military metaphor. It is a war term. Is that how I think of my staff during our meetings?

Why did I think she would support what I said? I think because I knew she had been in situations where she had spoken up against the dominant discourses herself. Finding out my assumptions about her were inaccurate increased my feelings of alienation from the group and prevented a healthy dynamic.

Both men and women use the dominant discourses. Historically this is a male position, though some women try to emulate it. The woman named Gail in the story had interpellated this discourse.

the heat of my red face. I wasn't angry. The discomfort I felt, with the focus of everyone on me, registered and made me wish I was elsewhere. It was difficult, but not unusual, for me to try to speak, with the large silent body of our staff looking on.

"I want to get to the agenda and stop wasting time." Gail said this with a glare at me.

"Don't you think I do too?" I asked, my face warm.

I could feel my face muscles were tense. I was red and hot. I was unable to say more.

Though my language was respectful and encouraged a more healthful direction for the group the democratic model was not accepted. I wonder what assumptions were being made about me as I spoke.

Trying to sort out the complexities of a network of caring human relations in hierarchical terms- where some are 'right' and others are 'wrong'- is tempting, since this is the method we all grew up with. It's such a simple-minded way of explaining things, where some dominate others, some lead and the rest follow, some think and others are told what to think. The truth is, human beings need a method or structure that supports diversity, otherwise we cannot create the fluid, yet whole, human organization which is required to fulfill our part of the ecological reality we face. It simply won't work for some to tell the others what to do. (Plant, 1989, p. 247)

The discourses which allowed me to feel confident as I explained my ideas to the group conflicted with a discourse which encouraged me to discount my value, my voice.

When I encourage student involvement in discussions I can help them find their voice and support a healthy group of people.

Being silenced is different from being

silent. Being silenced involves little choice, being silent involves choice. Silencing can happen because certain discourses dominate, and may not be open to others, on the basis of social structures like race, gender, age and cultural background. My age, gender, and cultural background limited the subjectivity available to me and encouraged my silence in certain situations. I do have some agency for the discourses I interpellate but to ignore certain ones is difficult.

With students I can be aware that all voices can be encouraged to participate in discussion, if they desire.

While to a degree it is our use of such constructions [that ignore obvious contradictions] that enables us to get by in the world, they ultimately prevent us from gaining a proper grip on reality. At every point where we have indulged in self-delusion, refusing to confront issues face to face, avoiding conflicts, refuted connections and so on, we have in so doing by-passed, or at least failed to perceive, a certain kind of potential for our future life. (Haug, 1987, p. 40)

I wonder what would have happened here if I had avoided “indulging in self-delusion?” I avoided a conflict, and I did so knowingly. I know I was silenced by the group and my own lack of confidence.

I wonder what would have happened if the members of the group had avoided self-delusion. The group had “the personal and social resources for action.” We might have experienced a healthful situation “collectively.” But we did not. My health, and probably the health of others, decreased.

If we thought more often about health, about how we as a group interact and how that can be so healthy for each and every one of us, we might act differently.

Cynicism can develop if we are not conscious of the conflicting discourses in society. I wonder if I can avoid it?

*

*

*

*

*

*

The Tape

I was having a good day. I felt happy because David was coming home from California that night and the students were responsive. The day had gone well. It was almost over. We were outside drawing perspective views of a roof. Some students were finished and were starting to wander back in or away. I heard the rap music again, coming from the classroom. I had already had a discussion about its inappropriateness with one student.

I could hear the loud swearing clearly from where I was outside. I left the student who was speaking to me, mid-sentence and marched into the room. I went to the tape machine and began pushing at the buttons. I remember feeling some kind of satisfaction from the sound of squealing tape. Finally I pushed the right one. The noise stopped amid the yell of the fourth loud "fuck" in a row.

I turned away, but on second thought I opened the tape slot and removed the tape. It dropped on the ground.

Suddenly I stomped on it, not once but twice, three times. Then I picked it up and held it out to the class.

"Whose is this?"

"Is it yours?" I said to the boy who had had his tape returned once this period because the music was offensive.

The Subtext

Generally, students know their rights. Many are eager to speak up about them. These can be challenging moments for teachers and students. Questioning authority in a respectful way is important to encourage with students. My challenging moments come when students I have encouraged to question begin to question me. If their questioning is not done respectfully and if I do not respond respectfully then I will undermine my intentions to support a healthful interaction.

Where students expect their rights and are faced with an attempt to dominate they might challenge that authority, not necessarily in a respectful way. Thinking I must always be in control of my emotions, or ignore my emotions, is a discourse which causes tension for me with others. Even though I was having a good time with my students and my day was nearly ended, the dominant discourse about authority, learned at home or in the institution, was in conflict with a more democratic discourse. If I do not stay aware of my emotions these dominant authoritarian discourses will predominate. Since I am an authority figure, who "guarantees the truth of an utterance" (Weedon, 1987, p. 97), my behaviour might encourage students to reproduce it (Grumet, 1988,

Dinnerstein, 1963). This is a tremendous responsibility and only a conscious effort to be aware of my conflicting discourses will make a difference. The embarrassment of knowing I can be this unconscious is a “power-ful” argument for working to make a shift from an oppressive discourse to a more healthful one.

I wonder how often this boy has had other teachers treat him this way? I suspect many times. A different discourse, one which includes humour perhaps, might be more healthful. Here is a vision of how this story might be retold if I could be aware of my conflicting discourses and act differently. This version is a “slice of life” in the classroom, implying the group process which has come before, and demonstrating ethical, respectful behaviour of individuals participating in a meeting which increases the capacity for their existence together, a healthful, democratic discourse:

I could hear the loud music and the swearing clearly from where I was outside. I excused myself from the student who was speaking to me, and walked into the room. I took the tape from the machine and placed it in my drawer. On the board I added the topic of music to our class meeting agenda.

It was the end of the day so I reminded students of their homework and

we said goodbye.

Jake said. "Can I have my tape back?"

"You know the procedure, you can have it back tomorrow, at the end of school. We have to talk about music again at the meeting," I said.

"He grumbled but left saying, "See ya."

The next day, at the class meeting, I spoke when we came to the topic of music.

"We said we would allow certain music in the class, as long as it was used at appropriate times. We have had a few episodes of music being played at inappropriate times, or too loudly, so there will be no music allowed in class." Groans. I knew this would be hard for some who really liked their music, but it was my job to follow through.

"Jake, you are next."

"I wasn't playing it too loud. And you weren't even in the room," he moaned.

"Jake, I heard it down by the elementary school," I laughed. "You weren't the only one though. We just didn't make it through the two week trial."

"This sucks," he said.

"What happens now?" Mark asked. "Can't we play our CD's either?"

"Music is music," I said, "but there will be other meetings. You can put it on the agenda for discussion next

time.”

“I’ll do it,” he said.

We moved on to the next agenda item.

Our group had “the personal and social resources for action” (Health and Welfare Canada report cited in Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 3), since we had worked out a procedure to allow students the opportunity to take responsibility for having certain music, for certain times in the class. When the two week trial did not work we reverted to what we had at first, no music, something which could be reversed at some future time, if we could agree.

Sometimes I am conscious that I am not open to the suggestions of an individual or group. Those are the moments I want to remember that one voice in control prevents the multiplicity of voices which can be more healthful. When students think about how the group interacts, and that health can be thought of in these terms, they have a model for how to stay healthful.

That afternoon I helped my son and his friends with their video assignment. I talked and laughed with the boys and tried to feel good about myself. I could ... and I couldn’t.

That night I slept poorly.

I knew I had to apologize. I felt badly.

The next day, as the last class approached I felt fearful. Many things went through my head. Maybe I shouldn’t apologize. After all, I had

When I am conscious of feeling badly about myself for becoming angry I must remind myself that this language constitutes a discourse which sets up a dichotomy. I want to change to a language which does not see me as bad or

talked with some of the other students in the class. They didn't seem to hold a grudge. Maybe I could just forget it. They probably had. After all, I was the teacher. I was in charge. It had been offensive music. There had to be a limit. There had to be some "control." Many of the other students didn't even like this music. All the students in my home room class knew that music was not acceptable. These other students were just pushing limits anyway. They could use Walkmans.

The rationalizing went on. The bad feeling (or the good feeling- the one that wouldn't let me give in to the rationalizing) didn't go away.

The art class started. The group of students this boy was sitting with was a particularly difficult one. I separated some of them. Two were sent out of the room.

Everyone quieted down and went to work. The class continued and still I said nothing.

Finally I asked the boy if I could talk to him. When we were alone, I apologized. I said I had done a dumb thing yesterday, I told him I would replace the tape if it was ruined.

He laughed and said it worked, surprisingly. I patted his arm, close to tears and restated my apology.

good but as a person struggling to recognize the discourses which support that dualism. Shifting to a more healthful language and being honest about my emotions, at least to myself, is what I am struggling to do.

I am repeating the history of my parents and their parents, rerunning the "tape" of my youth, of frustration's right to control the situation, of the 'adult's' right to do what he/she wills. Breaking that pattern requires a conscious awareness of the contradictory nature of subjectivity.

My brothers and I were amused one time when my mother became angry at my brother and ruined his record in much the same manner. We had no empathy for her, but somehow her behaviour, the circumstances, drew me in, became part of me. My arrogance and confidence has gone now that I see the reproduction of the same discourse in me.

Being able to apologize demonstrates I am not all powerful, and it encourages responsibility. I wish I had not felt "close to tears" because it means I was feeling badly about myself and, as I have stated previously, that bad/good dichotomy is unhealthy. Apologizing without that dichotomy is powerful; apologizing with it encourages misunderstanding, ill health.

*

*

*

*

*

*

SHIFTING DISCOURSES

Learning About Democracy in the Classroom

In the curriculum of the classroom I have come more and more in my thinking and in my actions to share power and control with students and parents. Rather than teach fewer subjects and swap students with other teachers I prefer to teach my students most subjects. This arrangement allows us opportunities to know each other better, to integrate topics, and to have a more flexible schedule which we can use for a variety of purposes such as class meetings. Most other teachers at my level do not share my perspective about the opportunities of working with fewer students. And the dominant discourses of most other home room teachers, who are men, do not necessarily mesh with the discourses which I am trying to encourage in myself. Because of dissimilar philosophies a tension may develop with some staff, students and parents who are used to the more traditional discourses of school. This tension might add to a sense of isolation and ill health if I am not aware of the feelings, emotions, discourses and assumptions which contribute to my subjectivity, or it might improve power relations and health if I am aware. In this section of the thesis I will demonstrate and explain some of the democratic, healthful concepts I am learning with most of my students, parents and staff, concepts which allow us to take responsibility for our thinking and actions.

Involving students and parents in curriculum and paying attention to the conflicting discourses within can encourage the collective voices necessary for health. Democracy in the classroom means collectively making decisions,

with information and opinion from our respective positions in the hierarchy. When students are allowed opportunities to participate in decisions which affect them, they then have the opportunity to learn what it means to be responsible for those decisions. Making this happen requires that I let go of some of the control of the decisions in the classroom, it also requires a consciousness of the "discursive constitution of subject positions from which individuals actively interpret the world and by which [we, students and teacher] are governed" (Weedon, 1987, p. 96). My stories demonstrate the kind of continuous reflective effort needed for this democratic process. Some generalization is possible, and is provided in this section of the thesis, but continuous reflection with my students and on my own, about the process and the procedures, is necessary for the healthful learning we are engaged in together.

Other people have demonstrated the effect of reflection on their work. Barbara McClintock talks to author Evelyn Fox Keller (1983) about thinking deeply about her research organism, about getting a feeling for what really makes it work.

For all of us, our concepts of the world build on what we see, as what we see builds on what we think. Where we know more, we see more. But for McClintock, this reciprocity between cognitive and visual seems always to have been more intimate than it is for most. As if without distinguishing between the two, she knew by seeing, and saw by knowing. Especially illustrative is the story she tells of how she came to see the *Neurospora* chromosomes. Unwilling to accept her failure to see these minute objects under the microscope—to pick them out as individuals with continuity—she retreated to sit, and meditate beneath the eucalyptus trees. There she "worked on herself." When she felt she was ready, she returned to the microscope, and the chromosomes were now to be seen, not only by her, but, thereafter, by others as well. (Keller, 1983, p. 148)

As Barbara McClintock trained herself to do, I can be reflective, I can "work on myself" and envision ways to make what we do as a group "count," ways to allow my students the experience to think and to make decisions, and then to learn from their decisions.

Making thoughtful decisions and learning from them encourages a responsibility to the group and to self. Rights and responsibilities are connected. People are aware of, and usually not afraid to demand, their rights as citizens in a community. Though students clearly understand their rights, they do not always know or accept much responsibility for having them. They may not have appropriate ways to voice and maintain their rights with others. How we handle the privilege of working with others will determine the success of what we do together. Knowledge of our rights and responsibilities, and how they are connected, is a vital step in the process of democracy.

Within the confines of curriculum, with one group of students and parents, some specific policies and understandings can be developed. The students and I discuss roles and responsibilities of the members in the educational hierarchy, from parent and student to the Minister of Education. We are then prepared for a discussion about the important rules and consequences we would need to have as a group of people working together. Activities which ask students to think about rights and responsibilities and to develop their own class rules and consequences give life to the democratic classroom.

Responsibility can be modeled, thought about, and taught, painstakingly, over a period of time, with a group of people who care about each other. Students need opportunities to think about themselves as subjects of

conflicting discourses, and to take responsibility for that behavior. For example, when a student's behavior is contrary to the class rules if I confront and punish him or her according to my own, possibly arbitrary ideas this would not be as effective and as important as following the rules and consequences he or she helped establish.

Students also need opportunities to bring up topics of concern for discussion in the group. Some of these concerns may result in additions to the existing rules and procedures, thus the class rules are always open to possibilities, to adjustment, as we ourselves need to be. By allowing students a voice, the 'control' of the classroom is shared by all participants and an ownership can be felt by its members.

Thinking About Class Meetings

The curriculum of the class is not finitely set. There is room for play, in the metaphoric sense of the word, with the curriculum of most programs. Some topics are required by the Ministry of Education, others are optional. When a topic is taken up, who comes in to speak about it, where we go to learn more about it, the types of assignments we do on it and how we evaluate them all involve decisions in which students can participate. Since there will be an effect on the work of the members of the class, and on the willingness to work, a teacher who is thinking in democratic terms can invite students to be involved in determining aspects of curriculum from their point of view, rather than making all those decisions alone.

William Schubert (1988) in his article recalls Dewey's principle of progressive organization of curriculum, which asserts teaching should proceed from student interest to "funded knowledge of the human race," and suggests it is the

. . . seed of democracy. It is the union of human interest and funded knowledge. As such it provides situational answers to the basic curriculum question: What knowledge and experiences are most worthwhile? (p. 167)

The curriculum is most meaningful to students when it proceeds from their interests to what they know and want to know. For example, if a student was interested in photography, he or she could clarify what was known about it and what he or she wanted to know this would be an effective way to proceed in a chemistry or an art course. In a discussion of human sexuality, if the students were interested in birth control, they could be

encouraged to share what they knew and then this was enlarged to cover what they wanted to know they would be learning together as well as appreciating their common interests.

. . . this is achieved by enabling learners to encounter the concerns or interests of one another. Through such encounters they become aware of the fact that they share deeper human interests, concerns, with many others. Although momentary problems differ among individuals, such problems usually symbolize a deeper strata of common human interests. (Schubert, 1988, p. 167)

By allowing students to voice their interests in a formal setting, we can encourage them to develop for themselves a sense of awareness and responsibility, authority, toward self and other and toward the classroom curricula. I must be willing to give up some of the control of the proceedings and allow students opportunities to speak about their concerns. Some of the advantages for a group which can work together democratically include moments of puissance, a collective health, and opportunities to think about and be responsible for the conflicting discourses which inform the member's subjectivity.

One forum for an elegant give and take of wills is the class meeting. The class meeting is a vital setting for democracy. I have been using class meetings for three years and have found them trying and challenging, rewarding and encouraging. Through them, my students and I are learning what democracy means. I know it means having students take some responsibility for what happens in the class. It means knowing it is an advantage when the people I work with do not abdicate their power to me but are participatory to the curriculum of the classroom.

Democracy means making decisions which might benefit the whole group rather than an individual or small group. For example, a student might prefer to discuss his homework with his seat partner rather than read during reading time, but if the group had agreed that reading time should be a quiet time then the rules or consequences set by the group will come into effect.

An awareness of the conflicting discourses within me, and that my students are subjects of their own conflicting discourses, will allow democracy to work. To change patterns set in language and to be aware of the power of the hierarchy is also part of the work. In the following account I demonstrate how my students and I can encourage moments of puissance and collective health.

The Class Meeting

The students and I formed a circle. Waiting until everyone joined the agreed upon formation for our meeting could sometimes take a while. This time they were relatively quick.

"I call the meeting to order," I said as chairperson. I usually chaired the meetings at the request of the students, who suggested the proceedings went more smoothly when I did. "Sheila, are you taking notes?"

"Yes," she said. "I just can't find my pen. Oh, I'm okay."

"I'll keep the speaker's list," Mark said.

The group slowly settled down.

I glanced at the agenda on the board. There were seven items, two were ones I added, five were put there by different students.

"The first item on the agenda is the back door. Who put that topic up?"

"I did," Jake said. "Can I talk now?"

"Before you start, how long do you think we should spend on this topic?"

"Ten minutes," Colleen said.

"Agreement?" I asked and checked around the circle. "Okay, ten minutes. Begin Jake."

Jake sat forward in his chair and cleared his throat. "We can't get in the back door when we come back from recess. It really bugs me."

Mike wanted to speak. "Can't we get a new door?"

He directed his question at me but Marni and Jake wanted to speak first.

"I tried to put a stone in the bottom to hold it open but it keeps falling out," Marni said. I hate standing out there and waiting for someone to come and open the door!"

"I really hate it when it rains and we have to walk around to the other door," Jake added.

I spoke in answer to Mike's question. "We have no money in the school to buy a new door. The principal was talking about the shortage of money at the last staff meeting. Does anyone have any other suggestions?"

"Reni and I were talking about this," Sheila said. "We think we should write a letter to the school board."

"Let's start with the principal," Rob put in. "Why don't we write to him first and ask him to talk to the janitor. That guy might have some ideas. I saw him fixing the door to the gym last week."

"Good idea, Rob." I commented. "That person is the building and grounds guy."

"And I think he was replacing the door. Maybe the old one will work for us. It had a handle," Rob added.

"Any more discussion on this? We only have two more minutes."

"I think Tom should write the letter," Chris said, with a smile at Tom.

"I don't want to," Tom said.

"Can you make this a writing credit assignment?" Sheila asked.

"Ya, and all our letters should go." Morgan always wanted things to be fair.

I looked around the group. No objections. "If there is no more discussion on this . . . we can talk about how to write a letter and the details about what could go in it in writing class." No one said anything further so I asked Sheila to record the results of the discussion in the minutes.

"Got it," she said smartly, as she finished writing.

I glanced at the second item on the agenda—seating. This was a topic they brought up often. The seating was arranged randomly by me putting out cards with their names on them. We had tried a number of different plans but, because the class rules often ended up being broken, we had come back to the cards each time. "Let's take ten minutes on this too, okay." Nods. "Who would like to speak about this one?" Several students put up their hands. I looked at Mark and he got the hint and started writing names on his list.

"Mike was first."

"I want to sit with my friends in class," he said. "Every time you choose I end up with someone I don't like." He looked at Cynthia. "I mean, who isn't my friend." She frowned back.

"Who's next Mike?" I asked.

"Me, then Ryan, then Alex, then Tiffany. I think we should get to choose whoever we want to sit with."

Ryan started to speak when Mike interrupted him. "I call a point of order on Cynthia, She threw this at me." A point of order was an idea I told them

about from another class. They agreed to use it as a way to encourage people to stay focussed.

"I want to stay in the meeting," Cynthia said, serious now, she knew she could choose this time but she would not have a choice next time a point of order was called on her.

Ryan continued, "Me too, I want to sit with Bill."

Alex said, "Come on you guys, you know you can't work together." He directed this to Ryan and Bill. "I think we should. . ."

"Point of order on Dan," Sheila interrupted, "he pinched me."

"Dan, do you choose to stay or go out?" I said.

"I'll stay, but I didn't really pinch her," he said with a grin.

"Alex, before you go on," I said, "I remind everyone there are only five minutes left for this topic. Point of orders take time. If we run out we could bring up the topic at the end of the meeting, if there is time, but if we want to make a decision we have to focus." I didn't often remind them to stay focused, the proceedings either went well and we moved through the agenda quickly and efficiently, or an increasing number of behavior incidents caused me to call the meeting to an end, as chairperson. "Alex, continue, we now have four minutes."

"I'll let Cynthia talk. She has a plan," he said with a wink.

"I think we should try a choice week instead of changing totally," Cynthia said, anxious to explain her plan.

"Say more," I encouraged.

"I think we should have one week a month where we get to choose where we sit. We should get three chances a day and if we still are noisy, then we should go back to the cards. If we do it well all week then we could try it for

the next month, for one week." Cynthia had really thought this out. She seemed to have considered the other ways we had tried to make seating changes . Her suggestion seemed to appeal to the group.

"Yah," Tom said. "That sounds good. Maybe if we do it well for a few months we can increase the weeks after the spring break."

"Time's up everyone. No more time for discussion. Can we make a decision on this? Let's go around and say what you think. A simple yes or no will give us an idea if we need to talk about this some more."

One after another the students nodded or spoke their approval of Cynthia's plan. We used consensus as a way to make decisions. Sometimes we did not need to go around the circle. Sometimes people had more to say as their turn came, but this time there was a quick indication that we should go with one week per month of choosing to sit where we wanted.

* * *

This example of part of a class meeting demonstrates that students are capable of discussing things that affect them as a group in a healthful way. This can not occur without some important ground work ahead of and during the meeting time.

Before a group begins its meetings it should not only think about roles and responsibilities of the members in the hierarchy of the education system, but also about how members sit during a meeting, how they make decisions, and about what kinds of things they can and can not make decisions. Whether we will sit in a circle or in a different formation, whether we will vote or use a different method of decision making are valuable issues to discuss ahead of time. Whether we study chemistry is not a decision the group can have any say about, but when we study chemistry, whom we invite in to work with us,

or where we go to learn more about chemistry are all curriculum decisions which can be made collectively.

My groups have worked in a class meeting to establish some rules of order and behavior for the class, as a first step together. Because we needed a way to deal with people who lost focus, we used the procedure of calling a point of order. At this point a person can choose to remain in the circle or not. If they choose to leave they forfeit the right of a voice in the decisions made for the group. A second call gives them no choice. Thus Dan and Cynthia would have been asked to leave the circle the next time a point of order was called on them.

My role has been to chair the meeting and to end the meeting early if the group is not able to discuss ideas respectfully. Students have chaired meetings on occasion, but the group has requested that I chair, perhaps because chairing takes more focus and self assurance than many are capable of or want at this age.

Everyone in the group has an opportunity to determine what is spoken about at a class meeting. The agenda is posted on the board and we all construct it together. In the story students contributed the topics of the back door and the seating while I contributed the Mediaeval Feast to the agenda.

In our class the group decided to make decisions by discussion and consensus. An initial discussion with students to explain the difference between a situation where the majority rules and consensus will clarify the ways decisions are made, but as the class meetings proceed meaning will become more clear, and further discussion and decision may be necessary. In the story, Cynthia's idea about seating was decided easily and the idea of writing letters to handle the door problem was also easily accepted. Where a

group can not decide to try one idea or another for a trial time period the topic can be revisited at a further meeting, or later in the same meeting.

During discussions I can speak as can any student. I must accept that I am part of the group, not just a facilitator of it. I have important things to contribute, from my perspective, as do the students. At the same time I must accept I have a part in contributing to the group, I must accept I can not control the decisions of the group. If I can recognize my emotions at the time of conflicting discourse and not enter a struggle for power with my students, a struggle of wills, I need not fear loss of personal power, and the group will be healthy, both individually and collectively. The group can feel it can "manage and even change its surroundings" (Health and Welfare Canada, cited in Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 3).

Waiting for the discussion to end can be frustrating to people who want to make decisions quickly or who have little patience for lengthy discussions, or both. A way to lower the impatience and anxiety of some, about the length of time a decision can take, is to time the agenda. If a decision is not made in the allotted time then the item can come up again later in the meeting, if there is time, or at another meeting. People with strong opinions may change their mind given time to relax, think, and discuss their ideas. Students soon become used to the implications of a limited amount of time.

In setting up the rules for procedure at the beginning of the process, it must be understood that a group will not usually own a decision unless there is a large acceptance of it. The best way to arrive at that acceptance is to discuss all the ideas and try to come to some understanding together.

Consensus is the primary way our class meeting reaches a decision. The group must decide, by consensus, to agree, to vote, or to postpone a decision.

Students should understand what it means to vote, that when a group votes it means the members in a group agree to go along with the majority, even if only just over half of the members of the group vote a particular way. In the case where the numbers for and against a decision were close, the decision would not be owned by a large number and there would not be much desire to abide by it. Discussion about voting as only one way to make a decision can be useful.

When a decision is made by consensus it means everyone who wanted to has had a chance to speak about an issue and be part of a decision, unless a person opted to leave the circle by choice or by their behavior. It also means everyone has agreed to try something for a trial period. In the story, the group agreed to write letters to the principal about the faulty door. People who chose not to say anything about an issue, who remained silent, must accept the responsibility for his or her silence. Here "silence" is not the same as "being silenced" where people are not encouraged to speak or when they do speak they are belittled.

Sometimes the mood of the group can be contrary to something the teacher desires. Suggesting alternatives like postponing a decision to another meeting or working with a committee of students would be a creative way to give students with reservations a chance to think, and perhaps accept a foreign idea. Sometimes ideas are first greeted with reserve and concern. The initial speakers can be opposed. By allowing students an opportunity to discuss and work out their fears the mood of the group can shift. After some discussion about a topic the objections might vanish and the group might be willing to proceed. If not there are other opportunities.

I am learning to keep in mind what I really want from the process is not to push my own agenda, but for students to have the opportunity to find their voice. Once the class meeting process is started, a return to autocratic decision-making would be a breach of trust and respect, a contradictory discourse which would confuse students and be unhealthy for the class.

In general, I can apply the reflections I have made about myself and my students and colleagues from my stories, in my job. In the classroom, because I have more authority it is easier for me to encourage procedures and practices which allow opportunities for healthy collective interaction and moments of puissance.

With my staff, because the administrators control the proceedings and agendas, I have much less influence and authority. Experience at many staff meetings has demonstrated the following to me: we rarely have time to discuss important issues before we are expected to make a decision by voting; we do not commonly establish roles and responsibilities of group members; and we do not decide or discuss how decisions will be made, before we vote. During interactions with these people I can recognize my feelings, possibly share them with my group, and recall that health is related directly to the dynamic force of the group.

My health depends on healthy group interactions according to the description of health from Health and Welfare Canada which says health is experienced not only "individually, but collectively. Most significantly perhaps, this new understanding of health dwells less on people's traits as individuals and more on the nature of their interaction with the wider environment" (Health and Welfare Canada, cited in Jevne and Zingle, 1996, p. 3).

How is the democratic process working? As mentioned, with staff I have limited influence. With students I have only begun to learn about this way of being. Some of the barriers to it are my own socialization patterns which affect how I interact with students and parents and administrators who misunderstand the democratic process of allowing student voices in the curriculum of the class.

Re-socializing Myself

When I have to correct a student's behavior I have learned I will be most successful if I do so by recognizing my emotions and accepting how I feel. Correcting a student's inappropriate behavior, probably the most important trial of a democratic classroom, must be done with respect for the student and the group.

This way of being may go against my socialization, against some of the discourses which are part of my subjectivity. As demonstrated with the story, "The Tape," speaking to students requires, for me, a language which is on the side of puissance to be acceptable. I have thought about what is successful, but in the intensity of certain moments, especially some moments when some students or I are not honest about our feelings, I might lose my perspective, try to control my emotions and end up with my emotions controlling me because I have denied or ignored them.

* * *

"Well, that's it. The meeting is over, go back to your seats, take out your science.

You know what I would really like to see is us make it through a longer meeting. We just can't do it so far. You guys are just too wild today."

* * *

With the right tone of voice these words might express an honest desire for improvement in a respectful way. If, instead, I feel disappointed, and I speak with a slightly sarcastic tone in my voice, then I have reached a personal limit of tolerance and have resorted to a discourse which I do not want to reproduce, a behavior learned at home. By reflecting on these

moments, I may make a change for the next time the class meets and does not behave well. At most, I can acknowledge the discourse I have observed from reflection on the stories of my life, and can shift from a controlling, dominant discourse to one on the side of puissance, which accepts my different discourses and recognizes my emotions.

As demonstrated in the section called "Reading and Writing the Stories," the efforts at reconstituting myself involve a complex process of reflection and practice. Sometimes the results are discouraging, sometimes encouraging. I try to be forgiving of my different discourses. I am always aware of the opportunities, sometimes only after the fact.

Avoiding Cynicism, Living With Hope

Parents and administrators are an important part of democracy in the classroom. With their support, students might reproduce a discourse which is cooperative and independent at the same time. They might be cooperative with each other and yet work independently because they have confidence in their own voice. The spirit of democracy will suffer if parents, students and others do not understand and confirm the process.

Parents, as partners in education, are invaluable to the curricula of the classroom when they, like other partners, understand their roles and responsibilities. Determining what those roles are can be a challenge for the school and for the classroom teacher. Parents, who are encouraged to think that the principal and teachers are their employees, or that they are equal partners, without there having been any discussion of democratic procedure, may create problems for the school community or for individual teachers. In a democracy participants must understand their roles. As well, they must be very clear that the intention of the democratic system is for the health of the whole group rather than the good of one person or group over another. This is healthful, ethical living.

In my efforts to work effectively with students, I am learning to include parents in the process. Often there are misconceptions about the notion of involving students in making decisions in the classroom, even around the term democracy. In an article about parenting, a researcher used the label "democratic families" and defined it this way: "where parents stress permissiveness somewhat more than setting down limits." (Teenagers Reap, 1989, p. 117). This may be the conception some parents have about democracy

in the classroom. By meeting with parents as partners to education, on a regular basis, I have been generally successful at encouraging a different understanding of the process. Their role is to be facilitators of the democratic process by encouraging their students to accept the responsibilities they have taken on, as they themselves must do in their own parent group as a council of parents with power in the hierarchy.

What is surprising, disheartening, even depressing is when people, perhaps without an acceptance of their roles and school procedures, do not follow the democratic process. Sometimes the administration does not have clear policies and procedures, or it capitulates to the will of parents, rather than using the supportive democratic structures, such as class meetings or parent meetings, that exist. When this happens democracy, and individuals in it, are ill served.

Sometimes students misuse or misunderstand the concept of democracy. One student asked me, with her parents present, why we had class meetings anyway "since they don't do anything except waste time." This same student tried to get the class to give up meetings or to have them less frequently. The rest of the students refused. Her understanding of the value of meetings, even though many decisions about classroom procedures and activities were reached by the group, was different from others. She had an opportunity to discuss her dissatisfactions with the group but she did not accept what they said to her about why having an opinion was valuable. She then worked with her parents to undermine the process for others in the class.

Some parents, teachers and administrators, especially ones who perceive discipline in a more traditional way, do not subscribe to the philosophy of the democratic classroom. The idea that students may be "running the class" is

one misinterpretation expressed. Another deeper distrust from some is that I might be a teacher, a woman, with little control. Rakow (1991) agrees that it is difficult to make changes in the usual text of the classroom without causing some discomfort:

When the professor who is the Inappropriate Other, however self-consciously, chooses to bring a different text to the classroom, a text that challenges the traditional curriculum. . . she or he has committed a further transgression. . . (Rakow, 1991, p. 10)

In spite of the difficulties, the process of developing a democratic structure and working for the change it can produce in myself, in my students, and parent groups is both worthwhile and necessary to my future as a teacher. I want to live my life in all consciousness, treating the students I work with respectfully, in spite of my own social and cultural history, making the shifts necessary to achieve the respect we all deserve. I believe I have developed some tools, some changes in myself, during this process of writing, thinking and practice which will help me do that.

With regard to my staff, where I have some influence, mostly in small groups, I can keep in mind what I have learned in my work in this paper and by my reflective practice with students, staff and parents. I can be honest about my emotions and pay attention to my own and others' conflicting discourses while trying to develop relations which work. Being honest with myself and others when I am angry and hurt is challenging, but the benefits for ethical and healthful living are tremendous.

CLOSING THE THESIS

In The Milieu

I am aware of being in the milieu in my life, in my growth. In the language of the Year 2000, I am involved in lifelong learning. I struggle with the discourses which inform my language, which draw me from dominance to submission and back, as well as to the language of puissance, of health. Like a plant which enlarges from the middle, I am struggling for movement, for growth. I do not grow toward something, as if there were one path, one correct "line of flight" (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, p. 49), I am becoming. Deleuze says, "to become is never to imitate. . . . There is no terminus from which you set out, none from which you arrive at or ought to arrive at. . . . The question 'What are you becoming?' is particularly stupid. For as someone becomes, what he is becoming changes as much as he does himself" (p. 2). In French the word "milieu" means "'surroundings,' 'medium,' and 'middle.'" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. xvii). Like Deleuze and Guattari I take the term to mean all three and use it instead of the English word "middle" to describe a place of becoming: I am in the milieu of life.

I came to the university to think about the ethics involved in the use of power and authority in the school system, where the quality of relationships I aspire to are so easily compromised. In the process of writing and reflection I expanded the inquiry from questioning only those above me in the hierarchy to questioning my relationships with others. A study of the ethics of authority had to include questioning my own discourse patterns and assumptions and making connections between situations where I had less authority and situations where I had more authority. Eventually, it meant

reflecting on my complicity in the stories of my life. It became my project to reconstitute myself, to change my subjectivity, with an awareness of gender, language, social history and the workings of the hierarchy, to accept responsibility, for my role in my stories.

I came to the university for solace for my frustrations with the educational institution, feeling unheard, unhealthy. I leave with certain understandings about how I am in power relations and how this knowledge will allow the possibility of being heard. I have learned that language constitutes power. The language of domination or submission does not support a view of myself I desire. Rather, the language of cooperation and of independence, a democratic, healthy language, which does not rely on the dichotomy of domination and submission, is the language I struggle to speak and the identity I struggle to construct.

The reader has experienced my struggle to become, to change certain dominant discourses as I reconstitute my subjectivity. At times I am convinced that I have found a different way of being, that I can be confident and comfortable with the understanding that I have changed.

And then I am humbled when I notice old language in my interactions with others. Even within the writing of this thesis, my language can change. I am a self who knows a language of dominance and submission and one who knows more and more about the language of puissance, of health. I am still in the milieu. . .

POSTSCRIPT

Power

Living in the earth-deposits of our history

Today a backhoe divulged out of a crumbling flank of earth
one bottle amber perfect a hundred-year-old
cure for fever or melancholy a tonic
for living on this earth in the winters of this climate

Today I was reading about Marie Curie:

she must have known she suffered from radiation sickness
her body bombarded for years by the element
she had purified

It seems she denied to the end
the source of the cataracts on her eyes
the cracked and suppurating skin of her finger-ends
till she could no longer hold a test-tube or a pencil

She died a famous woman denying
her wounds
denying
her wounds came from the same source as her power
(Rich, 1978, p. 39)

AFTERWORD

At The Photocopier Rewritten

The story about the photocopier was central to this thesis as a demonstration of the illhealth of both myself and my staff. I end this writing, this part of the process of reconstituting my subjectivity, with a retelling the photocopier story, of how I think this story might play out now.

At the Photocopier

"Okay Darcy, so you want me to copy this section here?"

Darcy and I were on our way into the photocopy room to get her some research material for a science project. There were three men standing around the teacher boxes. One was leaving as we came in, he looked at us strangely.

"Wait outside," one of the other men said to Darcy, interrupting our conversation.

Surprised, I looked at him as Darcy left, and said nothing, preferring to discuss this without her present.

"I'll be right out Darcy. You can wait for me in the hall by the office."

"The staff decided students were prohibited from the photocopy room," the man said to me aggressively, when she was gone.

I looked at him and said, "I missed that discussion and I can't say I agree with the way these signs are written, but I will bring it up at the next meeting. Perhaps we could word them so students can understand the problem. What do you think?"

In this version of the story there is no conflict and I do not end up silenced or angry. I did not ignore my colleague's aggression, I responded to him with a different discourse, one which allowed me my power and invited him to puissance, an ethical, healthful, democratic discourse.

Rules are important to facilitate the smooth operation of a large number of people. Participation in making the rules allows more ownership of them. A process to revisit rules and an understanding that they are open to change if the group agrees can help people in a group feel comfortable about interactions with others. Though I missed the opportunity to speak about a rule governing the presence of students in the photocopy room I did have the chance to return to my staff with some ideas for modification. The awareness of this option for students in the classroom, the knowledge that rules once made can be modified, will provide them with an understanding of how and why voice is important and will support their personal health and the collective health of the group.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atwood, Margaret (1986). The Handmaid's Tale. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart-Bantam Limited.
- Barnhart, C. & Barnhart, R. (Eds.), (1990). The World Book Dictionary. Chicago: World Book, Inc.
- Belenky, M. J., Clinchy, M. B., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's Ways of Knowing. The Development of Self, Voice and Mind. New York: Basic Books Inc.
- Bergvall, V. (1996). Constructing and enacting gender through discourse: negotiating multiple roles as female engineering students. In V. Bergvall, J. Bing & A. Freed (Eds.), Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice. (pp. 173-201). New York: Longman.
- Berman, Morris (1990). Coming To Our Senses. Body and Spirit in the Hidden History of the West. New York: Bantam.
- Bowers, C.A. and Flinders, David J. (1990). Responsive Teaching An Ecological Approach to Classroom Patterns of Language, Culture, and Thought. New York and London: Teachers College Press.
- Bogue, Ronald (1989). Deleuze and Guattari. London and New York: Routledge.
- Brookes, A. (1992). Feminist Pedagogy: An Autobiographical Approach. Halifax: Fenwood Publishing.
- Brimfield, R. (1992). Curriculum! What's Curriculum?, In The Educational Forum, 56, pp. 381- 389.
- Bulkin, Elly; Pratt, Minnie Bruce; Smith, Barbara (1984). Yours in Struggle. Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism. New York: Long Haul Press.
- Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F.M. (1992). Teacher As Curriculum Maker. In Jackson, P. (Ed.), Handbook of Research on Curriculum (pp. 363-393). Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan.
- Cox, Gray (1986). The Ways of Peace. New York: Paulist.

- Culler, Jonathan (1979). Jacques Derrida. In John Sturrock (Ed.), Structuralism and since: from Levi Straus to Derrida (pp. 154-180). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Davies, B. and Banks, C. (1992). The Gender Trap: a feminist poststructuralist analysis of primary school children's talk about gender. In Journal of Curriculum Studies, 24 p. 1-25.
- de Beauvoir, Simone (1960). The Prime of Life. New York: Lancer Books.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, G. (1987). A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalisim and Schizophrenia. (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Parnet, C. (1987). Dialogues. (H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Dinnerstein, Dorothy (1963). The Mermaid and the Minataur. Sexual Arrangements and the Human Malaise. New York: Harper & Row.
- Dreikurs, Rudolf; Grunwald, Bernice Bronia; Pepper, Floy C. (1982). Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom. New York: Harper Collins.
- Foucault, Michel (1980). Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972- 1977. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Goldberg, Natalie (1986). Writing Down the Bones. Boston and London: Shambhala.
- Grumet, Madeleine R. (1988) Bitter Milk. Women and Teaching. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Haraway, D. (1989). Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science. New York: Routledge.
- Harker, W. John (1992). Framing the Text: The Year 2000 in British Columbia. In Canadian Journal of Education. 17 (1), p. 1-11.
- Hartsock, N. (1990). Foucault on Power: A theory for women? In L. J. Nicolson (Ed.), Feminism/Postmodernism. New York: Rutledge.
- Haug, F. (1987). Female sexualization: A collective work of memory. London, UK: Verso.

- Hubben, William (1952). Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kafka. New York: MacMillan.
- Jones, K. B. (1988). On Authority: Or, Why Women Are Not Entitled to Speak. In I. Diamond and L. Quinby (Eds.), Feminism and Foucault: reflections on resistance. (pp. 119-133). Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Jevne, R.F.J. and Zingle, H. W. (1993). Striving for Health: Living With Broken Dreams. Edmonton: University of Alberta.
- Keller, Evelyn Fox (1983). A Feeling For The Organism. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Lather, P. (1991). Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern. New York: Routledge.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. (1989). Dancing at The Edge of the World, Thoughts on Words, Women and Places. New York: Harper and Row.
- Lewis M. and Simon, R. (1986). A Discourse Not Intended for Her: Learning and Teaching Within Patriarchy. In Harvard Educational Review. 56, pp. 457-470.
- Mead, Margaret (1955). Male and Female. New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc.
- Merchant, Carolyn (1983). The Death of Nature. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Miller, Alice (1989). The Drama of the Gifted Child, The Search for the True Self. New York: Basic Books.
- Ministry of Education, Province of B.C. (1990a). Intermediate program: Learning in British Columbia. Victoria, B.C.: Queen's Printer.
- Ministry of Education, Province of B.C. (1990b). Highlights, Year 2000: A Framework For Learning. Victoria, B.C.: Queen's Printer.
- Nicholson, Linda J. (Ed.). (1990). Feminism/Postmodernism. New York and London: Routledge.
- Orom, C. (1992). Listening To Voices : The Maternity Of Adults Living With Children. Master's thesis. University of Victoria, British Columbia.

- Pinar, William, (Ed.). (1975). Curriculum Theorizing The Reconceptualists. Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.
- Plant, Judith, (Ed.). (1989). Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism. Philadelphia, PA.: New Society Publishers.
- Rakow, L.F. (1991). Gender and Race in the Classroom: Teaching Way Out of Line. Feminist Teacher, (6), 10-13.
- Rich, A. (1978). The dream of a common language: poems, 1974- 1977. New York: Norton.
- Schubert, W. (1988). Accepting Responsibility for Social Responsibility in Student Lives. In Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 7, pp. 167-169.
- Tannen, D. (Ed.). (1982). Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Tannen, D. (1984). Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk Among Friends. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Teenagers reap broad benefits from 'authoritative' parents. (1989, August) Science News, 136. p.117
- Van Manen, (1990). Researching lived experience: Human science for an action-sensitive pedagogy. London, Ont.: Althouse Press.
- Underwood, S. (1994). The Moment When We Blink: Articulating the process of subjectivity in the life of a teacher. Master's thesis. University of Victoria, British Columbia.
- Weedon, C. (1987). Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

VITA

Surname: Miller Given Names: Deborah Lyn-Marie

Place of Birth: Ottawa, Ontario

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1967-1971
University of Victoria	1992-1997

Degrees Awarded:

B. Ed.	University of Victoria	1971
--------	------------------------	------

Publications:

None

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the Library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Finding Voice: A Teacher's Articulation of Her Subjectivity in Power Relations and Health

Author



Deborah Lyn-Marie Miller
May 10, 1997