ENTANGLED BETWEEN ESL-NESS AND POVERTY:
ACCULTURATION OF STUDENTS IN A GRADE 3-4 CLASS

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education
In conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

(April, 2010)

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study investigated how an elementary school shaped the acculturation processes of grade 3-4 immigrant students. It was grounded on John Berry’s model of acculturation strategies which maintains that the existence of multiculturalism in the host society is a necessary condition for the integration of immigrants. Also, Geneva Gay’s conceptualization of culturally responsive teaching was accepted as the analytical framework which represents the actualization of multiculturalism in school settings.

The site of the study was an elementary school with a large number of immigrant students in Western Canada. The study used participant observation and interviews as methods of data collection. The audio recording of the classroom sessions for five full weeks, interviews with teachers and students, as well field notes were the sources of data.

The analysis of the data showed that there was little evidence of culturally responsive teaching in the classroom. Findings suggest that these grade 3-4 students were receiving an education which is usually typified as the education for working-class children, were detached from their own culture, were taught by a curriculum defined by themes and orientation from Western/mainstream culture, and were experiencing a whole series of disconnected relationships among teachers, parents, and themselves. It was concluded that, despite the powerful multicultural policies at the provincial and school board level, school practices, and teachers’ attitudes were reflecting the melting pot-model of host society in Berry’s model and the process of institutional acculturation favoured assimilation rather than integration.
The dawn breeze  
Has taken all its fragrances  
From crossing your doorsteps (Hafez, Iranian poet)

This work would be impossible without the help of many people. I am afraid I can only mention a few of them. First, I need to thank the School Board and the principal of the school for accepting my research proposal; also, the grade 3-4 teachers and students for their unlimited support. The main teacher’s openness and help were extraordinary and made an incalculable contribution to my work. Thank you Mrs. Kate!

It is very difficult for me to express my thoughts and feelings about my supervisor, Eva Krugly-Smolska. While care, support, mentorship, guidance, kindness, encouragement, respect, and understanding are some aspects of what she offered me, all these words seem inadequate to capture how I have felt about her role in my program. I came to Queen’s because of her expertise in cultural aspects of science education. However, she patiently taught me many other things in the areas of scholarship and research. Eva! I can only tell that I am tremendously grateful for all little things and all very important things that you did for me. I have written tens of pages about these “things” in my journal and in my heart. I hope I can prove that I have deserved them.

Skip Hills has been a source of inspiration all these years in many capacities but most importantly as a member of my supervisory committee. He showed me the necessity and importance of constantly navigating between critical pedagogy, philosophy of education, and classroom practices. Thank you Skip for all your insights, difficult questions, and
unqualified help and support. Your spirit and sense of humour made my life much more meaningful.

Howard Smith kindly saw me through my comprehensive exams before his retirement. His critical insights in qualitative research and social cognition were eye-opening for me. He exemplified how to be critical without being vocal. I greatly appreciate his high demands combined with support and directions.

Azza Sharkawy kindly accepted to join my supervisory committee after Howard’s retirement. In addition to bringing her invaluable insights to this work, from shaping my proposal to end of the process, she has been a source of encouragement and heartening. She has never missed a single opportunity to support and help me. Thank you Azza!

Sheryl Bond generously shared her small but cozy space in cultural and policy studies without patronizing me. She showed me that it is possible and OK to be critical about critical pedagogy without being punished. Thank you Sheryl for all your care and support!

Working with Ruth Rees showed me how being militarily organized could lead to vigorous research. It was a privilege to have Ruth on my examining committee since her astute eyes substantially improved this dissertation. Thank you Ruth for your unfailing support!

I need to thank Dr. Carl James, my external examiner, and Dr. Jan Mennell, my internal/external examiner for their insights.

As a book worm I have lived a good part of my life in libraries. However, I have never experienced the support and kindness that I received from the people at the Education Library. Brenda, Corinne, Debbie, Nancy, and Peter, you have made the
library the most welcoming place for minority students and I did not find many of those places. Thank you a million! Brenda, thanks again and again for answering the same “non-smart” questions over and over.

Paper works and finding/following regulations are not the easiest or the most pleasant part of a graduate program. However, with the help of great people in the graduate studies office, I did not experience even a grain of hardship. Thank you Marlene, Erin, Celina and Heather for this!

At a personal level, I have been privileged with the support of my family. Through these years Haleh and Mitra not only had the burden of life on their shoulders, but also supported me with their love and care. “Thank you” is too short a phrase to express my gratitude.

Although many friends helped me during the years, I need to especially thank Jun for her continuous invaluable support and kindness. These years would be unbearable without the company of many friends and colleagues. We shared our joys, stories, food, and drinks. Among many, I would like to thank Alicia, Anita, Bakti, Bo, Gerard, Han, Shaljan, Sue, Svitlana, Ted, Ying, Xuemei, and Yamun who made the time sweet and the “air” fresh and pleasant.

This dissertation is about the experiences of immigrants. My initial settlement in Canada as an immigrant was helped by many friends. However, two of them, Hossein and Narges, had an important initial role in shaping my immigration experience. I think all of my achievements in Canada, including this one, owe them a lot. Thank you both! Last, but not least, I need to thank Amin for helping produce my desired visual representation of acculturation strategies.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this introductory chapter is twofold. First, it situates me, as the researcher, in the context of the present research and briefly explains how an engineering student ended up doing educational research on immigrant students. The second part provides a concise historical background for the education of minority students. This background does not go back very far in history; rather, due to the significance of multiculturalism in Canada, its main focus is the era of the introduction of multiculturalism policy. Furthermore, since the theoretical discussions about multiculturalism (and multicultural education) are covered in Chapter 2, providing this background will take the form of reporting the events rather than analysing them. However, this separation by no means implies that my story of the course of events does not have its roots in the theoretical frameworks that shape my understanding of the world. This chapter will end with a brief outline of the structure of the dissertation.

Section I: Positioning the Research

What brought me here?

I began teaching science and mathematics in high school from the very beginning of my university study in 1977. My early years of teaching, while I was still a university student, coincided with the overthrow of a 25-century long monarchy in Iran in 1979. As a young eager teacher who wanted to make a difference and have a share in building the country with egalitarian principles, I thought to do something to counteract the limited access of students from the lower classes to universities. Many of these students could not, and still cannot, afford to attend private schools that prepare students for the National
Entrance Exam of Universities. This is a high-stakes standardized test that determines who is qualified for the limited spaces of universities which usually about 20% of examinees pass and according to their ranks register for different majors (that is about 400,000 students out of almost 2,000,000 applicants in recent years) (personal correspondence with a friend). With the help of a group of friends, I set up a free school in a mosque and we paid for everything ourselves from our meager funds. In three months, we could not teach what students should have learnt in 12 years, but it was not difficult to teach to the test, especially since it was a “standardized” test that had been running for more than 10 years. Thus, our free school was “successful” in the sense that it allowed many students to pass through the "gates" of university, i.e. math and science tests.

It did not take long to understand that political changes do not necessarily mean any deep changes in social structures. Although we could not keep our free school for long and I was forced to leave teaching at schools after a while, the underlying idea of science for all never left me. Today many would call that idea “scientific literacy for all”, but being brought up in a “third world” country, to me, it translates into the issue of power and wealth for all. In fact, we live in a world where science, mathematics, and technology are the major gatekeepers in the process of sorting students into different levels of wealth and power (Hammond & Brant, 2004). Fuller (1988), among many others, believes that any discipline which has a science tag on it, “acquires the authority to promulgate truthful and reliable knowledge, control over [sic] education and credentials, access to money and manpower, and the kind of political clout that comes from possessing knowledge that is essential yet esoteric” (p. 177).
Trying to understand how the culture of this “prestigious” subject may be experienced by elementary immigrant students, I chose as the original purpose of my research to investigate and describe the process of transition of immigrant students into the culture of elementary science. My original research questions were:

1. What challenges do immigrant students face in science classrooms as far as their ethnic background, language, and religion are concerned?
2. How do these students negotiate the boundaries between their multiple worlds?
3. How do these students experience the difference between school and science curriculum in their homeland and in Ontario in their learning process?
4. Which factors contribute to their relative success or lack thereof in science?
5. How specifically encouraging or discouraging may the culture of schools, teachers, and science curriculum be as far as cultural differences are concerned?

To summarize all these years from 1977, I can claim that my original research plan was inspired by multiple sources: (i) my life history as a social activist concerned with social justice and equity; (ii) my experiences as a science teacher who has witnessed how some students find themselves strangers in science; (iii) the role of science as a “prestigious” subject in the gate-keeping function of schools to wealth and power; and (iv) historical and systematic marginalization of certain groups in science/education.

What Changed My plan?

As I will explain in the chapter on methodology, I went to an elementary school for observation and stayed in a grade 3-4 class for five weeks. The total amount of time devoted to science, as defined by the teacher’s daily enacted agenda during the five-week period of my stay at school was 26 minutes. Therefore, the short answer to the classic
question of “what was going on” in that particular classroom which I observed would be “well, not much as far as science is concerned.” However, by observing and recording the interactions of school, teacher, and curriculum with these immigrant students and their parents, a picture of different worlds/cultures/systems gradually started to form in my mind. I could see that there were 20 non-English-speaking students (of the total 24 students) divided across gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, fluency in English, and the fact of living in one- or two-parent families (or with grandparents). However, after living for eight years in Canada as a visible minority, it was not difficult for me to identify that all these 20 students qualified as “visible minority”.

My personal experience pulled the focus of my observations to worlds/cultures/systems of these visible “minority” students versus “mainstream” worlds/cultures/systems. Reflecting retrospectively, I was reacting to one of the teachings of my early years of living in Canada. In those days, I heard from many friends who had been here for many years that immigrant kids would have less problems in the future because through schooling, they learned how to be and act like “real Canadians.” An officer of Human Resources and Development Canada (HRDC) told me the same thing in an attempt to comfort me in the early days of my struggle to find a Canadian experience which is a requirement of acquiring any Canadian experience.

All these people used the concept of “being and acting like real Canadians” in a positive sense. Maybe none of them had heard of Richard Bedford Bennett, Canada’s prime minister in the 1930’s, who believed that “we must still maintain that measure of British civilization which enables us to assimilate these people to British institutions rather than assimilate our civilization to theirs” (cited in Harney, 1988, p. 54). Most
probably, they had not heard of Mackenzie King either. King was Canada’s prime minister in the 1940’s, who suggested that we should keep out immigrants from “nationalities unlikely to assimilate […] who consequently prevent the building up of a united nation of similar customs and ideals” (cited in Harney, 1988, p. 54).

After the second week of my disappointment with observing no science teaching/learning, my observations started to find a new converging area. Drawing on these personal experiences, as well as on my previous research and readings in multicultural (science) education, the focus of my observation shifted toward this process of “learning to be and act like real Canadians” for visible minority students. Conversations with my supervisor about the data that I had generated/collected by then, led us to decide that I could officially change the focus of my study for the rest of the period of staying in the field.

This shift in the focus of study is not uncommon and comes from the flexible nature of qualitative research. Holliday (2007) notices that “you cannot decide what sort of data you are going to collect before you begin” (p. 71). Similarly, Silverman (2005) reflects exactly my situation when he suggests “it sometimes makes sense to divert from an expected path if you come across new data or a new concept or if your data suggest a different focus” (pp. 72-73).

My new research question then became: How did Maple Wood School shape the acculturation processes of the grade 3-4 immigrant students?

Section II: Historical Background

While it is not uncommon to celebrate “our diversity”, it has not always been like that. In 1908, Mackenzie King, a Member of Parliament and later the leader of the
Liberal Party and Prime Minister of Canada, said in the Parliament “that Canada should remain a white man’s country is believed to be not only desirable for economic and social reasons, but highly necessary on political and national grounds” (cited in Ghosh & Abdi, 2004, p. 96). In a similar statement in 1914, Prime Minister Robert Borden said “the immigration of Oriental aliens and their rapid multiplication is becoming a serious menace to the living conditions on the West coast and to the future of this country in general. This government shall take immediate action to bring to an end such immigration for residence purposes” (ibid, p. 94).

When Canada became a nation-state in 1867, it kept its close ties with Great Britain and much of its early history was shaped by a desire to create a national identity that was reminiscent of Britain. At the same time, it had a diverse population of Aboriginal people, French-speaking population and immigrants who were not from British and French origins. Managing diversity through policies of immigration, citizenship and education was on the national agenda from early days (Joshee, 2004). Multiculturalism, whatever it may mean, has had very close ties with immigration in Canada. While even a brief history of Canada’s immigration policy, dominated by economic considerations (Palmer, 1975) is beyond the limit of these pages, one should not forget the century-old tension in Canada on “ideal” immigrants. Palmer (1975) reminds us that “by 1910 […] almost all sectors of society were in agreement that groups which could not be assimilated would have to be excluded” (p. 17). In Harney’s (1988) view, Canadian immigration policy has had five relatively unchanged purposes since the 1890s. These purposes, he suggested are:

1. Occupy the country in sufficient numbers to discourage the expansionary tendencies of the American colossus.
2. Protect the Pacific Rim from heavy Asian immigrants.
3. Create economies of scale and a rational East-West axis for an independent polity and a viable economy.
4. Maintain a British hegemony by combating separatism […].
5. Foster the image of Canada as a new place of opportunity […]. (p. 53)

Harney argues that one corollary of these purposes is that migration exists to serve the host country and not the immigrants.

Joshee (2004) claims that, during the late 1800s and early 1900s, there was limited access to citizenship rights and privileges. Burnet (1984) suggests that the underpinning principle of those policies was that new immigrants “should be assimilable into the dominant British and French groups” (p. 18). Also, she claims these policies were “shameful, of overt and covert exclusionary measures directed against Chinese, Japanese, South Asians, and Blacks” (p. 19). Assimilation of immigrants into the British cultural model was taken for granted (Kallen, 1982).

The revision made in 1919 to the Immigration Act of 1910 is exemplary in this regards. For example, paragraph (c) of the older Act is replaced by the following:

(c) prohibit or limit in number for a stated period or permanently the landing in Canada, or the landing at any specified port or ports of entry in Canada, of immigrants belonging to any nationality or race or of immigrants of any specified class or occupation, by reason of any economic, industrial or other condition temporarily existing in Canada or because such immigrants are deemed unsuitable having regard to the climatic, industrial, social, educational, labour or other conditions or requirements of Canada or because such immigrants are deemed undesirable owing to their peculiar customs, habits, modes of life and methods of holding property, and because of their probable inability to become readily assimilated or to assume the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after their entry." (Canada, 1919, p. 7).

This situation only changed after World War II with the large scale arrival of newcomers many of whom were Displaced Persons (DPs) who left their war-struck countries in Eastern Europe. A “third force”, who identified neither with Anglophones
nor with Francophones, started to take shape in Canada (Kivisto, 2002). Adopting the Citizenship Act in 1947 brought with it the rhetoric of cultural diversity which was identified with citizenship until the 1960s. The 1960s in Canada, as in many other places, was an era of change to address inequities. Among these changes one can refer to the adaptation of the Canadian Bill of Rights (in 1960) and new immigration policies that forbade racial/ethnic discrimination (in 1962 and 1967).

Kivisto (2002) claims that the “impetus behind this change was in part due to a desire to improve Canada’s reputation vis-à-vis non-white Commonwealth countries as well as within the United Nations, and in part because the economy needed workers” (p. 97). In fact, the need to improve the face of the country was rooted in the climate of the 1960’s which was increasingly liberal concerning minorities’ rights, as evident from the rise of nationalism all over the world and the civil rights movement in the US (Hawkins, 1988). For a more detailed report on the relation between Canada’s immigration policies and multiculturalism, one can refer to Harney (1988) and Tepper (1994).

Canada, Jansen (2005) claims, has a unique situation of having two conquering nations (the English and the French). Similarly, Kivisto (2002), among many others, has noticed that issues related to a mobilized ethnic nationalism distinguish Canada from other immigrant-receiving nations. According to Jansen (2005), “for many years Canada was considered to be a bicultural and bilingual nation, while the cultures of other groups— in particular those of native peoples and immigrants from other nations – were, if not dismissed, at least considered to be of little consequence” (p. 25). The rise of nationalism in Quebec in the 1960s— or according to Ghosh and Abdi (2004), “the volatile political developments in Quebec” (p. 103) — was the pinnacle of the tensions between two
cultures and led to the establishment of a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B&B Commission) in 1963 for finding the necessary steps for developing “the Canadian Confederation on the basis of the equal partnership between the two founding races” [emphasis added] as well as taking “into account the contributions made by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada” (Jansen, p. 25).

The recommendations of this commission led to adopting the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971 which was developed into the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 (Joshee, 2004). Four major elements of this multiculturalism policy, as suggested by Harney (1988), are: “integration, the right to cultural retention, cross cultural understanding, and equality of access and opportunity” (p. 78). In 1982, the multicultural nature of Canada was recognized by the new constitution ((Dupont & Lemarchand, 2000). Different governmental bodies were formed and financial supports for various multicultural programs were initiated. Subsequently, all provinces started to develop their own legislative acts or official policies for managing diversity. For a snapshot of these policies, see for example, Burnet (1984), Masemann and Cummins (1984), and Moodley (1995). More recently, Garcea (2006) has analyzed the content of provincial multicultural policies during the 1974-2004 period.

These federal and provincial institutions, their structures, and budgets underwent several changes in the years after, according to the change of political priorities. One major change happened in the mid 1980s when government policies shifted from retention of culture and language to the improvement of “race relations”. The language used to talk about multiculturalism focused on identity, nationhood, and progress with explicit links connecting Canada to the rest of the world (Mitchell, 1993). A concise and
insightful report on multicultural initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s can be found in Harney (1988). As for the success of these initiatives, it all depends on whom one asks.

Mitchell (1993) claims that “the weakest policy programs were those that were aimed at reducing racial and ethnic discrimination, and that aside from a noisy rhetoric, the general effort by the government was minimal at best” (p. 280). In 1995, the federal government undertook a Strategic Evaluation of Multiculturalism (Oliver, 2006, ¶19). The recommendations from that evaluation suggested that the major goals of multiculturalism must be “identity, participation and justice”. The new priorities were set to be “fostering cross-cultural understanding; combating racism and discrimination; civic participation; and making Canadian institutions more reflective of Canadian diversity” (cited in Oliver, 2006, ¶19).

There are some important points to be noted in this historical background. First, in 1971, Canadians were predominately of European origin and hence “the multicultural policy of 1971 addressed itself principally, if not entirely, to the many cultures of European origin” (Jansen, 2005, p. 26). Second, the new immigrants arriving in Canada did not spread evenly in the country and mostly settled in large urban areas. According to Statistics Canada (2003), “In 2001, 94% of immigrants who arrived during the 1990s were living in Canada’s census metropolitan areas”. Furthermore, “Nearly three-quarters (73%) of the immigrants who came in the 1990s lived in just three census metropolitan areas: Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal” (p. 7). As a result of this pattern of settlement, Jansen (2005) argues that, since new non-charter cultures were settled in limited areas of the country, a large percentage of Canadians were never exposed to the diverse cultures and multiculturalism, whatever it meant, had no or little impact on their life. In order to
better understand the rhetoric of multiculturalism, the next section will explain the terms of this rhetoric and how they were used.

**Terms and Conditions: The Mosaic, Visible Minorities, The Vertical Mosaic**

*Mosaic.* Canadian multiculturalism has created a discourse of its own which in many ways is different from its counterparts in other parts of the world. An elaboration on the key terms of this discourse will help us to better understand the situation. The term “cultural mosaic” is used to describe the coexisting mix of cultures in Canadian society. It usually contrasts the “melting pot” metaphor used for the US society. In Skerrett’s (2008) words “in relation to diversity, the United States melting pot myth emphasizes one unifying culture and language as a necessity for national strength […] whereas the Canadian mosaic stresses an array of ethnicities, cultures, and languages as an asset to society” (p. 262). In an introduction promoting the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, John Diefenbaker, the Conservative Prime Minister of Canada (1957-1963) whose government passed the Canadian Bill of Rights, is cited as follows:

> Canada is not a melting pot in which the individuality of each element is destroyed in order to produce a new and totally different element. It is rather a garden into which have been transplanted the hardiest and brightest flowers from many lands, each retaining in its new environment the best of the qualities for which it was loved and prized in its native land. (Canada, Department of the Secretary of State, 1987, p.9)

The term ‘mosaic’ was originally used in Victoria Hayward’s *Romantic Canada* for referring to the varieties of architecture. It received further currency after the publication of John Murray Gibbon’s *Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* in 1938, where he argued against America’s melting pot (Porter, 1987). The mosaic metaphor assumes, or as Dupont and Lemarchand (2000) put it, pretends that there is no already set culture that people should integrate into.
There is not agreement on how these metaphors may reflect the situations in these two countries. On one side, for example, Kivisto (2002) claims that “the Canadian government policies no longer call for an assimilation into an Anglophone identity, but rather suggest that cultural differences can and should persist over time” (p. 101). On the other side, Porter (1987), after reviewing the history of immigration in Canada and the United states, concludes that both these metaphors have their roots in fantasies and with all the differences, “it may seem strange that the two countries [...] should have run parallel with respect to immigrants and how they should be absorbed into the developing social structure” (p. 153). According to Harney (1988), the statistics on intermarriage over generations and language loss demonstrate that a slower rate of assimilation, and hence the reality of mosaic, was a result of excessive religious and geographical isolation.

Interestingly, Joshee and Winton (2007) claim that in developing policies on diversity, the US was “a chief source of models” (p. 17) for Canadians and “Canada continues to borrow educational approaches from the United States” (p. 24). Focusing on the period of 1940-1950, as a fundamental period for developing multicultural policies, they show the US influence in three main ways: looking at US policies as models, Canadian decision makers’ thought being shaped by the work of American scholars, and US curriculum documents and educational approaches being “borrowed” by Canadians.

Visible Minorities. After the introduction of a new points system into immigration policies in 1967, the “term “visible minority” started to appear in official documents (Jansen, 2005), a term referring to “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Employment Equity Act, 1995). The term was first used in 1984 “by the current Supreme Court Judge, Rosalie Abella in her Royal

Jansen (2005) argues that along with the significant change in the origin of immigrants, multiculturalism gradually started to be associated with non-European immigrants, as evidenced by government publications on multiculturalism which always include pictures of non-whites, often in their cultural dress.

Dahile and Fernando (1981) claim that visible minorities are the most disadvantaged groups in Canada and are excluded from the positions of political and economic power.

*The Vertical Mosaic.* It is important to note that the Canadian mosaic was not flat from day one. In his seminal work, *The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power*, Porter (1965) used census data from the period 1931 to 1961 to show the stratified and hierarchical nature of Canadians’ socioeconomic conditions. The major problems of Canadian society identified at that time by Porter (1965) were: "1) a fragmented political structure, 2) a lack of upward mobility into its elites and higher occupations, and 3) the absence of a clearly articulated system of values" (p. 558).

Furthermore, he concluded that this hierarchy was formed by four strata. At the top were the charter groups, people with British and French origins (with British being more privileged in most areas). Next were White ethnicities from Western Europe who assimilated to Anglo/Franco culture. Third were people from Central and Eastern Europe who had not culturally assimilated. At the bottom were visible minorities and Native people. For Porter, however, this stratification was not rooted in a systematic racism. Rather, he thought the dominance came out of living longer in the new land and establishing networks.
Since then, there has been extensive research on Porter’s thesis. Many have supported his thesis and many others have rejected it. Lian and Matthews (1998) have briefly reviewed the literature on this issue and after citing the arguments of both sides, conclude that “whereas ethnic stratification has lessoned among White European groups, differences between racial groups have persisted and that, in effect, Canada’s mosaic has been reduced to a division based principally on skin color” (p. 463).

Also, Helmes-Hayes and Curtis (1998) have thoroughly revisited the issue to examine the outcomes after all changes. While they report on a more successful integration of some ethnic groups into Canada’s employment structure, they suggest that the vertical mosaic metaphor is still valid and White Canadians earn more than minority groups.

Reactions to Multiculturalism

Dupont and Lemarchand (2000) provide a detailed report of the history and origins of multiculturalism in Canada from French Canadians’ perspective. They claim that multiculturalism was generally accepted by the English-speaking majority, “such as Canadians from Slavic origin […] and new immigrants” (p. 322). French-speaking Canadians did not like the form it took. Harney (1988) has a different view and claims that among English-speaking Canadians, hostility toward multiculturalism ranged “from the viscerally xenophobic to well-reasoned preference for a laissez-faire approach to liberal democracy […] even if a hierarchy of privilege based on ethnicity and class was obvious in economy” (p. 74). Native people did not support it either. They see “official multiculturalism” as a new symbolic order which has left the structural organization of power unchanged. In their view, not only did multiculturalism not help ease the tension
between “Canada’s two majorities” (p. 329) but it became part of the problem. While not everybody may agree with Dupont and Lemarchand’s analysis, many argue that “other” ethnic groups were left out in the process of introducing multiculturalism (e.g., Hawkins, 1988).

Moodley (1983) was among the first to notice Canadian reactions to multiculturalism. She noticed that the French complained about a loss of cultural hegemony; other European ethnics argued that cultural preservation fails without linguistic protection; and Native groups saw nothing of their land claims and treaty rights in it.

**The Retreat of Multiculturalism**

Although many multicultural policies still exist, with the surfacing of neoliberalism in the 1990s, in Canada, as in many other Western countries, multicultural programs were among the government cuts (Joshee, 2004). Bloemraad (2007) calls this a backlash against multiculturalism and demonstrates its examples in many immigrant-receiving countries. Her best example from Canada is what the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences heard repeatedly in its public forums in Quebec: that immigrants are asking for too much accommodation. Oliver (2006) noticed that in the late 1980s and early 1990s there was a “growing number of public attacks on official multiculturalism and its rejection by large segments of the population” (¶15).

The retreat did not show itself only in the budget cuts for multiculturalism; there was also a shift in rhetoric as well. The new focus is best explained by then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney: “in a competitive world, we all know that technology,
productivity, quality, marketing, and price determine export success. But our multicultural nature gives us an edge in selling to that world” (cited in Mitchell, 1993, p. 282). Therefore, it was not a surprise when the report by the Economic Council of Canada (1991) added up in dollars and cents the expenses of new policies of shifting to Asian immigrants from British immigrants. It concluded that Canadians’ economical gain from immigration is very small. It also suggested that considering risks of social friction as result of increasing the number of immigrants, “it is cautiously optimistic that the risk is acceptable” (Paquet, 1994, p. 65).

In the mid-1980s, the emphasis on multiculturalism and hence government policies began to shift. In Mitchell’s (1993) view, this was a shift in Canadian identity from “expressive instances of multicultural unity and harmony” to something “explicitly linked in language and law to the multicultural ethic.” Therefore, the policies focus changed from “interest in the maintenance of cultural language and heritage (which had been primarily focused at the French Canadians) to a far more extensive and stronger commitment to the improvement of what it termed ”race relations”” (p. 280). However, according to Skerrett (2008), the change started from the mid 1990s, a period she refers to as “the age of marketization and standardization.” This age she argues “has institutionalized the vertical mosaic with schools settling into patterns of academic tracking and uniform teaching and learning strategies—a direct result of melting pot inspired, standardized curriculum and high stakes testing” (p. 273).

After reviewing the theoretical debates and recent changes in multicultural policies of Australia, Britain, and the Netherlands, Joppke (2004) concludes that as a result of the unhappy marriage of the liberal state with multiculturalism, we are
witnessing a retreat of multiculturalism both at theory and policy levels. She mentions the following causes for this retreat and suggests that these causes have different weights across the cases and most of them resonate with the liberal critique of multiculturalism:

(1) the lack of public support for official multiculturalism policies (a cause largely outside the liberal spectrum), (2) these policies’ inherent shortcomings and failures, especially with respect to the socio-economic marginalization and self-segregation of migrants and their children, and (3) a new assertiveness of the liberal state in imposing the liberal minimum on its dissenters. (p. 244)

Similarly, Mitchell (2003) has investigated the shifts in educational rhetoric of Canada, England, and the United States. She concludes that the current processes of globalization and neoliberalism have transformed the rhetoric of multicultural education. This transformation has been “from a concern with the formation of tolerant and democratic national citizens who can work with and through difference, to a more strategic use of diversity for competitive advantage in the global marketplace” (p. 387). More recently, Mitchell (2006), in reviewing the effects of neoliberalism on the educational sector of the European Commission, notices “a steady movement away from the spirit of multiculturalism vis-à-vis the formation of a democratic European citizen and towards an individualist discourse of responsibility for lifelong learning and the constant mobilization of work skills” (p. 392) [italics in the original]. Talking from a European perspective, Phillips (2007) has demonstrated examples of this retreat (pp. 3-8). Retreat, if not demise of multiculturalism, has been documented internationally by Bloemraad, (2007), Burbaker (2001), Entzinger (2003), Joppke (2004), Kymilcka (2005), and Tilbury (2007).
Talking specifically from a Canadian context, Elliston (1996) argued that the desirability and feasibility of multiculturalism goals had been put into doubt. The main challenges, in her view, were as follows:

the prevailing view that catering to special interests is divisive and unaffordable, the popularization of the philosophy of equal opportunity for all without reference to those conditions which are barriers to equality, the rejection of the concept of racism as a characteristic of Canadian life in so far as it negates the need for systemic restructuring and power distribution; the militancy of individuals and groups who promote the superiority of mainstream culture above others. (p. 2)

While I would agree that the neoliberal policies had a major role in the retreat of multiculturalism, hooks’ (1999) insight on the issue makes more sense to me because she looks for reasons inside the education community rather than outside. She does not forget budget cuts, but the failure of this community to accept the consequences of multiculturalism in terms of sharing the power, moving out of their comfort zones, and grappling with racism came before those cuts. Certainly, the rhetoric of multiculturalism in most countries revolves around the concept of “social cohesion”. But how much are we educators willing to bring tension to our fairly cohesive community?

**Multicultural Education**

After the introduction of the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971, different provinces started to establish multicultural policies for education based on their needs, population, and their interpretation of multiculturalism (James & Wood, 2005). Teacher organizations further developed their own policies (McCreath, 1986). Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Quebec were among the most advanced for developing these policies. However, most school boards did not develop comprehensive multicultural policies and there was not always agreement on the meaning of multicultural education (McLeod, 1984). In the heydays of multicultural education, McLeod suggested that the then-ten-
year-old “multicultural programmes have been viewed as added extra costs. […] Immigrant parents, minorities, and multicultural education for mainstream students have not received their just share of the educational tax dollars” (p. 44) He noticed that success has happened when education administrators, teachers, and students have worked together and where schools had been sensitive to language needs, curriculum adjustments, and extracurricular activities. However, Smith (1996) suggests that despite all efforts by teachers and administrators, multicultural education had remained “for the most part a fragmented and partial reality, and one that, on several fronts, is in danger of losing some of its momentum” (p. 57).

At this point, I would like to give a picture of how multicultural education in Canada has been evaluated by researchers. In a comparative study of multicultural study in Germany, South Africa, and Germany, Adam-Moodley (1986) concludes that multicultural education in Canada is essentially a superimposition on Anglo-Saxon curriculum. She acknowledges the difference in educational policies and practices at provincial and board levels due to the lack of a national policy on multicultural education. This of course, is a jurisdiction problem. Furthermore, she suggests that while some see the current praxis of multicultural education as a boost for self-concept of minority students, others view it “as a superficial palliative, which does little to combat the problems of language education, inequality of access and the covert racism that differentiates between physically assimilable minorities and visible ones” (p. 12).

In reviewing themes of multicultural and citizenship education in Canada, Joshee (2004) divides its history into five periods with different issues at focus. The first 70 years, from 1867 to 1940, she claims, is a period of assimilative nation building with the
goal of promoting Anglo-Canadian culture and eradicating cultural diversity (see also James & Wood, 2005). The second period, 1940-1963, started with World War II and opportunities of managing cultural diversity were under the broad umbrella of citizenship education with the aim of promoting “patriotism and a common national identity” (Joshee, 2004, p. 138). In the third period, 1963-1970s, the focus was on identity with the aim of promoting education about Canada. Two areas which received significant attention in this period were “teaching of “nonofficial” or “heritage” languages and “sharing of the culture”” (p. 142). In the period from 1980s to mid-1990s, following the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, social justice became the key issue and curriculum documents throughout Canada tried to reflect this issue. Finally, she notices from the late 1990s, neoliberal policies resulting in cuts from social spending and promotion of schooling as a means of increasing economic productivity. In this period, Joshee (2004) claims, we are witnessing unity being put above everything else and the promotion of social cohesion.

Ghosh (2004) suggests that, in the context of multicultural education in Canada, the case of Quebec is special. In Quebec, multicultural education was introduced under the name of “intercultural education.” Interculturalism, according to Ghosh meant “a Quebec that will be pluralistic in outlook, but Francophonic through its reliance on the medium of the French language” (p.558). She claims that multiculturalism policy in Quebec “is ideologically contradictory to the vision of French–Quebeois nationalism.” Furthermore, while intercultural education policies attempted to integrate immigrant students, they have mainly focused on linguistic programs.
James and Wood (2005) have looked at the opportunities, limitations, and contradictions of multicultural education in Canada. They conclude that with all its different forms across the country, multicultural education is situated within “the historical legacy of an elitist, monocultural and assimilative education system […] in which […] the economic, social and cultural elites of society, i.e., English-speaking (and in Quebec, French-speaking), white, middle-class Canadians […] are more likely to succeed” (p. 93) They argue that this legacy limits the vision, content, and style of multicultural programs and hence, “the promise of cultural democracy, inclusivity, and equality […] continues to elude minority students” (p.161).

In Elliston’s (1996) view, the main restraints to any action plan were “resistance from within, the vulnerability of committed and responsible people in systems, the high capacity for risk-taking required to keep the vision of the 'ideal' of multiculturalism alive, and the lack of resources” (p. 3). I guess few would disagree that the situation is different today if not worse.

**Language Education**

We should note that not all recommendations of the B&B Commission were accepted in the process of adopting multiculturalism. The most important exclusion was the protection and recognition of minority languages, other than English and French, in regions where numbers justify (Kallen, 1982). This has been a major concern of many, among them the first Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism (CCCM) (1972). CCCM noted, with great foresight and insight in my view, that “without language cultural pluralism (or to use the contemporary term, multiculturalism) emerges as truncated multiculturalism, confined to such aspects of folk dancing, native costumes,
special foods, embroidery, instrumental music or even folk songs” (cited in Harney, 1988, p. 73).

The Canadian Multiculturalism Act recognizes the government’s responsibility for retaining and enhancing heritage languages (i.e., languages other than English and French) but within a national commitment to formal languages and hence giving priority to two languages. Drewing and Munro (2007) suggest that the recognition of formal languages was more a political matter than recognition of important groups who established the country since it totally ignored Aboriginal languages. This was mostly a reaction to the “Quiet Revolution” in Quebec. As evidence, they mention that in many cities there are both French immersion programs for non-Francophone students and Francophone schools for minority students whose first language is French. While education is a provincial responsibility, all these programs receive federal funding.

Fleras and Elliott (1992) claim while Canada has officially accepted bilingualism, unofficially “an English unilingualism prevails” (p. 147) which threatens Aboriginal and heritage languages, as well as French. As for Aboriginal languages, they note that all but three of fifty-three Aboriginal languages are in different stages of decline or disappearance.

Language training for adults is the federal government’s responsibility. Prior to 1992, it was designed for the training of the breadwinner of the family under a very small program called the Settlement Language Program (SLP). In 1992, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) was introduced which is available to adults until they become citizens. One can refer to Drewing and Munro (2007) for goals, conditions and the quality of this program.
As for K-12 students, every school board in Canada treats immigrant and Canadian-born English as Second Language, hereafter ESL, students differently; each province has its own ESL policy. All these policies promise the same thing, their main difference is the length of support provided for students, and most of them put emphasis on mainstreaming the students as soon as possible. Also, all of these policies accept the importance of retaining the first language and the fact that developing proficiency in the second language takes many years. Many provinces offer less ESL programs at the elementary level and think that the limited funding for ESL should be allocated more to higher grades. There are several models of teaching ESL for junior high and high school students which are similar across Canada but are implemented differently at schools depending on the availability of resources, the number of ESL students, and school/board priorities. Main challenges of K-12 ESL education are: lack of systematic responsibility for ESL students, inadequate number of trained ESL teachers, insufficient funding, the fact that there is no requirement that ESL teachers be specialists in ESL, and no mandatory training for teaching ESL in teacher education programs (Drewing & Munro, 2007).

The establishment of heritage language programs has been difficult and controversial (Green, 1977). The controversy, in Green’s view, had its roots in the fact that for a population which had been accustomed to doing things in its own ways and in its own language, it was difficult to recognize and understand the need of newcomers to be able to converse intelligibly with their children.
Since the late 1990s, government support for heritage languages has been steadily decreasing (Joshee, 2004). Similarly, summarizing the situation of heritage language programs, Handford (1993) noticed that

the majority of heritage language programs are community-run, held outside of regular school hours and on weekends. They survive on minimal funding from the government (most of the funding has disappeared, except for specific projects) and depend on the individual ethnocultural community for financial support. Individuals, usually volunteers, teach the classes. (p. 40)

As mentioned earlier, the limited recommendation of the B&B commission for supporting heritage languages was not reflected in the Multiculturalism Policy or Act. However, some heritage language programs were initiated by federal and provincial authorities. These programs were different across provinces and at the same time have caused controversy in some areas for being divisive and creating communication problems among insulated communities (Fleras & Elliott, 1992).

**An Outline of the Structure of the Dissertation**

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 discusses theoretical aspects of Canadian multiculturalism and multicultural education in Canada as the context of this study. Chapter 3 is a review of the research in the field. It is followed by Chapter 4 on the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 5 discusses methodological issues of the research. Next will be the data presentation which is covered in Chapter 6 to 9. Chapter 10 introduces the data analysis. The final Chapter 11 is devoted to the conclusions.
CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous chapter, a historical background for the education of minority students was sketched with a focus on the era of the introduction of multiculturalism policy. However, that chapter did not discuss what multiculturalism means in Canada and how it is conceptualized from different perspectives. This chapter will discuss theoretical aspects of Canadian multiculturalism and multicultural education, which serve as the context of education in Canada. It is important to note that, due to the totally different situation of people of Aboriginal origin and people of Quebec, I have excluded issues related to these two groups throughout this study.

**Multiculturalism: What is it?**

Multiculturalism is a term which means different things to different people depending on where they stand on the political spectrum, their position on race and ethnicity, and their notion of culture. Kallen (1982) suggests multiculturalism in Canada is used with three different meanings. First, is the social reality of the facticity of diverse people living in Canada. The second meaning refers to the federal and provincial policies for managing this diverse population. Third, he argues, is the ideology of cultural pluralism that underlies federal government policies. I would suggest that the third meaning is an ideology of multiculturalism which may not always be necessarily pluralistic as will be discussed later. Similarly and more recently, Fleras and Kunz (2001) suggest five meanings for multiculturalism: as a fact, it refers to the existing cultural diversity in Canada; as an ideology, it refers to the ideas about the structure and practice of social relations towards others; as a policy, it refers to the policies introduced
by provincial and federal governments; as a practice, it deals with means of putting the notion in practice; finally as a critical discourse, multiculturalism refers to the ways of challenging the dominant discourses of society and its institutions by individuals and groups. I will use this fairly inclusive categorization as a framework for this chapter and will discuss the underpinning theories of the second, third, and fourth meanings.

**The Political Theory of Multiculturalism**

Reviewing the theoretical roots of multiculturalism requires an understanding of the theories of culture, race, gender, ethnicity, nationalism and how these theories in/form identity. On the other hand, multiculturalism goes hand in hand with the notions of globalization and immigration. This theoretical map is too wide to be even surfed in this limited space. This subsection addresses the ties between multiculturalism and liberalism because of its importance and central and prevailing role among all theories around multiculturalism.

After briefly reviewing the history of discussions on cultural diversity, Laden and Owen (2007) conclude that these discussions on pluralism arose in a context of liberalism as the dominant political theory. Hence, much of the discussion was on identifying some aspects of liberalism that may obscure questions on culturally diverse societies. They suggest that liberalism, as a philosophy, was developed in response to concerns of religious diversity and involves three characteristic features: (1) religious tolerance (leading to the separation of church and state and state neutrality); (2) “the strong protection of individual liberties” which was justified through and based on (3) “human equality and similarity” (p. 8). The inadequacy of this basic liberal framework to handle
issues of diversity led to the development of new political theories beyond the original religious debates (Laden & Owen, 2007).

Laden and Owen (2007) indicate that liberal norms of equality were criticized for two major distinct theoretical reasons: being insensitive to cultural differences which may need treating different individuals differently (by regulation or subsidization) and not paying sufficient attention to inequalities built into social structures and social power. These critical views, responses to them, and different approaches taken to issues (e.g., universalism or contextualism), along with the debates on the dimensions and roles of political philosophy itself, have formed the political theory of multiculturalism over the last twenty years.

The modernist root of recognition and identity has a key role in the theory of multiculturalism. Two changes in the late eighteenth century, Taylor (1994) argues, had a decisive role in shaping the modern notions of recognition and identity: the collapse of social hierarchies which replaced honour (something that not everybody has) with dignity (which everyone shares); and the new understanding of individuality that relates right and wrong to an individual’s inner feeling and voice, rather than to an outside source. According to Taylor (1994), these two changes brought two kinds of politics of recognition. Moving from honour to dignity brought “a politics of universalism, emphasizing the equal dignity of all citizens” by targeting “equalization of rights and entitlements” (p. 37). The formation of the new notion of identity gave rise to a politics of difference that asks us to recognize the unique identities of groups and individuals that “has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity” (p. 38).
As Goodin (2006) suggests, liberals’ arguments for multiculturalism have been put forward “on many different grounds: of “egalitarianism,” of “fairness,” of “impartiality,” of “rectifying historical injustices,” of “epistemic abstinence”’ (p. 290). Major theorists making these arguments are Kymlicka (2000), Parekh (2006), Rawls (1993), Raz (1995), Taylor (1994), Tully (1995), and Young (1990, 1995). The consistency, usefulness, practicality, and applicability of these arguments, as well as their hospitality to multiculturalism, whatever it may mean, have been extensively debated in the political philosophy literature over the last two decades. Examples of these debates from Canadian perspectives can be found in Kymlicka (2001a, 2001b), Moore (2001), Orwin (2001), Réaume (2001), and Williams (2001). Also, philosophers of education have tackled this issue with a focus on the implications of these arguments in educational settings (e.g., Alston, 1995; Arcilla, 1995).

Not surprisingly, at the heart of some liberal arguments against multiculturalism are deviations from the classic liberal values and sacrificing individual rights at the expense of collective rights. Barry (2001) gives an elaborate example of defending liberalism against the goals and roles defined by multiculturalism. One can read Kelly (2002b) to appreciate how Barry’s arguments have their roots in different readings of John Stuart Mill’s conceptualization of liberty in 1859. Elsewhere, Kelly (2002a) presents a collection of detailed critiques to different aspects of Barry’s book. The burning question in the junction of liberalism-multiculturalism, then, is how multiculturalism may (or may not) fit in liberalism which is the backbone political philosophy of Western democracies. Taylor (1994), for example, claims that Kantian
liberalism cannot incorporate the politics of recognition because it is difference-blind.

Joppke and Lukes (1999) argue that

multiculturalism has mostly appeared as a polemical attack on the key tenets of liberal societies and states—universalism, nationhood and citizenship, and individual rights, provoking no less polemical counter-attacks against the relativism, fragmentation, and illiberalism inherent in some of its more strident versions. (p. 1)

They suggest that it is appropriate to question the key tenets of multiculturalism as well, namely, “its epistemological relativism and attack on Enlightenment universalism, its socio-moral elevation of primordial group over society-wide citizenship identities and loyalties, and its legal-political preference for group over individual rights” (p. 2).

While in most cases, different readings or versions of multiculturalism can be traced back to different kinds of liberalism (Tamir, 1988), it is important to indicate that issues of identity and citizenship have always been an inseparable part of discussions on multiculturalism. With the introduction of post-modern theories of identity and citizenship in the last two decades, the philosophical boundaries of multiculturalism have gone way beyond tenets of liberalism.

**Canadian Multiculturalism**

The introduction of Multiculturalism Policy in 1971 established multiculturalism as the official discourse in terms of dealing with immigrants and minorities. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act (see Appendix B) complemented that policy in 1988 when most provinces had already developed their own policies on multiculturalism.

Canadian multiculturalism, like its counterparts in other Western liberal democracies, has been categorized as plural multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 2000), mainly because the underpinning theory of its policies is cultural pluralism. Horace Kallen, the
originator of the term “cultural pluralism”, emphasized that underlying all diversities in pluralism are the fundamental principles of political democracy (Bullivant, 1981). These principles require maintaining “certain common institutions essential for the well being and smooth functioning of nation-state as a whole. […] such as: common language, common political system, common legal system, common economic market system” (pp. 2-3). Therefore, Bullivant concludes, cultural pluralism can only operate at a private and not a public level. Using heritage language at home, religious practices, and rules of conduct at family level are aspects of private life which are encouraged “almost in the sense of ethnic enclaves” (p. 3). He claims that this distinction between private and public level is the key to understanding many tensions that arose in nation-states.

**Critiques of (Canadian) Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism has been criticized from two sides. On one side, conservatives and some liberal opponents argue that only current nation-states can bring personal equality and common citizenship. They claim that multiculturalism is destructive, divisive, and replaces universalism by particularism by unnecessarily bringing ethnicity to civil society (May, 1999). In Canada, Bisoondath (1994) and Gwyn (1995) provide two famous examples of this argument. From the left side, multiculturalism has been criticized for being superficial, being unable to address racism, and being used for social control.

Phillips (2007), for example, noted that the emphasis on cultural diversity in the discourse of multiculturalism overshadows ethnicity, religion, and race. In her view, culture is used in North America partly as a euphemism or camouflage for race, but mostly to avoid the issue of race altogether. This leads to concentrating on culture when
other issues are at stake and hence obscures, for example, racial disadvantages. One can see Eller (1997) for a condensed report of what worries anti-multiculturalists in the American context.

In another line of critique, feminists argue against multiculturalism (or some versions of it) for ignoring in-group inequalities. Okin (1998), for example, elaborates on the possible tensions between feminism and multiculturalism. She concludes that “establishing group rights to enable some minority cultures to preserve themselves may not necessarily be in the best interest of women of the culture, even when it is in the men's” (p. 683).

For Harney (1988), the problem with Canadian multiculturalism is that it “may serve to perpetuate the hegemony of the British as the elite of Canada” (p. 82). He suggests that by rewarding leaders who are concerned about ethnicity rather than social class and by encouraging political grouping on issues which go against class, “multiculturalism softens issues of immigrant exploitation and removes them from the frame of the flow of labor to capital” (p. 82).

Fleras and Elliott (1992) have categorized critiques of multiculturalism in Canada in four groups. First is the claim that multiculturalism is divisive, ghettoizes the society, perpetuates the marginalization of ethnic minorities, and threatens national unity. Second is the critique that multiculturalism is regressive because it diverts the attention from social, economic, and political inequities to ethnic festivals and folklores and hence, reinforces these inequities. The third critique claims that by equating ‘culture’ to food, fashion, and festivities, multiculturalism is decorative and disguises assimilation. Finally, multiculturalism is critiqued for being impractical since it is bounded to the complex
realities of a capitalist society which make any fundamental social change close to impossible.

In a similar attempt, Liodakis (1998) has summarized criticisms on multiculturalism in Canada and has come up with the following themes: reproducing the stereotypes of ethnic groups, undermining social cohesion and Canadian unity, ghettoizing ethnic groups, undermining the special claims of Francophones and Native people, depoliticizing and obfuscating social inequality.

Likewise, Magsino (1999) identifies three types of concerns in objections to multiculturalism: egalitarian concerns (it distracts minorities from politicized participation for equality, it ignores the structural conditions in shaping the ethnic inequality); concerns for national unity (it undermines core values that are the basis of stability and unity and encourages divided loyalty); and concerns for the cultural ghettoization of minority groups (it isolates new Canadians from mainstream Canadians).

A relatively new framework for analyzing Canadian multiculturalism has been scrutinizing its relationship with racism. Examples of these analyses can be found in Ash (2004), Fleras (2004), Saloojee (2004), and Singh (2004), who discuss hidden areas of multiculturalism, an issue which is beyond the scope of this study.

I would like to conclude the section on critiquing multiculturalism with an opposing view from Malik (2005) who challenges the very idea of diverse Western societies. He claims that “multicultural policies often create divisions and resurrect ways of thinking about difference that are rooted in racial theory” (pp.362-363); a theory which apparently must be improper to him. As evidence to his argument, Malik recalls that today, not just language, but the shopping mall, the sports field, the Hollywood film and the television sitcom all serve to bind differences and create a set of
experiences and cultural practices that is held more in common than at any time in
the past. (p. 376)

**Analyses of Official Multiculturalism in Canada**

Fleras and Elliott (1992) claim that, compared with other nation-states, Canada
“deserves kudos” for accepting multiculturalism as part of its collective vision. However,
you add that beneath this appearance “claims are more apparent than real. […] Many in
practice are insensitive to minority rights as individual or group rights, suggesting an
underlying adherence to Anglo-conformity as the preferred culture in Canada” (p. 127).
In response to this evaluation, one may argue that the gap between policy and practice is
not uncommon. But others (such as Hawkins, 1988) suggest that these policies and
initiatives were responses to specific political situations and never intended to give more
power to minorities. A critical analysis of the official multiculturalism in Canada may
shed some light on this issue. By official, I refer to the federal government’s Policy and
Act on multiculturalism which have set the bar for other policy makers and practitioners.
As Bokhorst-Heng (2007) suggests, states, whether strong or weak, have a critical role in
creation, reproduction, and dissemination of the official narrative of multiculturalism. All
other agents, such as non-government organizations, civil society, and individuals, she
argues, respond to the statal narrative which acts as a point of reference.

In my reading of the Canadian Multicultural Act, I notice that it has several
references to “communities of all origins”, “individuals and communities of different
origins”, “diverse cultures of Canadian society”, “languages other than English and
French”, “Canadians of all origins”. But it does not have any reference to “founding
races” or “mainstream Canadians” as if they do not exist. It assumes Canadian society is
a level field and tries to introduce the rules of fair play. Nobody expects a legislative
piece to contain a history of all wrongdoings in the past. However, the preamble of the Act could set the historical background of the issue. What is the rationale for the Act? Why was it introduced at the first place? Whom is the Act going to protect and against whom? In my view, this is a reflection of “the invisibility of Whiteness” in the official multiculturalism. Jansen (2005) noticed that the term “visible minority” appeared around the late 1960’s; a term that, in his view (among many others’), implies the invisibility of whiteness and also implies that non-whites are a problem for whites.

The following are some of the references in the Act to culture and its components: “multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;”; “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to […] foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures; […] preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French; advance multiculturalism throughout Canada.” Also, part of the preamble reads “persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion or to use their own language.”

In thematizing these samples, I cannot agree more with James (2001) that this policy “articulates a discourse of “difference” that signifies that culture is primarily carried in and exhibited by “foreign bodies”- people who are from somewhere else, “who are linguistically different.””(p. 178). This conceptualization of culture seems too narrow and problematic to me. The pejorative comments about superficial multiculturalism that
equate multiculturalism to three F’s (food, fest, and fashion), three D’s (dance, dress, and dinner) or three S’s (sari, samosa, and steel band) have their roots in this concept of culture in the Act. In Bokhorst-Heng’s (2007) words, the “multiculturalism framework established ‘multiculturalism’ to be about ‘the other’, exclusive of those with British or French heritage, while at the same time suggesting equality to be something about ‘sameness’” (p. 643).

There are two references to official languages of Canada in the Act: (1) “WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada and the Official Languages Act provide that English and French are the official languages of Canada and neither abrogates nor derogates from any rights or privileges acquired or enjoyed with respect to any other language;” (2) “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to [...] preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada.” Given that language is an integral part of any culture and the institutionalization of English and French, the Act is a self-explaining story about the status of languages and cultures: other languages can be preserved and their usage can be enhanced without touching the status of English and French.

The term “barriers” is mentioned only twice in the Act. First, it is government policy to “promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation” [emphasis added]. In the second case, the policy reads “the Minister [...] may assist ethno-cultural minority communities to conduct activities with a view to overcoming any discriminatory barrier
and, in particular, discrimination based on race or national or ethnic origin” [emphasis added]. One may ask why “eliminating”, rather than “assisting with”, those barriers are not part of responsibilities of government. In this situation, how something could be stated is more important that how it is stated (Östman, 1998).

There are two references to equality and one reference to equity: “individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity”; “Canadians of all origins have an equal opportunity to obtain employment and advancement in those institutions”; and “promote full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society”. One can see that equality is related to employment, treatment and protection, while equity remains for participation.

There is no reference whatsoever to social justice and social class in the Act. Here silence, as a main device of exclusion speaks more than words. Only under the pressure of critics, when later in 1997 the federal government introduced the Renewed Multiculturalism Program. The program introduced three new objectives: social justice, identity and belonging, and civic participation.

In Jansen’s view (2005), the most important shortcoming of policies on multiculturalism, including the Multiculturalism Act, is that the prevailing atmosphere of the policy is persuasion rather than insistence. He believes that if laws are not accompanied by some kind of sanction, there is no guarantee for the enactment of that law. I agree with him in asking: What happens if the federal and provincial departments do not follow the “encouragements” by the Act? One can add to those questions: How
will all those issues be monitored and policed and what will happen if these policies are not followed?

The best example of this point is the history of the policy for Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards in Ontario. The policy was introduced in 1993 by the NDP government and was a source of hope for many people. However, after the Conservatives took power in 1995, the policy was totally put aside. Despite the legal mandates of the Act, there was nothing “unlawful” in ignoring the policy for Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards in Ontario.

Peter’s (1981) analysis of the Multiculturalism Policy and the processes of its introduction and implementation concludes that it “served as a device to legitimize the continued dominance of the ruling English speaking elite and secure its position in the society at a time when its position was threatened by Quebec’s claim to political power […] and by the economic and cultural vitality of ethnic groups” (p. 60). Critiquing the Policy from another perspective, in her textual analysis of the Multiculturalism Policy, Ng (1995) argues that multiculturalism is an artifact produced “to reorder a society away from Anglo-conformity to govern a new reality” (p. 35). The liberal democratic state introduced the policy because demands of diverse minorities for equitable treatment had become vocal and militant. Developed in the framework of national unity, Ng argues, the ideology of multiculturalism now has reoriented understandings of Canada. It has made it a fact that Canada is a multicultural country rather than an English-French country. By ideology, she means not simply a bias or set of beliefs, rather “ideologies as processes that are produced and constructed through human activities. […] Once the ideological
frame is in place, it renders the very work process that produced it invisible and the idea that it references as ‘common sense’” (p. 36).

Multiculturalism Policy came in the context of social dissatisfaction with the resurfaced poverty, the civil right movements in the US, the historical conflict between Francophones and English elites in Quebec, and the increasing militancy of Aboriginals. Ng (1995) claims that the antagonism between French and English Canadians led to the establishment of the Royal Commission. The Policy, she argues, established the facticity of multiculturalism. “The speech gave instructions for how programs and services would be reorganized in accordance with a new ideological framework” (p. 46). She astutely notices that in assigning the financial resources, the policy has the condition of “resources permitting”. From a less optimistic view, Peter (1983) claims that the policy “grew out of the embarrassment caused by the formulation of bilingual and bicultural policies” (p. 44); however the government strategists were quick to change this embarrassment into an advantage.

More recently, Bokhorst-Heng (2007) identifies the following themes in The Multiculturalism Act of Canada: promoting social justice, strengthening nation-building, developing Canadian identity, bringing social cohesion, and providing national resource. Interestingly, she notices that social cohesion received minimal attention in the early years and only came to the forefront and is getting increasing attention “after the release of the 1997 Social Cohesion Research Workplan” (p. 650). For a detailed account of discussions on cohesion of Canada in those days, one can read Breton, Reitz, and Valentine (1980).
Public Sphere versus Private Sphere in Canadian Multiculturalism. As mentioned earlier, cultural pluralism, which is the underpinning philosophy of Canadian multiculturalism, can only operate at a private and not a public level (Bullivant, 1981). Bullivant suggested that the pluralist dilemma is “the problem of reconciling public claims of constituent groups and individuals in a pluralist society with the claims of the nation-state as a whole” (p. x). Many other scholars have raised the same point.

In the heydays of multiculturalism, this was noticed by the Director of Education at the Board of Education for the City of Toronto, Green (1977), who suggested that there are “two major hurdles” for multicultural education. First, was a need for changing attitude because “dance recitals, restaurants, cultural festivals are all acceptable and colourful; languages, jobs, power are not acceptable” (p.16). The second obstacle, according to him, is insufficient funding.

Moodley (1983) argues that “the focus on the non-controversial, expressive aspects of culture” best illustrates the ideological aspect of Canadian multiculturalism, i.e. “the ethnocentrism of entrenched Anglo-Canada;” an ideology which “trivializes, neutralizes and absorbs social and economic inequalities” (p. 326). The recognition of this notion of culture in the multiculturalism Policy and Act was also a formal recognition of the unspoken assumption that ethnic groups are somewhere outside of the mainstream Canadian society, the “we” and “them” syndrome (Peter, 1981). This syndrome, Peter argues, is denied by “many leading liberal Canadian sociologists” who are reluctant “to deal with ethnicity in terms of power and politics” (p.59).

Taylor (1994) also noted that the problem of cultural diversity, as well as its solution, is the public recognition of differences which was downgraded to private
spheres by assimilation processes. In the same vein, Kallen’s (1982) main problem with the multicultural policy is the assumed division between private and public life spaces of visible minorities. Ethnic-Canadians, she argues, are free to practice what they want in their private life, but there is no guarantee for their collective minority rights in terms of religious, linguistic and educational institutions. This should not be surprising because, as she mentions, collective minority rights for non-Protestant, non-Catholic, non-English, and non-French minorities were not recognized or protected in the original Canadian Constitution and Charter of Rights.

Nevertheless, this “dilemma” is not a unique feature of Canadian multiculturalism. Speaking from a Belgian context, Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) refer to the asymmetry and distinction made between the surface and profound cultural features. Minorities’ rights to cherish surface and superficial features of their cultures are recognized and this is seen to be enough for preserving their cultural identity. However, maintaining the identity of the majority requires that their profound cultural features (values, beliefs, religion, language, and law) remain untouched.

**The Implementation of Official Multiculturalism**

Churchill (1983) examined the implementation of multicultural policies in Canada and concludes that “the combination of financial, organizational and regulatory arrangements which are in place still do not provide universal access to minimum standards of service, particularly for indigenous people and new minorities” (p. 264). One should notice that this was written in the blooming days of multiculturalism. Later, Chacko and Palmer (1995) briefly examined Canadian social policies in the areas of employment, business, health, justice and legal affairs, education, housing, and social
services and demonstrated how these programs fail to serve visible minorities. Magsino (1999) claimed that “implementation of multiculturalism thus far has been limited, ill-focused, and inadequately funded” (p.47). If we accept the credibility of these claims, then the question will be whether there is a gap between the policies and the practices and given the discourse of the Act and Policy, to what degree the current situation has been inevitable.

The federal government used to publish an Annual Report on the Operation of The Canadian Multiculturalism Act. A long quote from the 1999-2000 report is well deserved and self-explaining. According to the federal government, four key issues to be addressed, were:

**Disproportionate poverty.** In a recent study of 89 ethno-racial groups in Metro Toronto, the most severely disadvantaged were black with poverty rates ranging from 52.2% to 70% compared to 22.7% in the overall population.

**Systemic discrimination.** A large number of highly qualified immigrant professionals continue to experience difficulties with credentials recognition and accreditation. Visible minority male immigrants earn an average of 15% less than their white counterparts. While there is some improvement among the Canadian-born, visible minority males still earn, on average, 9% less than white males with the same qualifications, skills and experience.

**Under-representation.** Ethnic and visible minorities continue to be under represented in most institutions and professions, and in the media, where they are also often negatively portrayed.

**Victimization as a result of racism and hate-motivated crime.** Visible minority-Canadians also continue to be the objects of racism and outright discrimination. According to a recent analysis of police statistics, as many as 60,000 hate and bias crimes are committed in Canada’s large urban centres annually, of which approximately 61% are directed against visible minorities. (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2001, p. 13)

**Assumptions of Canadian Multiculturalism**

Introducing multiculturalism policies in any society is based upon certain assumptions about people’s attitudes towards difference. Kallen (1982) has pointed,
correctly in my view, to underlying assumptions of the mosaic model of “one nation/many people/many cultures” (p. 52). The model assumes

[…] that members of all ethnocultural collectivities are both able and willing to maintain ethnocultural distinctiveness. […] that levels of prejudice and discrimination are low enough to allow mutual tolerance. […] a rough equivalence in the distribution of power among various ethnic collectivities, so that no one population can assume dominance and control over others. […] that members of the different ethnic collectivities in society will mutually agree to limit and control the extent, spheres and nature of interaction between them. Thus, processes of acculturation and assimilation will be mutually restricted by the interacting ethnic units. (p. 52)

These assumptions, Kallen argues, imply that ethnocultural rights should be brought to the public sphere through political representation, economic power, linguistic rights, and territorial autonomy. She views these as elements of nationhood and claims that in Canada, multiculturalism was never conceptualized in terms of nationhood except for charter groups. As already discussed, for visible minorities, the cultural pluralism model only applied to private spaces of life.

Arguing from a psychological perspective on intergroup relations, Moghaddam (2008) suggests that Canadian multiculturalism policy has two underlying assumptions. First, stating that there is no official culture in Canada imagines a cultural free-market in which individuals are free to choose their cultural identities. He acknowledges that implicit in this assumption is the existence of an egalitarian situation where no ethnic group has priority over others. His only problem with this assumption is that with giving equal merit to all cultures and not endorsing any specific culture, governments end up in “relativism”. Then, as an example of consequences of cultural relativism, he mentions the domains of arts and literature and asks how incomparable could be plays written by him with Shakespeare’s. However, he does not mention the reality of a vertical mosaic in
Canada (as discussed in the introduction), neither does he talk about the power of race and social class, among the other sources of power. If there are systemic and systematic barriers for “visible minorities”, which many argue there are, governments’ neutrality means favouring the privileged or, in Moghaddam’s words, lack of an egalitarian situation which makes the first assumption baseless. As for his example of cultural relativism, I think there is a confusion about ethnicity and culture as well as narrowly reducing culture to high culture.

The second assumption, according to Moghaddam (2008), is that if minorities are given a free choice, they are positively motivated to keep their heritage cultures. He mentions that this assumption contradicts the assimilationist assumption that newcomers want to become Canadian. By referring to two studies in the 1970s, he concludes that there is general support for heritage culture and language retention in Canada. However, he notices that “for some time there has been evidence of groups being ambivalent toward heritage-culture retention” (p. 155). For him, this ambivalence can be partly explained by the discriminations experienced by those groups. Retention of the heritage culture makes these groups even more “visible” and more vulnerable. Moghaddam’s explanation resonates with my personal experiences from encounters with many immigrant families who want their children to be Canadian like ‘them’ (i.e., “mainstream” Canadians) and benefit from being treated like ‘them’ not “regarded as second-class citizens like ‘us’”. However, unlike Moghaddam (2008), I do not think that discrimination is a major issue only in Western Europe. He himself has shown that different minority groups in Canada have totally different experiences. Moghaddam and Taylor (1987) argue, rightly in my view, that there is a limitation to the Canadian
research on maintenance of heritage culture which generally reports positive attitudes
toward culture retention. This research “has focused on groups that enjoy relatively
positive status in Canada by way of their history, numerical importance, or organization”
(p. 122). Again, they forget to mention social class, and race.

The evidence from research about psychological assumptions of multiculturalism
will be presented in the next chapter as part of the literature review.

**Multicultural Education in Canada**

If prior to the 1960’s, in the school systems in Canada the ideal of cultural
assimilation and conformity prevailed (Fleras & Elliott, 1992), the official introduction of
multiculturalism into Canada was supposed or expected to change this situation. The
umbrella term for all these polices, programs, and practices was ‘multicultural education’,
which was as vague, and differently-understood as multiculturalism itself. Carlson (1976)
suggests that multicultural education is “a labyrinth of assertions and assumptions” (p.
26) which makes little sense to teachers and students and needs to be examined.

Multicultural education, according to Katz (1982),

could include, but not be limited to, experiences which (i) promote analytical and
evaluative abilities to confront issues such as participatory democracy, racism and
sexism, and the party of power, (ii) develop skills for values clarification
including the study of the manifest and latent transmission of values, (iii) examine
the dynamics of diverse cultures and the implications for developing teaching
strategies, and (iv) examine linguistic variations and diverse learning styles as a
basis for the development of appropriate teaching strategies. (pp. 16-17)

These different policies, programs, and practices, correspond to different conceptions of
multiculturalism that will be explained later in this chapter.

Fleras and Elliott (1992) suggest the following categories for understanding
multicultural education: concept (its purpose); content (choosing among: cultural
awareness, race, power, identity, …); scope (specific aspects such as curriculum, textbook and teacher training; or addressing educational values, priorities, and power structure); objectives (erasing the “ethnic” problem, eliminating discrimination and creating harmony, promoting justice for minorities); style (the structure of school in terms of having multicultural units or suffusing the philosophy into the whole school); target (minority students or all the students, teachers, and staff); implementation (balancing between the needs of minority students, the whole school, and society); and effectiveness (criteria for measuring efficiency).

At the core of many of these categories is the philosophy of education, which has proved not to be easy to agree upon, and an agenda for a new social order. Whatever the goals of education might be, a good part of those goals are expected to be implemented through schools; if there is an agenda for a new social order, we are faced with George Counts’ (1932) old and difficult question which appears in the title of his book: *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order?*

**Cultural Competence (Competency)**

One of the fundamental dilemmas of multicultural education has been lack of “skilled” teachers who understand their students’ cultural background and teach accordingly (Hill-Jackson, 2007). However, this is not an easy task for teachers and teacher educators who are mostly from White Western middle class backgrounds. Changing the composition of the teaching force is not an easy task. The “easy” solution is providing teachers with the necessary “skills” to “manage” the diversity in their classrooms. “Cultural competence”, “multicultural competence”, “intercultural competence”, “ethnic competence”, and “cross-cultural awareness practices”, used
interchangeably in the literature (Diller & Moule, 2005), refer to those necessary skills. The term “multicultural competence”, which first appeared in Paul Pedersen’s *A Handbook for Developing Multicultural Awareness* (1988), has its roots in mental health and counselling literature and later its use was extended to social work and multicultural education.

The definition of the term varies across the disciplines, and depending on how one defines culture and competence, there are different conceptualizations of the term. According to Hess, Lanig, and Vaughan (2007), the common elements in different definitions of cultural competence “include: cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity or attitudes, cultural encounters, and cultural skills” (p. 32) and all professionals need this competency in order to effectively provide service for culturally diverse populations. For example, Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) define cultural competence as “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or professional and enable that system, agency, or professional to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (cited in Ford & Whiting, 2008, p. 105). This definition seems so vague and broad and one can reword it as “whatever it takes to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.”

I have several problems with the concept of cultural competence, especially with the rhetoric that reduces everything to skills with “crash courses” on “managing diversity” by “boosting cultural competence”. First, it takes the status quo on the composition of teaching force for granted and tries to bypass the problem by finding remedies for White middle class teachers without any vision for diversifying the teaching force. Second, by heavily drawing on the literature from mental health, it reinforces the
deficit model for minority students by medicalization of differences. Third, it reduces education to training and students to clients. Finally, I would like to add Murrell’s (2007) argument which, correctly in my view, identifies the fundamental issue of approaches which ignore students’ identity, i.e., the presumption of the necessity and desirability of assimilating minority students.

As mentioned earlier, attitudes and beliefs are major components of cultural competence. On the other hand, most teachers make decisions more on the basis of their beliefs, deep rooted in their value systems and upbringings, rather than on their knowledge (Nespor, 1987; Wilen, Ishler, Hutchinson, & Kindsvater, 2000). Then, if as research suggests teacher candidates’ beliefs are highly resistant to change (Ward & Ward, 2003), we need to reconsider add-on approaches for teacher candidates.

This by no means implies that the concept is inherently problematic. For example, at the heart of Diller and Moule’s (2005) conceptualization of cultural competence is an understanding of racism, prejudice, identity formation, and White privileges. Also, their understanding of culture goes deeper than food, festival, and fashion. My main argument is that a change of attitude is a long and complex process which cannot be reduced to a set of skills. This becomes even more difficult by considering the fact that White teacher candidates’ response to multicultural education courses is not generally positive. Levine-Rasky (2001) cites many studies which have documented White teacher candidates’ “defensiveness, hostility, anger, denial, and a general detachment from issues of social inequality” (p. 314). One can see Chávez and O’Donnell (1998), Ford, Glimpse, and Giallourakis (2007), and Hill-Jackson (2007) for strategies of engaging teacher candidates in this process.
I think the actualization of multicultural education in classrooms is feasible by accepting culturally responsive teaching, as elaborated by Gay (2000) among many others, rather than focusing on cultural competency. I already discussed my problems with the cultural competency, however, the more important issue for the present study is that accepting this notion, which is basically related to skills and behaviour, would clash with my definition of culture, as stated later in Chapter 4, which will focus on values and beliefs. Gay (2000) suggests that teachers’ work in classrooms needs to be supported by substantive reforms in policy, administration, and funding levels. Furthermore, she notices that affiliation, gender, age, social class, education, individuality, and status are mitigating factors among members of ethnic groups.

For Gay (2000), four pillars of practice in culturally responsive teaching are “teachers’ attitudes and expectations, cultural communication in the classroom, culturally diverse content in the curriculum, and culturally congruent instructional strategies” (p. 44). She makes it clear that practicing these principles needs (1) a very good knowledge about different cultures, (2) the courage to admit to existing problems in school systems and to stop blaming the victims, (3) the will to challenge the traditional assumptions about the universality and neutrality of teaching practices, (4) the skills to productively translate knowledge about cultural diversity to classroom practices, and (5) the tenacity to persistently follow high levels of performance for underachievers. As seen from Gay’s formulation, we need much more than a set of skills. For more on culturally responsive teaching, its requirements, and impediments, one can see Irizarry (2007), Ladson-Billings (1995), Lipman (1996), and Phuntsog (2001). I acknowledge that being a culturally responsive teacher is not easy at all, especially if we consider teachers’ exhaustion under
the pressures of budget cutbacks and standardized curriculum. However, I believe it is a worthy ideal.

Preparing teachers for an engaged multicultural education is not easy. Cannela’s (1998) research shows how deep-rooted barriers in teacher education are. Although her study was in the US, her conclusions seem applicable to Canada.

Institutionalized perspectives and the beliefs, powers, and fears of those teacher educators who function within the institution emerged as barriers to the construction and development of social justice teacher education. These barriers were evidenced in three ways: through university-level structures, in the reproduction of dominant knowledge base, and in the institutionalized perspectives of teacher educators. (p. 91)

At a personal level, she argues, power and beliefs of teacher educators as well as the fears, prejudices and privileges of prospective teachers were found to be among these barriers.

**Language in Multicultural Education**

It is generally accepted that language and culture are interdependent, inseparable, and interacting (Heffernan, 1995; Jiang, 2000). However, there is disagreement on the relationship between these two and specifically whether language is an element of culture or the central essential component of the culture (Dupont & Lemarchand, 2000). Whichever is the case, Minami and Ovando’s (2004) review of literature shows “that the acquisition of culture-specific communicative competence and socialization patterns plays a significant role in the process of language acquisition and the development of language skills” (p. 583). Language has an important role in creating a sense of community and acts as a common bond among the members of a group; hence, retaining the culture and identity is closely related to the language (Fleras & Elliott, 1992).
Rocher (1973) was among the first to notice the lack of support for heritage languages in the Multiculturalism Policy. In Rocher’s view, language was the *sine qua non* of culture and without supporting heritage languages the maintenance of other cultures was impossible. Similarly, for Kallen (1982), “the most contentious aspect” of the multicultural policy can be seen in the linguistic assimilation of immigrants into […] English and French” (p. 55). For immigrant students, the role of English (or French) is very crucial. Reporting from a vast research, Watt, Roessingh, and Bosetti (1996) conclude that attaining English language proficiency is “the essential and determining feature of educational success and positive cultural adjustment” (p. 126, emphasis in the original).

From another perspective, Peter (1983) argues, soundly in my view, that language retention requires a “creative interaction between its symbolic expressions, social behaviour, and social relations” (p. 45). By taking out this unity of language from the public domain and making it the concern of ethnic fragments, he suggests, language will inevitably deteriorate. As a result, mobile members of the group withdraw, join the mainstream and ethnic cultures decline in a process of self-fulfilling prophecy. Finally, Ortega (1999) suggests “without an explicit understanding of the context and the politics of teaching languages, teachers are left without tools to resist hegemonic practices in language education that discriminate against minority language students” (p. 23).

**Different Conceptualizations of Multicultural Education**

There are several categorizations for conceptualization of multicultural education with many overlaps. Gibson (1976) was among the first who categorized approaches to
multicultural education in the US and her categorization still seems relevant. The following is her summary of then-existing approaches:

(1) Education of the Culturally Different or Benevolent Multi-culturalism—The purpose of multi-cultural education is to equalize educational opportunities for culturally different students. (2) Education about Cultural Differences or Cultural Understanding—The purpose of multi-cultural education is to teach students to value cultural differences, to understand the meaning of the culture concept, and to accept others' right to be different. (3) Education for Cultural Pluralism—The purpose of multi-cultural education is to preserve and to extend cultural pluralism in American society. (4) Bicultural Education—The purpose of multi-cultural (or bicultural) education is to produce learners who have competencies in and can operate successfully in two different cultures. (p. 7)

Hollinger (2001) contrasts cosmopolitan with pluralist multiculturalism. McLaren (1995) defines four types of multiculturalism: conservative, liberal, left-liberal, and critical. Glazer (1997) suggests three types of multiculturalism: cultural pluralist, additive, and militant /transformative. Others have come up with more types and subtypes; for example, Alibhai-Brown (2000) has distinguished eleven types and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995) with six types. I prefer Kincheloe and Steinberg’s (1997) typology (below) because of its clarity and inclusiveness as well as its emphasis on the roles of race, class, and gender. The significant role of social class in multiculturalism is manifested in the fact that, for the last forty years, socio-economic status has remained “the single most powerful predictor not just of education but of all life outcomes” (Levin, Gaskell, & Pollock 2007, ¶1). Likewise, Mitchell (1993) has well documented the case of capitalist multiculturalism in Canada. More recently, Tilley (2007) has noticed that the obstacle for translation of multiculturalism principles into practice is the silence about race.

Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) categorize the various responses to diversity into five types: 1) Conservative multiculturalism or monoculturalism views the marginalized
students as deprived and inferior to students from middle and upper class and white European background. This approach, mainly common during the 1960’s, locates the problems in the students and tries to assimilate everyone to a “common culture” which “happens to be” the culture of white middle class Europeans. Some other scholars have called this view assimilationism.

2) Liberal multiculturalism, they argue, believes in a natural equality and a common humanity for all individuals. For liberals, lack of social and educational opportunities to compete equally is the reason for inequality. Kincheloe and Steinberg claim that this view is based on an “allegedly neutral and universal process of consciousness that is unaffected by racial, class and gender differences” (p. 11) and has been reluctant to examine race, class, and gender issues. This approach is engaged in depoliticization of education, which is in fact a reinforcement of the politics of the status quo. Integrationism is another name given to this view.

3) Pluralist multiculturalism is what often is meant by multicultural education and its major difference with liberal multiculturalism is that the former focuses on difference while the latter’s focus is on sameness. This approach has less emphasis on assimilation, however it recognizes race and gender differences. Pluralists slip into socio-political decontextualization and imply that “everyone can ‘make it’ by working hard.” While their policies bring greater parity for symbolic representation, a greater disparity emerges in distribution of power and wealth. It fails to engage in issues of class, gender and race.

4) Left-essentialist multiculturalism views race, gender, and class as unchanging elements of identity formation and fails to appreciate the historical and dynamic nature of these
categories. It focuses on just one form of oppression or discrimination, i.e. race, gender, or class, as the reason for the failure of marginalized students.

5) Finally, critical multiculturalism is concerned with power relations in everyday life and how political opinions, socio-economic class, religious beliefs, and racial self-image are formed by dominant cultures. It also illustrates the contextualization of the factors that contribute to inequalities and how individuals are engaged in the power relations.

One may ask Where can we situate Canadian multicultural education in this spectrum? Since educational policies vary across provinces and they have changed a lot since the introduction of the Multicultural Policy, there is no single clear-cut answer to this question. Chapter 3 on the literature review will present the result of research on this issue.

Where Do I Stand?

As evident from my analysis of the Canadian Multicultural Act and my acceptance of Kincheloe and Steinberg’s (1997) categorization, I do not think that a pluralist multiculturalism has the potential to meet the needs of minority students. Rather, I would position myself along with supporters of an antiracist or critical multicultural education because this framework can serve the need of minority students to challenge the discrimination and racism they face in schools. Obviously, this view has influenced my story of what happened at Westside School and how I interpret/analyse those observations.

I strongly identify with May’s (1999) formulation of critical multiculturalism, which he calls a non-essentialist view and has three steps. The first step, he argues, is unmasking and deconstructing the “supposedly universal, neutral set of values and
practices that underpin the public sphere of the nation state” (p. 30). The second key element, for him, is situating cultural differences in the larger web of power relations of which they are part. The third move is a “reflexive critique of specific cultural practices that avoids the vacuity of cultural relativism, and allows for criticism (both internal and external to the group), transformation, and change” (p. 33). The final step is fostering students who can critically engage with all cultural backgrounds, including their own.

**Summary**

This chapter examines the theoretical aspects of multiculturalism and multicultural education and I positioned myself away from pluralist multiculturalism and close to critical/antiracist multicultural education.

One may legitimately conclude from the previous discussions that theoretically, multicultural education is full of difficulties, conflicts, and ambiguities. With these uncertainties and conflicts, I cannot agree more with Kach and Defaveri (1987) who see the burden on “poor classroom teachers amidst of all this” difficult situation who should decide what do to “with little guidance” (p. 236) and, I will add, with little training.

Multiculturalism in Canada, Tepper (1994) claims, expresses “the practice of integration, retention of elements of identity, instead of a policy of assimilation” (p. 95). Unpacking the different aspects of multiculturalism shows that the linear and causal relationship between multiculturalism and integration, as Tepper suggests, is theoretically problematic. At the heart of multiculturalism are two major assumptions that the retention of minority cultures is of value and maintaining positive relationships between different groups is a value (Berry, 1984). Do all minority groups and host societies have similar views on these assumptions? What are the possible theoretical situations, in terms of
integration or assimilation, that may occur in response to these questions? Chapter 4 on theoretical framework will address these questions. The next chapter will provide a review of the literature on the research in this area.
CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Building on the ideas developed in the previous chapters, the aim of this chapter is to critically review the research in the areas of acculturation and multicultural education in Canada. In writing this chapter, I have tried to keep in mind Hart’s (1999) suggestion on the role of a literature review. For him, the review of the literature in social science aims at:

1. distinguishing what has been done from what needs to be done; 2. discovering important variables relevant to the topic; 3. synthesizing and gaining a new perspective; 4. identifying relationships between ideas and practices; 5. establishing the context of the topic or problem; 6. rationalizing the significance of the problem; 7. enhancing and acquiring the subject vocabulary; 8. understanding the structure of the subject; 9. relating ideas and theory to applications; 10. identifying the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used; 11. placing the research in a historical context to show familiarity with state-of-the-art developments. (p. 27)

More recently, Boote and Beile (2005) have reframed these categories in five major criteria for literature review; i.e., coverage, synthesis, methodology, significance and rhetoric.

This chapter will review the research in the area of interaction of contacting cultures with a focus on schools as the secondary site of socialization for children. The first section focuses on research in the area of acculturation and specifically acculturation in schools. The second section extends the review to selected aspects of multicultural education which are relevant to this study. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the issues related to multicultural education in Quebec (where it is called intercultural education) and research on the education of Aboriginal students are not included in this review.
Section I: Acculturation

Acculturation refers to cultural change that occurs as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups (Berry, 1980). Stanley (2003) suggests that acculturation research has been hampered by many conditions. Among these conditions, she mentions: (1) acculturation is often measured by proxy variables and measures (such as language use and self-reported identity) which do not capture acculturation easily and are sometimes unrelated. (2) While the previous measures of acculturation have been unidimensional, the dimensions of acculturation and their relative importance are not agreed-upon and well defined. (3) Different measures used for investigating acculturation make the comparison of the findings very difficult. Furthermore, she argues, that in measuring acculturation, costs of acculturation are not usually considered, the (un)importance of different factors are not identified, and power relationships between majority and minority groups are often overlooked.

More recently, Luque, Fernández, and Tejada (2006) suggest that after the formulation of the acculturation model by Berry and his colleagues (as discussed in detail in the next chapter), research on psychological acculturation has had three major areas of focus:

acculturation attitudes, that is, how immigrants wish to maintain their own identity and at the same time relate to other groups in the host society; the specific changes in their conduct or way of life in the new society; and finally, the stress caused by acculturation in terms of the difficulty experienced by individuals when confronted with their new situation. (p. 332)

According to Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999), there have been three strategies for assessing different preferences for acculturation (or acculturation strategies): the ranked preferences of the four acculturation strategies through the use of vignettes [...], the assessment of attitudes toward host and co-national
communities as a basis for classifying research participants into one of the four acculturation groups [...], and the simultaneous measurement of the four acculturation attitudes via separate subscales. (p. 425)

Research on the acculturation of children is rare. While there have been numerous studies on acculturation, most of these studies have focused on adults (García-Vázquez, 1995; Zhou, 1997). Tseng (2002) is also concerned that, while “children of immigrants often represent their parents' greatest hopes for upward mobility" (p. 4275), most research on immigrant adaptation has focused on adults.

**General Research Findings about Acculturation**

Before focusing on the aspects of acculturation related to the present study, I find it useful to briefly discuss the general research findings on acculturation. These are usually the conclusions of quantitative studies using different scales to measure acculturation. A brief review of major approaches for measuring acculturation can be found in Zane and Mak (2003).

Research shows that the following factors significantly affect the process of acculturation: the country of origin, social class (or socio-economic status), gender, socio-historical experiences and the status of specific ethnic groups, the size of the ethnic community, the length of stay in the new country, and the extent of the development of a cultural community (Gordon-Popatia, 1994).

Berry (2003) summarizes some factors from previous research. Group factors, he suggests, show that: immigrants are more likely to seek participation and choose assimilation or integration than refugees; people with a distinct appearance from the dominant population may be less attracted by assimilation or be discouraged by racism and discrimination; a larger size of the group may cause a preference for culture
maintenance or even separation; finally, national policies may encourage or discourage certain kinds of acculturation. For a comprehensive examination of group factors one can read Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, and Senecal (1997). Berry (2003) reminds us that different preferences in the process of acculturation are part of a network of relationships with measurable features of one’s group and the group situation in relation to other groups. […] These preferences are an outcome of contextual factors rather than just a correlate because individuals have little influence over many of these group-level factors. (p. 30)

Among individual or psychological factors, Berry (2003) contends, are “indicators of how one is oriented to the two cultures in contact (such as one’s cultural identity and perceived similarity) and intercultural experiences (such as actual contact and discrimination” (p. 30).

An area of acculturation research closely related to the present study is the change in cultural values in the process of acculturation. In their review of literature on the role of acculturation in modifying and changing central group values, Marin and Gamba (2003) notice that this question has received limited attention in spite of it significance. They claim that the research in this area “often suffered from faulty conceptualization, poor instrumentation, and incomplete analyses” (p. 90). From their review, they conclude that “acculturation does influence certain cultural values and beliefs of the members of a given ethnic group” (p. 89). They also suggest that some values or components of a cultural value (e.g., in the area of family values) remain strong and unchanged.

**Canadians’ Attitudes toward Immigration and Multiculturalism**

The way immigrants go about their acculturation highly depends on how the host society receives them and how willing they are to “mix with” the new culture and society (Berry, 2003). Therefore, in order to investigate the choices and alternatives that
Canadian immigrants may have in dealing with the new society, this section looks at the research on Canadians’ attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism. The next section will take this question to school sites.

Fleras and Elliott (1992) report that, generally, the public perception of multiculturalism shows a concern with economic, social, and cultural areas. The perception, they suggested, was that immigrants take job opportunities and are a burden for social services; immigrants from non-democratic countries will disentangle Canada’s democratic tradition; and treating all cultures as equal will undermine the integrity of Canadian culture. Let us see whether the research supports these claims.

One of the most extensive studies on Canadians’ attitudes toward immigration, ethnic groups, multiculturalism, and integration is that of John Berry and colleagues (Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977). They conducted a national survey by using a 7-point rating scale and non-verbal responses (i.e., a card-sorting procedure). Their final sample included 1849 households and the data were statistically analyzed. While any summary of the findings of this study cannot do justice to a 350-page book, Mackie’s (1987) summary is worth a long quote. He states that the study tells us about:

the ethnocentrism of French Canadians; the lack of fervor of the “other ethnic groups” (especially Ukrainian- and Russian-Canadians) for immigration and multiculturalism; the mutually positive attitudes of Angloceltic and French Canadian respondents, when the context is multiculturalism rather than biculturalism; the constancy of immigration and multiculturalism attitudes from Ontario westwards; the lack of generational differences when research concentrates on attitudes towards other groups; the recognition of native people’s special status as indigenous people. (p. 47)

Berry (2006b) claims that the 1977 national survey and its follow-up (Berry & Kalin, 1995) supported the multicultural hypothesis; i.e., confidence in one’s own identity will lead to respect for others, and to a decrease in discriminatory attitudes.
Furthermore, Berry (2006b) suggests, those national studies supported the assumption that more contact and sharing, under the condition of equality, will promote mutual acceptance.

Critiques on some technical aspects of Berry et al.’s (1977) national survey can be found in Burnet (1978b) and Mackie (1978). The latter has commented that “the study suffers from the inevitable strain of trying to serve simultaneously both government and social science” (p. 45). However, there is no one-to-one correspondence between attitudes and behaviour. Burnet (1978a) raised this issue and commented that “there are many indications that behaviour does not match attitudes. Discrimination continues. Such advances as members of various ethnic groups have made seem rather the result of assimilation than of acceptance of difference by Canadians” (p. 109).

In the introductory chapter, I discussed the issue of retreat of multiculturalism in many industrialized countries including Canada starting from the early 1990s. However, before that retreat showed itself in policies and budgets, it needed to gain public support. Karim (2002) investigated “the competition of cultural discourses in the content of newspaper editorials and columns” during the 1980s, “which was a period of increased media attention to the multiculturalism policy” (p. 441). I agree with him that “the press in Canada, which is owned by the socioeconomic elite […], is an important channel of dissemination of dominant discourses” (p. 440). Therefore, his examination of Toronto Star, Globe and Mail, Ottawa Citizen, Le Devoir, The (Montreal) Gazette, and The Winnipeg Free Press can shed light on how Canadian elites felt about multiculturalism during those days. His study concludes that

While the various perspectives supporting multiculturalism, biculturalism, Anglo-conformity, Québec nationalism, and liberal individualism jostled for
hegemony in the five newspapers, the dominant media narratives seemed to hold that multiculturalism fostered national divisiveness, immigrant alienation and political exploitation. (p. 453)

While Karim (2002) claims that the attacks from the press “may have served to legitimize the political attacks” on multiculturalism (p. 454), I do not share this rather conspiracy-based view. For me, these newspaper pieces are only elaborated formal documents of those “competing cultural discourses”. They reflect the complex and inter-layered socioeconomic and cultural atmospheres at regional, national, and international levels. While in the final analysis, elites shape “public opinion”, this is a bidirectional relationship. Therefore, I would rather view Karim’s (2002) conclusion as a snapshot of how some Canadians felt about multiculturalism rather than “a harbinger of a political storm” as he chose for the title of his article.

More recently, Banting, Courchene, and Seidle (2007) summarize a number of studies which investigated Canadian public opinion on selected diversity issues. I reproduce that summary here:

- In 2005, in response to the affirmation that “immigration enriches Canada because immigrants contribute their know-how and culture to Canada,” 79% of respondents saw this as a strong or moderate benefit; 73% agreed (i.e., saw as a strong or moderate benefit) that “immigration improves the international competitiveness of our economy” […].
- In the 2003 New Canada Survey, multiculturalism was ranked 11th of 18 “things and events that some people say make them proud to be Canadian” and “having two official languages, English and French, came 15th […].
- A Trudeau Foundation […] poll asked respondents which of the following views was closest to their own: (1) immigrants and minority ethnic groups should blend into Canadian society and not form a separate community; or (2) immigrants and ethnic minorities should be free to maintain their religious and cultural practices and traditions. Almost 49%, chose the first and 40% the second.
- A question in the 2006 Trudeau Foundation poll began as follows: “Some immigrants and minority ethnic communities have very traditional practices and beliefs when it comes to the role and rights of women.” Respondents were then asked which of the following views was closest to
their own: (1) Canada should accept and accommodate traditional beliefs about the rights and roles of women; (2) immigrant and ethnic minorities should adapt to mainstream Canadian beliefs about the rights and role of women. Only 13% chose the first statement and 81% the second.

- In 2003, 45% of respondents to the Portraits of Canada survey agreed that all or many land claims by Aboriginal people are valid; 49% indicated that few or none were valid […].
- In 2003, 74% of respondents to the New Canada survey agreed there is still a lot of racism left in Canada […]. (p. 10)

Again these are different cross sections of public opinion and all of them are very recent (from 2003 onward) and I have no comment to add except for the survey on women’s rights and role. In that question, the terms “traditional” and “mainstream” are taken for granted as if everybody knows what these terms mean and there is no disagreement about them.

**How Do Canadian Schools Treat Immigrant Children?**

Davies and Guppy (1998) examine “the evidence and reasoning that underpin claims of institutional racism in Canadian education” (p. 133). In this examination, first, they cite attainment studies in Canada in the 1980s and claim that patterns of attainment found in the research “are in direct contrast to those assumed by many scholars”. By presenting their own analysis of 1991 census data, Davies and Guppy (1998) claim that there is overwhelming evidence that racial minorities as a whole (i.e., both foreign- and native-born) “have attainment that are superior to Whites and to the Canadian born. Using a variety of measures, no case can be made for claims of across-the-board discrimination” (p. 139). They believe that the increasing “accusations of racism in Canada” and the gained currency of “the concept of institutional racism” (p. 132) lack supporting evidence because “none of these authors refer to published statistics on educational achievement” (p. 133).
Since for Davies and Guppy (1998), “racism has been historically understood as an attribute of individuals” (p. 131), they seem surprised by the very term “institutional racism” and ask “how can an institution, as opposed to a living, breathing person, be racist?” Their answer is: “to some degree, this trend reflects a change in the standard of what is racist” (p. 132). In their view, claims about the White, Judeo-Christian, male culture of schools in Canada are mere accusations on shaky grounds. They suggest that “many readers may find it difficult to see just how the teaching of Grade 12 physics, or Grade 2 phonics, is “White” or “Christian” in essence […]. Canadian schools, like schools elsewhere, are constantly influenced by transnational trends in education” (p.141). They suggest that practices in Canadian schools during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century show “racial minorities experienced profound dislocation through schooling” (p. 132, emphasis added).

In reflecting on Davies and Guppy’s (1998) “examination”, I find that the most significant feature of their analysis is their limited view of racism, as evident from tying racism with individuals rather than non-living and non-breathing institutions. Even in the case of the bad old days, they prefer the euphemism of “dislocation” because they see the roots of those experiences in “expressions of bigotry from teachers and fellow students, though not the same type of institutionalized “solution” by education authorities” (p. 132), as if they have not heard of Adolphus Egerton Ryerson, the architect of modern education in Ontario. Ryerson understood schooling for persons of Aboriginal origins as “not to contemplate anything more in respect to intellectual training than to give a plain English education adapted to the working farmer and mechanic” (cited in Milloy, 1999, p. 16). The second issue, in my view, is their limited understanding of education as
evident from their lumping of the whole experience of students into a narrow definition of achievement and using it as a measuring stick for a very complex concept of racism in schools. Education outcomes of immigrant children is an under-researched area and factors such as parents’ socioeconomic status, ethnicity, self-concept, gender, subject matter, students’ cultural characteristics, school characteristics, and achievement motivation influence these outcomes (Mia, 2003). Reitz and Banerjee (2007) remind us that “it is important to distinguish descriptive findings on educational attainments from findings that bear on equality of opportunity in the school system” (p. 503). For example, Mia’s recent analysis of Canadian students’ achievement does not support Davies and Guppy’s study (1998).

As a reader, it was not difficult for me to understand how a Grade 12 physics course could be White or Christian; rather it struck me when I read sociologists, who know much more than I about the sociology of knowledge, holding such views about the neutrality and universality of school knowledge. Furthermore, I have a problem with the way Davies and Guppy label others’ experiences, literally “others”, as “subjective feelings”, that “ought to be verified with objective measures” (p. 134), especially when these measures are solely attainment studies. Finally, Davies and Guppy suggest that “crucial sources” of disparity issues raised at schools are “particular class and socio-economic status” (p.145) rather than race. However, they forget the racialized nature of poverty in Canada (see for example, Nelson & Nelson, 2004; Wallis & Kwok, 2008).

From a perspective contrary to that of Davies and Guppy (1998), Henry, Tator, Mattis, and Rees (2000) reviewed the research on racism in Canadian education. For them, the manifestations of racism in the educational system are as follows
• Racially biased attitudes and practices of teachers and administrators
• Eurocentric curriculum
• Racial harassment and racial incidents
• Streaming of minority students (specially Blacks) into non-academic programs
• Assimilation culture of school
• Lack of representation
• Devaluing the role and participation of parents and the community (p. 234)

They discuss each of these issues and cite from studies which have investigated them.

However, while the chapter gives a very useful and concise sketch of how racism is operationalized in Canadian schools, one cannot draw categorical conclusions about racism and schools. The situation is different across provinces, cities, and schools and not enough data exist to investigate where each of these elements may or may not be present in a single school board. However, Henry et al. (2000) remind us not to be naïve about “our multiculturalism” and celebration of diversity because “racist beliefs and practices, although widespread and persistent” (p. 1), are often invisible and the stories of those who suffer from racism are not heard.

In order to better understand these conflicting views, Reitz and Banerjee (2007) suggest looking at the perceptions of racial prejudice and discrimination. They claim that such perceptions are “fairly widespread” (p. 496) within certain minority groups. They refer to the *Ethnic Diversity Survey* (EDS) conducted in 2002 which included reports of personal experiences of ethnic discrimination. In that survey, 35.9 percent of minority people reported such an experience, compared to 10.6 percent of White respondents.

Reitz and Banerjee argue that while the EDS does not show the perception of discrimination against groups, “the earlier surveys indicate individuals are more likely to perceive discrimination against their group as a whole than against themselves personally” (p. 497). Furthermore, they suggest that the racial divide on the significance
of discrimination is even more than the widening racial gap on the perception of discrimination. I cannot agree more with their position that the perception of racial discrimination as insignificant contributes to the belief that the existing policies are adequate and do not need any improvement.

As for evidence of discrimination against racial minority immigrants, Reitz and Banerjee (2007) suggest that while “the available research confirms that racial discrimination exists, it allows for divergent interpretation of its significance” (p. 500). In the case of immigrant children, they believe “overall, the education levels of the racial minority second generation in Canada are fairly high […] despite complaints of cultural and racial bias in Canadian schools” (p. 503, emphasis added).

The fact of the aforementioned racial divide over the existence of ethnic discrimination in Canada raises some questions for me. For example, on what basis have these perceptions about discrimination been formed? Is it imagination, dreaming, conspiracy theory, ill-feeling? What experiences usually form the basis of these perceptions? Are immigrants from European countries and their cultures treated and perceived the same as those from the developing and Muslim countries? Is there a hierarchy of cultures among immigrants? If yes, does this hierarchy have any correspondence to the vertical mosaic? For example, while the average percentage of perceived discrimination among people who are visible minorities in the EDS was 35.9 percent, the number for Blacks was 49.6 percent and the number was greater among children than adults (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). Why do we hear complaints of cultural bias rather than evidence from research? Why do we choose such a word with all its negative connotations? These are not easy questions. However, I feel part of the answers
are reflected in the fact that the term “visible minority” is used and promoted as a euphemism for “racial minority.” In other words, I feel it is not acceptable or politically correct.

There is one final point about perceiving discrimination. Matthews’ (2006) analysis of narratives of East and Central African Asian Ismailis in Québec shows that psychological theories are only starting points for understanding perceived discrimination. However, immigrants’ beliefs about Canada as a tolerant society, free of colonial baggage, and characterized by multiculturalism, especially when compared with their country of origin, are important in judgement about incidents. For example, “perceiving events as discriminatory is less likely when conditions in the country of emigration are worse than those faced in the host society” (p. 382). Matthews’ data suggest “a strong propensity not to perceive incidents as discriminatory”. She concludes, soundly in my view, that “If this is the case, surveys are necessarily underestimating the prevalence of discrimination in Canada” (p. 384).

**Acculturation and Schools**

Schools and educational settings are the major milieus of acculturation for most immigrant children and strong representatives of the new culture to them and their families (Vedder & Horenczyk, 2006). What happens to immigrant children in schools has been explained, elaborately in my view, by Ashworth (1975):

An immigrant child has all the needs of a Canadian-born child, the need for love and protection, the need for increasing independence, the need for friendship and peer acceptance. When the conflict between the values of home and school cannot be resolved or when the parents are overwhelmed by our affluent, materialistic society, the immigrant child suffers. (p.72)
Acculturation in schools may be categorized as “situational acculturation” which, according to Trimble (2003), refers to “the way situations shape and determine behavior, cognition, and affect of acculturating individuals” (p. 10). For Berry (2006a), the institutional level, along with national and individual levels, constitute the three levels of acculturation in terms of the locus. Educational systems, Berry suggests, like health systems, governmental agencies, and workplaces, are an institutional locus of acculturation.

From their review of research on the acculturation of children, Vedder and Horenczyk (2006) conclude that peer relationships, the experience of competence (as opposed to its denial) especially in language, autonomy, and the broader social factors (such as discrimination and group-based inequalities) are the major components of acculturation in schools. This section reviews the research on acculturation of students with a major focus on the Canadian context. Since the present study does not address the question of immigrant students’ achievement, all studies on the relationship between acculturation and achievement were excluded from this review; so were the studies on the acculturation traits of adults. The reviewed studies are presented chronologically below.

Hobart (1968) provided an insightful ethnographic report from a school in the Mackenzie District of the Canadian Arctic “which in 1964 was attended by 44 percent of all Eskimo children in the district” (p. 102). He describes how in the process of building the schools, every voice was heard except that of the Eskimo. The consequences of this educational system have been described by Hobart as follows:

The children early lose their appreciation of their parents, their home communities, and the way of life that is lived there, and indeed come to disdain all of these. Obviously it is the world and knowledge of the white man which is important, since this is all that is taught to them in school, and equally obviously
since their parents and neighbors know little or nothing of these they are not
worthy of respect. (p. 103)

Gordon-Popatia (1994) investigated multiculturalism in Canada by focusing on
ethnic identity, social integration, and intergroup relations. Her qualitative study was
based on focus group discussion with adolescents from Latin America, China, Vietnam,
and South Asia. She discussed each of these areas with each ethnic group and explored
comparisons and commonalities. In her analysis on integration, Gordon-Popatia
identified

both the difficulties and challenges, and the potentials for growth and successful
accommodation of their cultural background and experiences. Common
experiences of cultural adaptation included: feelings of helplessness and
hopelessness due to lack of English language; perceived differences in social
relationships and adaptations to Canadian schooling. Some groups also mentioned
forming certain interpretations and perceptions of the nature of Canadian society.
(p. 275)

When reading Gordon-Popatia, I want to learn more about the experiences of her
participants. Unfortunately, choosing three vast areas of focus prevented her from
addressing each of them adequately. Undertaking the task of elaboration on history,
philosophy, implementation of multiculturalism, as well as defending multiculturalism
against all its critiques, distracted her from focusing on her data adequately, I believe.

Wang’s (1999) study on experiences of recent Chinese immigrant children in
public elementary schools of Honolulu has insightful offerings for Canadian schools
where many Chinese students attend. Wang combines case studies of four students with
surveys and interviews of parents for data collection. The study concludes that Chinese
students are faced with on-going challenges and barriers in order to adjust to the new life
style, language, and culture. First, with the new American life-style and parents’
preoccupation with survival in the new society, parents’ capacity and availability to provide support for their children decreases. This leaves children with less attention and their parents with a sense of frustration and guilt. Sending children back to China, Wang contends, is a common solution sought by parents. Language is another barrier for Chinese students born outside of the US. They are under the pressure of learning a new language and school lessons simultaneously. Their language not only influences their learning and attainment but also prevents them from fully socializing and leads to lower self-esteem and lower motivation for studying.

Bewilderment with the new school system was another issue for Chinese students especially those who came to America in higher grades. This was the result of perceived unfair treatment and being considered second-class students. Additionally, misconceptions about the American school system, which they think is too easy and includes too much fun, led some Chinese students not to take their teachers seriously. For these students, it was not easy to adjust to American classrooms which, unlike Chinese classrooms, were not teacher-centered and did not rely on memorization. To all these experiences one should add the constant pressure of parents’ high expectations that their children should be “all-As”. These parents neglect of students’ mental health and lack of communication with schools further complicated the situation.

Wang (1999) concludes:

In helping their children adapt to and succeed at school, recent Chinese immigrant parents are helping them move towards the gradual process of their children's Americanization, which, in turn, results in challenges/difficulties, or, inability, for the parents to accommodate their children's greater degree of school adaptation and Americanization. (p. 175)
In her study of Chinese children's integration into elementary schools in Quebec, Zbongxiao (2002) interviewed 10 Chinese students (aged between 7 and 10) from one Chinese parochial Saturday school and one French public school in Montreal, 10 parents from these two schools and 4 teachers from the French public school. She found conflicts between Chinese culture at home and school culture was puzzling for students. At home parents wanted to maintain authority, asked for obedience, and children did not have freedom of speech and right of privacy. On the other hand, school norms promoted “independence, freedom of speech and the pursuit of their own right to be creative. School teaches children not only to respect but also to question. Not only to obey but also to challenge” (p. 93). This resultant conflict, Zbongxiao argued, creates a dual personality in students. They will grow up with psychological problems or become totally silent and withdrawn. These phenomena may cause serious damage to their future lives and even careers. The need to negotiate their way through these cultural and normative boundaries without the understanding of their parents, put them at risk. (p. 93)

Furthermore, Zbongxiao found discrepancies between parents’ high expectations and teachers’ generalized expectations, something that confuses students. These discrepancies were mainly due to lack of communication between Canadian teachers and Chinese students and parents.

Mody’s (2005) ethnography on the development of cultural identity among Asian kindergarten students in New Jersey puts emphasis on the role of kindergarten as the first social milieu where immigrant children experience the transition between the home and public spheres. She spent one school year in kindergarten classrooms of two different public schools with high Asian Indian population (one third) in the same city. The schools “were relatively more suburban than urban […]; one in an area where more
families were described as working class and transient and one in an area where more families were described as professional middle-class” (p. 5). While she describes in detail how everyday talk and play put their fingerprints on the process of identity formation, by comparing the practices in two schools, Mody finds strongly contrasting experiences.

Among her findings, she refers to different forms of cultural recognition: “harmonious interactions based on familiar, culturally congruent play styles and discordant interactions based on unfamiliar, abrasive cultural encounters” (p. 208). The former fostered among the Asian Indian students strongly bonded relationships exemplified by feelings of safety, shared intimacy, and expressive congruence. The latter, however, created intentional forms of avoidance, including silence, and situations that led to disciplinary measures.

Commenting on Mody’s work, Brown (2005) has mentioned two major points. First Brown criticizes Mody for using a wide range of theoretical perspectives. Second, the unanswered questions, for Brown, are as follows

To what extent did larger socio-historical discourses of normality and […] “Whiteness” perhaps unwittingly frame the interactions of teachers and students […]? Did children (and even the teacher) respond to each other in ways that mirrored normalizing social practices sanctioned in larger societal contexts? (p. 33)

Shedding light onto the under-researched area of the life of refugee students in Canada, Baffoe’s (2006) ethnography investigated the social integration and educational experiences of immigrant and refugee youth in a Québec educational context. His data came from participant observation in adult high school as well as from interviews with ten teenage students, parents, community leaders, and teachers. He concluded that in the
context of his study, school embodied “the principal acculturation institution” (p. 175) affecting the lives of participants. He observed that “for most of the youth participants […], the school offered little or no avenues for extracurricular or sporting activities geared towards having fun” (p. 176). Rather, those activities were carried out in their communities and neighbourhoods and this re-enforced their socialization with peers from their own ethnic background. Also, “the role and impact of race and racism in the lives of these youth in the schools” (p. 176, emphasis in the original) was found critically important for the participants. On the positive side, from Baffoe’s study, it became evident “that culturally-responsive pedagogy and culturally-competent and responsive teachers can help to mitigate cultural differences in the schools as well as assist in the positive learning outcomes for new immigrant youth” (p. 177). Baffoe acknowledges that it is very difficult to create a sense of trust in refugee participants and some of them did not open up to him. The sense of insecurity caused by suffering and trauma of refugees is hard to overcome.

In a recent study, Wolfgang and Josefowitz (2007) examined the value differences between Chinese immigrants and Canadian-born students from non-Chinese backgrounds as well as the amount and type of attitude change by these immigrant students. The sample of their study consisted of 400 high school students in lower middle class areas of the Greater Toronto Area. Their questionnaire included a 40 item scale in five areas of family, sex and marriage, non-verbal communication, education, and personal values. On the question of difference between the values of Chinese immigrant students and their Canadian-born counterparts, they found similarity between their values in 70% of the items. They also found that the longer the immigrant students stayed in Canada, the more
they accepted Canadian values of individualism while becoming more traditional in family values.

The interesting point of this study for me is how authors explain their first finding on the similarity of values between two groups. This similarity contradicts most previous studies which compared value differences between immigrants and their Canadian-born counterparts. Wolfgang and Josefowitz (2007) suggest that the reason should be sought in the fact that the majority of the Chinese students in their sample were from Hong Kong, a Western industrialized city-state where people have values similar to those of Western people. Another factor, they argue, goes back to the similarity of social class background between Chinese and Canadian samples. They suggest that social class may be considered as “the most important factor in determining the endorsement of modern attitudes” (p. 133). This warns us against making categorical assumptions about minority groups from a certain ethnic background.

Have All Minority Students the Same Status?

As mentioned earlier, minority groups are not just minority in terms of numbers, rather it is their position in power relationships that makes them vulnerable. However, there is a hierarchy among visible minorities based on their social class, gender, the country of origin, and legal status, among other factors. For example, refugee students face additional problems in adjusting to the new environment (Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Harkins’ (1998) study is a good example of these differences. Harkins conducted an ethnography on the factors influencing the acculturation process of four elementary Japanese students living in the US with their parents who were on international job-related trips. She identified nine factors that contributed to the process of acculturation of
these students. The most important were students’ personality (being introvert or extrovert) and their receptive attitude toward the new culture. The factors of moderate importance were mothers’ role, educational expectations, family value of education, and artistic endeavours. Finally the least important were length of residency, language acquisition, and clothing. She mentions that sojourners do not assimilate due to their temporary status in the host country.

Harkins’ (1998) findings are interesting because some of them contrast with most previous studies in the area of acculturation. For example, while language acquisition is among the most important factors for acculturation of immigrant students (Trueba, 1991), for her participants, this was the least important. This could well be attributed to the situation of her participants: “unlike other immigrants who come to stay, [these students] know that they will return to Japan” (p. 2). Furthermore, these students were “returnee children of Japanese business persons on overseas assignments” (p. 3). The sense of security, self-confidence, financial ease, and finally affiliation with a country which is a member of The Group of Eight (G8) put these students in a situation which is different from that of many immigrant or refugee students.

Section II: Multicultural Education

Research on Multicultural Education

In the area of multicultural education, research has not kept pace with the debate or rhetoric (Grant & Millar, 1992). Speaking from an American perspective, Grant and Millar mentioned several reasons as barriers to multicultural research in the US including faculty demographics (93 percent white and 70 percent male), lack of clarity in the meaning of multicultural education, lack of funding, ethnocentrism and elitism,
ghettoization of researchers in the area, lack of formal and informal forums for socialization in the area, and lack of leadership by scholars of color. There is no evidence that the situation is very different in Canada. *The Handbook of Research on Multiculturalism* (Banks & Banks, 2004) which synthesizes the research in the United States, has no Canadian counterpart. Even when the first edition of the book included a chapter on multicultural education in Canada, it addressed the “historical development and current status” rather than reporting studies in the area (Moodley, 1995).

Before focusing on specific areas of research on minority students’ education in Canadian schools, I would like to mention Churchill’s (1983) study which compared the social equality for minorities across 15 countries: Australia, Canada (Ontario), Denmark, England and Wales, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States. Minority people in these countries, Churchill acknowledged, differ vastly in terms of population, recency of settlement, concentration in certain areas, and geographic isolation or its lack thereof. Minorities also differ in the ways they relate to each other, to their culture and language, and to the majority population.

By reviewing polices and practices in these countries, Churchill (1983) concluded that the combinations of all arrangements provided by governments did not “provide universal access to minimum standards of service, particularly for indigenous people and new minorities” (p. 264). While this conclusion by itself is not new nor surprising, she had an insightful observation about the relation between the way different societies define social equality for minorities on one side and the provisions provided by these societies for education of minorities (in terms of governance, organization, and financing) on the
other. She argues that definitions of social equality/opportunity were changing from the early 1960s across a spectrum. According to Churchill (1983),

> At the one end is the definition saying that minority social groups will be accepted into full social participation after their language and culture, at least in the conduct of community life, will have been replaced by that of the majority. At the other end is the definition saying that equality consists in the preservation of minority languages and the cultures whose social status would be equal to that of the majority. (p. 233)

She concludes from her study that “the apparent position of various minorities in fifteen industrialised countries along a line between these two definitions, is related to the provision of minority education” (p. 233). This confirms the point earlier made in chapter two about the significant role of state policies as official narratives of multiculturalism.

**General Findings about Multicultural Education in Canada**

At the request of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, Corson (1998) prepared a discussion paper to review and synthesize the Canadian research in the areas of diversity and equity in order to guide the Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda. His third research question, on reducing “disparities in access to academic literacy among different social, cultural, and regional groups” (p. 15), and its findings are the most relevant to the present study. Corson identifies the following themes in response to this question: unfair and culturally biased assessment practices; insufficiently funded second language programs; lack of support for students’ first language in form of bilingual immersion education (except in Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan); lack of support for heritage languages; stereotypes in textbooks and classrooms, bias against different discourse norms; bias against non-standard language varieties; and racial bias. Ironically, none of these issues belong exclusively to literacy. I am not aware of any Pan-Canadian research which has attempted to address these issues systematically since then.
Students’ Narratives

Feuerverger and Richards’s (2007) interview study provides a glimpse of some immigrant students’ experiences from an inner-city high school in Toronto where 40 different languages were spoken. The goal of their study was to illustrate and explain “the complex notion of ‘outsiderness’ in its many manifestations; to recognize the tensions and dilemmas, and also the strength and resilience” (p. 557). They found that “frequently, feelings of confusion, shock, anger and panic, and shame in negotiating two or more cultures culminated in an overwhelming feeling of despair” (p. 563). However, their perceptions of being situated as the ‘other’ are not homogeneous but rather multi-layered. Sometimes immigrant students feel that their identities are rejected by both Canadian and home communities; other times, they are able to create a space where their multiple identities are accepted and respected. Sometimes their own prior lived experiences of conflict and war create negative stereotypes about various ethnic groups and religions, which they bring into the Canadian classroom. All these factors affect how they view their world. (pp. 571-572)

Few people would disagree with Feuerverger and Richards’s view that these students’ continuous attempts “to reconstruct the solitary spaces of ‘in-betweeness’ into more robust versions of their cultural selves, in whichever ways were possible”, is heartening. However, as they have noticed themselves, these “whichever possible ways” are sometimes very pricy, if one can ever put a price tag on losing language and culture. For example, they mention “an assimilationist interaction” from a fifteen-year-old boy who after being ridiculed tried to learn English and change his situation. The boy realizes that categorical discrimination exists toward immigrants, but he feels that it has no relevance for him as a member of that category because he wishes to transcend it. The perception is that in order to re-socialize himself, he must acquire the correct traits and dispositions of a “true Canadian,” and thus his outsider status will “disappear.” (p. 565)
I wonder if this boy can ever become a “true Canadian”, no matter what it means. Also, it seems that the authors themselves do not believe that his outsidedness will ever disappear. Therefore, can we consider this interaction, which Feuerverger and Richards perceive as not necessarily psychologically healthy, as a “solution”? The boy himself acknowledges that his parents are concerned about him forgetting his native language and home country.

Furthermore, not all participants were able in all situations to “easily” melt into the dominant culture. However, some examples of in-between-ness are problematic to me. One example is the student who “‘becomes more Bulgarian at home’ and then ‘becomes more Canadian at school’” (p. 566). One may argue that both these “choices” imply conformity to the authority of parents and the culture of school. Finally, one should not forget that this is the situation in Toronto which is considered “a very desirable destination in the global community in terms of immigration and resettlement” (p. 555).

**Multicultural Education and Language**

Due to the central role of language in the acculturation process of minority students, language education is among the most important components of multicultural education and it deserves more attention. Research on very young ESL students has traditionally been focused on method issues and studies from sociocultural/critical perspectives are few (Iannacci, 2006; Toohey, 2000). An exemplary exception is Iannacci’s year-long ethnography in two kindergarten and two grade one Canadian classrooms. He has investigated the cultural and linguistic acculturation of ESL students. His analysis shows how culturally-specific literacy practices act as barriers for ESL...
students. Additionally, and in my view more importantly, he illustrates how students are engaged in processes through which they mirror their classmates, feign competency and comprehension and gain teacher approval at the expense and suppression of their cultural/religious backgrounds. [...] Constructions of childhood experiences and interests reflective of the dominant culture were reinforced and limited the potential for a culturally relevant and responsive literacy curriculum. Additionally, alternative conceptualizations of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ were not questioned or developed during these specific events since mainstream cultural celebrations associated with dominant notions of childhood were taken for granted and reproduced. (p. 66)

**Relation between First language and Second Language.** Failure to understand the relationship between literacy and language development of English language learners and their first language and to link these two, and teachers’ lack of interest in or awareness of maintaining students’ first language, are among the major problems of second language teaching (Ortega, 1999). Research has documented positive academic and verbal benefits of using heritage language for English-language students in elementary schools (Danesi, 1995).

The fact that skills developed in one language are automatically transferred into the second language is well documented; Cummins (1991b) has theorized it under the framework of interdependency theory (see also Cummins & Danesi, 1990). Cummins’ findings have not been unchallenged, (see for example Porter, 1990), but there have been convincing rebuttals to these challenges (Cummins, 1991a; Danesi, 1996; Danesi & De Sousa, 1995). Danesi (1996) suggests that bilingual education of immigrant students, in their own language and the official language, goes beyond linguistic and academic benefits and helps affective components of personality function properly “by becoming comfortable with their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds at school” (p. 124).

*Language-as-problem* manifests itself in conventional wisdom which connects non-English language heritage and circumstantial bilingualism with social problems, [...]. Language-as-right orientation, […], capitalizes on the natural and legal right for minority groups to fight discrimination on the basis of language and finds its strongest articulation in advocacy for bilingual education. Finally, *language-as-resource* acknowledges the value of knowledge and competence in languages in […] our modern multicultural world. (Ortega, 1999, p. 23)

Ortega claims that foreign language teaching is typically associated with the perspective of language-as-resource. However, drawing on ample evidence from research, she notices a double standard here that for the majority students, bilingualism is seen as an economic resource, and they are not expected to develop proficiency for their use of language. On the other hand, bilingualism for immigrants is presented as a problem. She argues that they “are compelled to develop native-like proficiency in the majority language in very limited periods of time and often at the expense of their first language development” (p. 24).

**Language and Parental Involvement.** Parental involvement in students’ schooling and how this involvement may contribute to children’s achievement at school is fairly well researched. Ladky and Peterson (2008) mention several studies in this area. They also conclude from other studies that “mother tongue, socio-economic status, culture, and education levels influence parents’ readiness to engage in home-school partnerships, as well as the roles they are able to play in such partnerships” (p. 82). Cummins (2000) suggests that if ability to speak English and the knowledge of North American cultural conventions are made prerequisites for ‘parental involvement,’ then many of
those parents will be defined as apathetic and incompetent and will play out their
pre-ordained role of non-involvement. (p. 8)

**What Should ESL Teachers Know?** Jong and Harper (2008) elaborate on the
knowledge and skills that are specific to English Language Learners (ELLs). They argue
that while many teaching strategies for diverse students may work with ELLs, these
students’ needs go much beyond those strategies or “just good teaching”. ELLs’ need to
master the language skills prevents them from fully participating in other subject areas.
Also, they note that acquisition processes of ELLs are different from those of native
speakers; i.e., simply interacting with native speakers and exposure to the language are
not sufficient for English language acquisition of these students.

However these needs and differences are not reflected in “good teaching” as
promoted in the teacher education programs. Neither are common monolingual
assumptions examined. According to Verplaetse and Migliacci (2008), ESL teachers need
to know that it takes one to two years to learn basic interpersonal language skills and five
to ten years to develop cognitive academic language proficiency. The commonsense
notion of the more English they have the sooner they will learn English is false for ELLs.
Teachers should know the importance of allowing students to use their first language for
the development of the second language.

Teaching ESL is not all about language. Diaz-Rico (1998) calls for antiracism
education in the preparation of ESL teachers because, with all their good intentions, they
come to the profession from middle-class backgrounds with racial and class prejudices
which are mostly unexamined and often denied.
Summary

This chapter reviewed the research on acculturation with a focus on acculturation of immigrant students in Canadian schools. Next, it reviewed selected aspects of the research on multicultural education in Canada with special attention to language education of minority students. One can conclude from this review that acculturation is complex, multi-layered, non-linear, and very context-based with issues of race/ethnicity and social class at the heart of it. After more than three decades, Ramcharan’s (1975) “crucial question” is still on the table for educators. He asked, “How far and at what pace can they [i.e., teachers] expect the immigrant to adapt to his new school and his new curriculum” (p. 105)?

This review revealed that, while there has been vast research on national and individual levels of acculturation, few studies have focused on acculturation at the institutional level. For young immigrant children, school is the major and often the sole environment of contact with the new culture. My research exploring the role of school in the process of acculturation of young children is a contribution to filling the existing gap in this research. While Ramcharan’s (1975) question requires philosophication of aims and limits of immigrant students’ education, this study seeks a descriptive answer of the existing limits.

The next chapter will examine the theoretical underpinnings of acculturation and culture.
CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical perspectives, or conceptual frameworks, according to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), are those loosely interrelated sets of assumptions, concepts, and propositions that constitute a view that “may structure strongly the questions a researcher asks and the means chosen to answer them” (p.37). It guides researchers in framing their project, determining what kinds of investigations are appropriate, and shaping their analysis. It is with the help of theory that we can work through the inconsistencies that we find in our data. Theories are in turn in/formed and expanded by these inconsistencies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

The question then, is which theories will lead me through my data analysis? Recalling from Chapter One, that my research question was: What shapes the processes of acculturation of immigrant elementary students? Chapter Two focused on theories of multicultural education in Canada which is the official context of schooling in Canada. But what do we know about the nature of interactions of multicultural societies with their culturally different immigrants? What happens when two different cultures come into direct contact with each other? This chapter will seek possible theoretical answers to these questions. It will first discuss acculturation, then the subject of acculturation, i.e., culture.

Defining Acculturation

In a classic definition, Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) view acculturation consisting of “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original
culture patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149). They emphasize that this definition assumes acculturation is only one aspect of culture change and is different from assimilation which might be considered as a phase of acculturation; i.e., there are alternative options. This emphasis is important because many used and others continue to use acculturation and assimilation interchangeably. For example, Kallen (1982), speaking about the era before the 1960s, noted “the public sector was envisaged as an Anglo or Franco cultural monolith, thus attainment of social positions within the sphere of secondary institutions would be predicated on required acculturation to prevailing Anglo or Franco norms and practices” (p. 53); most probably she meant assimilation.

In Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits’ (1936) definition, a continuous first-hand cultural contact is a key element of acculturation (Trimble, 2003). Types of cultural contact, and the context of this contact, therefore, shape the process of acculturation. The relative size of two groups, the in/significance of differences between two cultures, the voluntary/coercive nature of cultural exposures, the in/significance of social and political differences between two groups, and existence or lack thereof of political dominance are among the influencing factors of acculturation (Metianu, 2007, Redfield, Lincoln, & Herskovitz, 1936). The point about first-hand experience helps us distinguish acculturation from diffusion which is “the spread of culture traits”, present in the process of acculturation but frequently occurring without direct contact (Teske & Nelson, 1974). Also, Padilla and Perez (2003) suggest that “Redfield et al. held that acculturation did not imply that assimilation would ensue automatically” (p. 37).

Later, the Social Science Research Council (1954) defined acculturation as

Culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct cultural
transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modification induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. (p. 974)

In this definition, two key elements of change and adaptation are added to cultural contacts (Trimble, 2003). Furthermore, Berry (2005) notices that this second formulation implies that change is indirect, takes time, and it may not inevitably be towards a similarity with the dominant culture. It was Theodore Graves who in 1967 introduced acculturation at an individual level and coined psychological acculturation which according to Berry (2005), refers to changes in an individual who is “a participant in a culture contact situation, being influenced both directly by the external culture, and by the changing culture of which the individual is a member” (p. 701). Keeping the distinction between group and individual acculturation is important since there are huge psychological differences among individuals who live in the same conditions (Berry, 2005). At the individual level, changes may be in the areas of identity, values, attitudes, and behaviour while at group level, changes may influence the social structure, the economic base, or political organization of the group. Also, these changes are not limited to cultural changes; rather, they can be physical, social, economic, and political (Sam, 2006). With these descriptions, individual acculturation is very close to learning or at least learning a second culture.

Among all these changes, the change in values has been discussed most. Teske and Nelson (1974), for example, suggest that “at the group level of analysis the evidence would suggest that although acculturation may provide for a change in value orientation, and even adoption of values, this is not a necessary condition for acculturation to exist” (p. 356, emphasis in the original]. They notice that even when certain cultural elements
are adopted by a group, they are adapted and may acquire new meaning in the culture of that group.

Finally, one should note that intercultural changes such as urbanization are not considered acculturative; acculturation only refers to cross-cultural changes (Barnett, Broom, Siegel, Vogt, & Watson, 1954).

**Acculturation and Power Relationship between Contacting Groups**

As Vijver and Phalet (2004) notice, implicit in these definitions is an assumption about the equal resources of the groups that come into contact. However, for immigrants, often times this is not the case and they are generally in lower socio-economic status than their native counterparts. This unbalanced power relationship between immigrants and people of the host country limit immigrant choices of socialization and acculturation. On the other hand, the host country, like the immigrant population, is never monolithic and hierarchically structured in terms of social class, gender, cultural capital, and social capital among other things; therefore, any definition or model of acculturation must be contextualized in this complex power relationship.

The issue of power relationship in acculturation was first emphasized by Teske and Nelson (1974). Dominance of one cultural group over another one, Teske and Nelson argue, is an important factor which influences the degree and direction of acculturation in favour of the dominant group. They are also clear that by dominance, they refer to a power imbalance and not necessarily numerical superiority. They quote from Dohrenwend and Smith (1962) that “the relative strengths of any two cultural systems in contact, then, can be understood in terms of the conditions of admission to its various orders of structured activities which each can impose upon the other” (p. 31).
A History of Acculturation

Acculturation is a history-old experience; Rudmin (2003) cites studies which trace the roots of acculturation to 2037 BC among the Sumerian rulers of Mesopotamia or to the second millennium BC in the Egyptian empire. He follows the theories of acculturation in Western thought from Plato to DeTocqueville and its first use in the English language in 1880. Then, he reviews the field of psychology in the US from the introduction of the concept of acculturation in 1904 by G. Stanley Hall who talked about the culture acquisition of Native people and continues to the development of the first full psychological theory of acculturation in 1918 by social psychologists, Thomas and Znaniecki. Rudmin (2003) claims that,

Despite the early interest in the acculturation of the dominant society to the minority group, and despite the early arguments that acculturation takes place in the presence of hostile attitudes, most acculturation researchers have presumed, […], that the minority group acculturates to the majority, that the minority group’s positive attitudes largely determine acculturation, and that the minority can suffer pathologies arising from acculturation. (p. 12)

Salant and Lauderdale (2003) notice that in 1964, Milton Gordon developed a sociological theory of assimilation in his book Assimilation in American life: The role of race, religion, and national origins. This theory, they argue, was focused on the integration of immigrants in the host society and “emphasized the importance of social structures by distinguishing between cultural or behavioral assimilation (i.e., acculturation) and social structural or institutional assimilation” (p. 72). Unlike Rudmin (2003), Salant and Lauderdale suggest that the focus on immigrants’ experiences reflects the influence of Gordon’s work. Furthermore, they indicate that research in cultural psychology has “focused on quantification through psychometric scales […] and on description of individual-level changes with acculturation” (p.72). Gordon’s (1964)
model was among the most influential unidimensional models of acculturation which were critically scrutinized in recent decades for being too linear and mainly reflecting the experiences of European immigrants (Hwang & He, 1999; Vijver & Phalet, 2004,).

According to Rudmin (2003), since 1918 researchers have developed different typologies of acculturation of which he provides a chronological list of 68. He suggests that the “history of acculturation typologies stops at 1984, when Berry and his associates stabilized their taxonomy” (p. 12).

Sam (2006) noted that acculturation first was used among anthropologists and sociologists. He acknowledged that from the early days, acculturation and assimilation have been used synonymously or as sub-sets of each other; however while sociologists preferred assimilation, anthropologists tended towards acculturation. Evidence for Sam’s claim can be seen in Kate (1926), who argues

In many minds the term 'assimilation' is confused with amalgamation. Does the former necessarily imply inter-marriage — the fusion of races? Is not assimilation rather the incorporating into our national life of all peoples within our borders for their common well being? Is it not the working together side by side for the common advancement, each race contributing something of value and so slowly but surely evolving a new people enriched by the diversity of its origin? (p. 135, cited in Day, 2000)

**Two Perspectives on Acculturation**

The aforementioned confused thinking about assimilation and acculturation as synonyms reflects the fundamental issue of directionality; i.e., is the change in acculturation unidirectional or bidirectional? The answer to this question brings two different perspectives (Sam, 2006). Some researchers (e.g., Gordon, 1964) have suggested that acculturation is unidirectional and only one group moves towards and wants to be like another group, which is supposed to be “stationary.” Another view (e.g.,
Teske & Nelson, 1974) thinks of acculturation as a bidirectional process through which both groups can change though not necessarily towards a mid-point (Sam, 2006).

Gutierrez’s (2004) view on this issue is somewhat different from most other researchers and worth mentioning. He claims that historically, social scientists have been talking about the process of transculturation for describing cultural mixing of people where cultures resided side by side. It was a process of give and take and sharing life and love. He quotes the definition of transculturation from Spitta (1995) as ‘the complex processes of adjustment and recreation — cultural, literary, linguistic, and personal — that allow for new, vital, and viable configurations to arise out of the clash of cultures and violence of colonial and neo-colonial appropriations” (p. 2). Gutierrez (2004) suggests that with the development of a domination/subordination relationship and its evolution to a racial/ethnic/national divide, the transculturation process transformed to the one way process of acculturation. For more on different views on directionality, one can see Nguyen, Messé, and Stollak (1999).

Closely tied with directionality is another fundamental question on dimensionality of acculturation; that is, does acquiring new cultural attributes necessarily imply losing one’s original cultural attributes or identity? Sam (2006) suggests that thinking of cultures as mutually exclusive leads one to consider that maintaining two cultures is psychologically problematic. This unidimensional position, in his view, is in line with an assimilative assumption about acculturation. In contrast, bidimensional (or multidimensional) views of acculturation suggest that identifying with or acquiring a new culture does not necessarily mean losing the original culture.
In a similar vein, summarizing the existing American perspectives on acculturation, Diller and Moule (2005) notice three general trends. One, a unidimensional view assumes that moving toward the dominant culture necessarily means giving up traditional ways. This notion, they believe, will lead to marginalization. Two, bidimensional or multidimensional views of acculturation accept the possibility of living and functioning effectively in two or more cultures. The third view assesses the impact of acculturation by finding out what has been gained and lost in the process of acculturation.

**Conceptualization of Acculturation**

There are several conceptual frameworks for acculturation and most of them focus on the acculturation process of groups rather than individuals. The research on acculturation, Ward (2006) suggests, “commonly examines changes in identity, attitudes, values and behaviors as a function of intercultural contact” (p. 244). Ward (2001) gives a useful and clear map of the theory and research on acculturation. She identifies three major approaches to acculturation: social identification, culture learning, and stress and coping. She elaborates on affective, behavioural, and cognitive differences of these approaches. The social identification approach is influenced by social cognition and “is concerned with the way people perceive and think about themselves and others, including how they process information about their own group […] and other groups” (pp. 412-413). This approach mainly addresses issues of defining, measuring, and predicting the state of acculturation based on certain aspects of cultural/ethnic identity. The roots of culture learning approach are in social and experimental psychology. It “highlights the social psychology of intercultural encounter and the processes involved in learning culture-specific skills” (p. 413). In this approach, culture-specific variables in the process
of adaptation are investigated. The third approach deals with “psychological models of stress and coping” in the study of cross-cultural transition and adaptation” (p. 413). It has a broad analytical framework and “incorporates both characteristics of the individual and characteristics of the situation that may facilitate or impede adjustment to a new cultural milieu” (p. 413). For another recent review of these frameworks, one can see Berry (2003).

All these conceptualizations address the differences in the acculturation processes of groups rather than individuals. Padilla and Perez (2003) claim that none of the major theories of acculturation take into consideration individual differences and personality characteristics that facilitate or retard acculturation. […] To date, no model has been advanced to explain how it is that individuals from the same educational, socioeconomic, generational, and familial backgrounds differ on willingness and competence to acculturate. Choice to acculturate may be related to personality characteristics such as assertiveness, likeability, sociability, extraversion, and ego control. Differences in attitude and risk taking and level of anxiety tolerance may also lead to differences in the acculturation process. (pp. 40-41)

**Acculturation Strategies or Attitudes (Berry’s Model)**

Groups and individuals undergo different experiences of acculturation depending on their engagement in and attitudes towards the host society. Also, the host societies show different degrees of acceptance and recognition of immigrants. In his conceptualization of acculturation strategies, Berry (2005) argues that responses to two basic issues can determine the acculturation strategies of ethnocultural groups. These issues are: To what degree minority groups are (un)willing, or think it is of value, to be in contact with people outside their group (acculturation behaviours)? To what degree minority groups are (un)willing, or think it is of value, to retain their heritage culture and identity (acculturation attitudes)? Berry (2005) emphasizes the distinction between these
two components. While these two questions are usually related, there is not a complete correspondence between them. Berry’s conceptualization is reproduced in Figure 1.

![Acculturation Strategies Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.** Acculturation strategies (Reproduced from Berry, 2005, p. 705)

Berry has shown attitudes and behaviours on the two basic issues along bipolar arrows. From the intersection of generally positive or negative to the above-mentioned answers, he defines four strategies at two different levels. From the minority groups’ point of view, the left sketch in Figure 1, when minority groups are unwilling to retain their culture and actively interact with other cultures, *assimilation* occurs. However, if they avoid interacting with other groups and are willing to retain their heritage culture, the *separation* strategy is defined. *Integration* is an alternative when there is both a willingness to retain the heritage culture and for interaction with other groups. Finally, *marginalization* is defined when there is little possibility in the heritage culture retention (e.g., due to enforced cultural loss) and interaction with other cultures (e.g., due to exclusion or discrimination).
In the sketch at the right in Figure 1, Berry has shown possible options from the perspective of the larger society which can constrain the choice of minority groups or enforce certain kinds of acculturation strategies. The acceptance of cultural diversity and allowing integration, the integrationist attitude, defines *multiculturalism* in contrast to the preference for assimilation; the assimilationist attitude, which defines a *melting pot* strategy. Enforcing or encouraging separation, the segregationist attitude, defines *segregation* while imposing marginalization; the exclusionist attitude, defines *exclusion*. Berry (1980) suggests that change for immigrants occurs at least at six areas: language, cognitive styles, personality, identity, attitudes, and acculturative stress. In his proposed model, after some initial change, immigrants face the state of conflict and then adopt a strategy. For Berry (2006b), adaptation “refers to the long-term ways in which people rearrange their lives and settle down to a more-or- less satisfactory existence” (p. 52). It denotes relatively stable changes and varies from very positive ways of living to very negative ones in psychological, cultural, social, and health areas.

Elsewhere, Berry (1997a) reminds us that these strategies are dynamic. It means that while people generally have a coherent preference for one strategy or another, they may change their strategies across the locations; e.g., they chose one strategy for public spheres and another for private spheres. This shows the significance of John Berry’s distinction between the acculturation of individuals and groups mentioned earlier. Furthermore, the larger societal context, which is not always monocultural, may be influential in choosing acculturation strategies and sometimes there is little choice available. In the last chapter, I will discuss some of these ethnic preferences for certain strategies as well as the intergroup variations that exist among each ethnic group.
Van Oudenhoven, Ward, and Masgoret (2006) notice that there are two assumptions in all multidimensional models of acculturation. First, it is assumed that immigrants’ orientation towards the cultures of home and host are independent. This is evident from the way Berry has framed his two questions which are the basis of acculturation strategies. Second, they argue, is the assumption that acculturation processes function “in various separate domains, such as in attitudes, values, behaviors, language and cultural identity” (p. 641). I think that they have a valid point here because these assumptions are not supported by evidence from research.

**Rudmin’s Critique of Berry’s Framework**

In 1997, the first issue of the journal *Applied Psychology* was devoted to discussing Berry’s framework and seven critics offered their views. Rudmin (2003) noticed that while critics complimented the “model”, they “also argued that it lacks utility and explanatory force and that it should be expanded to include, for example, a greater focus on subcultures, dominant group attitudes, or acquisition of cultural skills” (p. 4). The 1998 symposium hosted by the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology was titled “A Critical Appreciation of Berry’s Model.” The presenters, according to Rudmin (2003), noted the model’s “lack of psychological and cultural content” (p. 4) and “its ineffectiveness in explaining differences between groups or between individuals” (p. 5). Escobar and Vega (2000) suggested that the “model” is ambiguous, lacks prediction power, and its assumptions about culture are problematic. More recently Berry’s “model” has been criticized for having poor validity, too much focus on minority groups, and not paying attention to the acculturative features of dominant groups (Rudmin, 2003; Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001).
Berry (1997b) and Berry and Sam (2003) have responded in detail to these critiques. More recently, Rudmin (2006) combined all critiques on Berry’s model in a hundred-page essay. He claims that the model

confuses dimensional and categorical conceptions of its constructs, fails to produce ipsative data from mutually exclusive scales, misoperationalizes marginalization as distress, mismeasures biculturalism using double-barreled questions instead of computing it from unicultural measures, and then tends to misinterpret and miscite this faulty science. (p. 1)

This seems an ongoing debate, which at times gets personal, such as referring to “extensive published but widely uncited data” (p. 1). However, I am not convinced by Rudmin’s argument that “the predominance of researchers, theory and data from similar Anglo-Saxon settler societies (USA, Australia, Canada)” (p. 1) shows a biased and blind ideology whereas the very same phenomenon from similar European countries demonstrates scientific authenticity.

**Some Remarks on Berry’s Model**

Berry does not use terms such as “minority group”, “majority group”; rather, he prefers the term “cultural group”. For example, Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006) state “by using these term […] we seek to avoid the extra baggage that often accompanies terms such as mainstream, majority, dominant, minority, non-dominant and host society” (p. 11). I chose not to follow this convention because I cannot agree more with Padilla and Perez (2003) that “minority status of the immigrant is the crux of the matter both in terms of smaller numbers and lower power or status in society” (p. 39). In the process of immigrating to industrialized countries, most immigrants from “developing” countries are faced with the devaluation of their money, legal status, education and professional
credentials, and language. Furthermore, in my view, this avoidance does carry the heavy baggage of silence and a futile effort to seem apolitical.

Additionally, Berry’s framework does not distinguish among different kinds of multiculturalism as explained in Chapter Two. But elsewhere, Berry (2006a) describes some preconditions of such a multiculturalism which may lead to integration. The dominant society, and he is clear that dominant is in terms of power relationships, must be open and inclusive, and prepared to adapt national institutions to needs of minority groups. At the same time, “non-dominant groups need to adopt the basic values of the larger society” (p. 36, emphasis in the original). Other preconditions, according to Berry (2006a), are

- widespread acceptance of the value to society of cultural diversity […]; relatively low levels of prejudice (i.e. minimal ethnocentrism, racism, and discrimination);
- positive mutual attitudes among ethnocultural groups (i.e., no specific intergroup hatreds); and a sense of attachment to, or identification with, the larger society by all individuals and groups. (p. 36)

Some of these preconditions are too vague to convey any meaning. For example, one may ask: How do we define inclusivity and openness and how do we measure it? Drawing on the discussions in Chapter Two, I can conclude not all kinds of multiculturalism lead to integration. Rather, only critical or antiracist multiculturalism has the capacity for integration because integration, in my view, is about power sharing and equal participation, not sharing different foods and dances. Another important question is:

What are “basic values” for Canadian society? Suárez-Orozco (2000) poses the same question from an American perspective when he asks, if acculturation is about values, then “acculturate to what? [Because] American society is no longer, if it ever was, a uniform or coherent system” (p. 21). This is how acculturation is linked to the concept of
identity and more specifically Canadian identity which is not a very well agreed-upon issue.

Finally, as Van Oudenhoven et al. (2006) mention, some researchers do not see marginalization as a viable option for immigrants. They do not choose to be marginalized; rather, they are forced to marginalization.

**Modified (or Enhanced) Version of Berry’s Model**

Berry’s framework has been merged with other theories in order to more accurately model the host-immigrant relationships. For example, Richard Bourhis and his colleagues have suggested the Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM), which tries to look at the dynamic interaction of the acculturation attitudes of dominant and non-dominant groups (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997) which are in turn in/formed by government integration policies (Piontkowski, Rohman, & Florack, 2002). Based on these models, Bourhis and his colleagues have suggested new strategies and new scales for measuring acculturation. Their model suggests that the members of the host society may support five strategies of acculturation: integration, segregation, assimilation, exclusion, and individualism. Comparing these strategies with Berry’s model, exclusion and individualism can be considered forms of marginalization and the first three strategies are counterparts of Berry’s integration, separation, and assimilation.

Since I will not use any of the devices used to measure acculturation, a detailed discussion of these models and their subsequent modifications would be irrelevant. However, one can see a major concern of all these models is measurement which has its roots in a certain philosophical thought. For a brief discussion, one can see for example, Piontkowski, et al. (2002).
In another line of inquiry, in the 1990s, Colleen Ward and her colleagues attempted to merge their work on psychological adjustment with John Berry’s conceptualization of strategies of acculturation (Ward, 1996; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). They argue for a differentiation between psychological and sociocultural adjustment. Psychological adjustment, they suggest, refers to “psychological or emotional wellbeing, is best understood and interpreted within a stress and coping framework”, whereas sociocultural adjustment relates to “the ability to “fit in” or negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture” and “is more appropriately placed within a social learning paradigm” (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999, p. 424). The former is for the most part based on affective responses, while the latter is based on behaviours, effective interactions in the new settings, and skills which facilitate interactions (Ward, 2001). Again based on their new model, Ward and colleagues have developed different instruments and scales for measuring acculturation attitudes.

John Berry’s model has been described as the most popular (Vijver & Phalet, 2004). Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) refer to this model as “distinguished by a sound conceptual base and a systematic and comparative analysis of empirical data” (p. 423). Historically, this model is significant because it introduced the importance of multicultural societies and the fact that minorities may have choice in how far they want to go in the process of acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Furthermore, many of Berry’s studies were conducted in Canada and are more relevant to the present study. These features as well as the nature of this study, which is more focused on the attitudes of the host society, led me to choose Berry’s model as the conceptual framework of this study.
Critical Acculturation Psychology

In March 2009, a special issue of *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* was devoted to critical psychology of acculturation. Different articles in this issue question the epistemological underpinnings of the traditional research in acculturation psychology and the role, or lack thereof, of culture in the research. For example, Chirkov (2009) summarizes her critique as follows

Acculturation researchers have been trying to apply a positivistic and quantitative approach to a phenomenon that is far beyond the capacity this approach has to comprehend it. Second, that there is no culture in acculturation research and the researchers do not even have working models of culture that could guide research in this area. Third, that the complex nature of the acculturation process requires very diverse thinking about the subject, an application of various epistemological and methodological approaches, inter- and multi-disciplinarity, intellectual flexibility, and the willingness to critically analyse achieved results and obtained knowledge. Unfortunately, all these capacities and attributes are yet scarce in the discourse of the psychology of acculturation. (p. 94)

Since many articles in the special issue directly or indirectly criticize John Berry’s works, he responded to these critiques (Berry, 2009):

I believe that many of these assertions do not represent my views, nor my empirical research, on acculturation. […] I argue that dismissing the positivist traditions of the natural sciences, and replacing them with social constructionist concepts and methods is a regressive step in our search to improve our understanding of acculturation. (p. 361)

However, these debates on the philosophical foundations of research are far from being settled, if one can imagine any settlement at all. While the present study is not based on theories of cultural psychology and partially borrows Berry’s model from acculturation psychology, I can identify with many (not all) of the critiques in the special issue. In my view, that issue of *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* was a bold move for shifting directions of research in acculturation.
**Acculturation of Adolescents and Children**

It is very important for me to bear in mind that these strategies were primarily conceptualized for adults. Phinney, Berry, Vedder, and Liebkind (2006) suggest that families and larger communities determine the acculturation attitudes of immigrant adolescents, (and all children), who absorb attitudes from schools, their peers, their family, and other adults. Also, adolescents have different preferences for friends, learning a new language, retaining their heritage language, and adhering to cultural values of their family. These preferences are influenced by contextual factors, such as their communities, and personal attributes such as gender.

Schools, suggested by Gates (1992), as institutions of legitimization, establish what counts as knowledge and culture. Classrooms, Mody (2005) suggests, are ecological contexts “constructed through teachers’ practices, through school and neighbourhood histories, structures and practices and through children’s peer group interactions.” (p. 4). Classroom contexts, she argues, are places to recognize and valorize culture. Moreover, schools are virtually the sole community of elementary students, or the secondary site of their socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Therefore, it makes sense to look at the role of school and investigate how it in/forms students’ attitudes and establishes their culture. Of course, these attitudes may change in the later stages of students’ life.

**Acculturation and “Doing School”**

Elementary students need to learn and get used to daily routines of school. The transition year of kindergarten partly serves this goal. Betts, Betts, and Gerber-Eckard (2007) define “doing school” as “unwritten rules and procedures that all students need to follow” (p. 20). They suggest that these rules must be understood for being successful at
school and students learn them from the non-verbal messages of teachers and by watching their classmates. Standing up in the middle of the class, making noise, humming during class, yawning loudly are examples of unacceptable practices mentioned by Betts et al. They elaborate on the meaning of “doing school” as follows:

“Doing” school involves performing numerous actions that the majority of students automatically understand. “Doing” school includes attending to tasks and following the teacher’s direction regarding assignment, standing in line, and putting away materials. Additionally, students need to understand the regular activities of the school day including talking appropriately with teachers and classmates and following the “norms” of the school. (p. 20)

However, these norms go much beyond those simple behavioural tasks. Fitts, Winstead, Weisman, Flores, and Valenciana (2008) remind us that learning to “do school” in Western public schools is informed by cultural themes of individualism and competition. They say that

Students are taught to compete against one another for scarce resources: attention from teachers, opportunities to speak and be recognized in class, the best grades, or the first place in line. Students are also taught that if they get help from others on assignments, then that work is not worth as much. (p. 365)

Sociological Views on Assimilation

John Berry’s framework for strategies of acculturation, including assimilation, was based on the psychology of intergroup relations. However, there are more explanations for assimilation. Vallee (1975) suggested that arguments in favour of assimilation had been based on two grounds. First, the claim that ethnic plurality brings a risk of internal conflicts which takes social energy from important tasks. The second view comes from a concern for equality as in Porter’s (1965) position. Elaborating on this second position, May (2008) noted that John Porter’s advocacy of assimilation is different from most conservatives and rather than being rooted in racism or exclusion of
ethnic minority groups, it was “based on his long-held and principled commitment to egalitarianism” (p. 102). May claims that according to orthodox liberals, ethnic practices, such as using minority languages, were “antediluvian” and “would thus atrophy and eventually die in the face of modern […] culture” (p.102). Consequently, the sooner ethnic groups get rid of these practices, the better they would move forward toward civilization as equal individuals or citizens.

Commenting on the process of development of Canadian-ness, Porter (1987) suggests that “while the observation could be construed as suggesting either the melting pot or assimilation to Anglo-conformity, there is certainly nothing of the mosaic in it. It would seem that in Canada, as in the United States, public education was to be the main road to assimilation” (p. 150). He claims that the ideal method of absorbing immigrants was “Anglo-conformity or Anglo-Canadianization” (p. 152) in which education played a major role.

Finally, not everybody is against assimilation. Knight (2004), for example, attests that “in some cases at least liberals ought to pursue policies of assimilation” (p. 194) because “there will usually be more opportunities in dominant cultures to revise values, beliefs and life-goals […] due to the sheer number of ideas and options that their greater scale provides” (p.195). The best case for assimilation, he argues, is the new generations for whom educational measures may ease cultural transitions. Of course, he advocates for assimilation “in a slow and sensitive fashion” (p. 195).

**Social Inclusion and Acculturation**

In most acculturation models, the attitudes of the host society towards immigrants and refugees and their cultures play a significant role in the process of acculturation.
These attitudes are part of the larger issue of social inclusion (or exclusion). As mentioned earlier, John Berry specifies “openness and inclusiveness” as prerequisites for integration. Social exclusion, Walker and Walker (1997) suggest, is “a comprehensive formulation, which refers to the dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any of the social, economic, political or cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in a society” (p. 8). Based on this definition, the opposite of exclusion is integration into those systems.

Social exclusion is concerned with poverty, unemployment, racism, marginalization, education, and care in society. Discussing the theory and research on this issue is beyond the scope of this study; one can read, for example, Richmond and Saloojee (2005) for a detailed discussion on social inclusion from Canadian perspectives. However, while examining the education of immigrant children, we cannot forget what is happening to immigrant families in a larger context. Hernandez (2004) refers to many factors which have direct influence on the education of immigrant children and compares these factors for immigrant and non-immigrant students in the US. Any story about schools without including these factors would seem partial. These factors according to Hernandez (2004) are: country of origin and race/ethnicity, poverty, parents’ education, parents’ labour participation, single-parent families, families with many siblings, overcrowded housing, English language fluency, legal status, health service access and use, psychological adjustments, and education.

Speaking in a Canadian context, we should bear in mind that according to Omidvar and Richmond (2005), “during the last two decades there has been a dramatic, downward shift in the economic status of newcomers to Canada” (p.156). They cite
numerous studies which persistently document increasing rates of poverty for immigrant families and “growing difficulties in the labour market integration of immigrants, especially recent immigrants” (p.156). This trend, they suggest, is contrary to what used to be in the first forty years after the Second World War, when newcomers were generally successful in the labour market after some initial support and their employment participation rates were quite comparable with that of the Canadian-born. In a similar vein, Burstein (2007) reminds us that “a growing number of studies are turning up evidence that the influence of visible minorities is tempered by their low incomes, poverty and social exclusion” (p. 42).

More recently, Biles, Burstein, and Frideres (2008b) raise the same concern that “mounting evidence indicates that the pattern of economic success experienced by immigrants [compared to non-immigrants] over the last two and a half decades has experienced a profound lasting deterioration” (p. 7, emphasis added]. Again, they claim that before the 1980s immigrants could quickly match and even exceed Canadian-born counterparts.

Faced with these findings on social inclusion, Bloemraad (2007) asks “What are the relationships among economic, social, cultural, civic, and political integration?” (p. 318). She contends that sociologists need to work on the relationship between multiculturalism and socioeconomic outcomes, which is less known. I will return to the issue of social inclusion later in my discussion chapter.

**Culture, Acculturation, and Multiculturalism**

The concept of culture is at the core of acculturation and the way we define culture definitely influences research on acculturation (Sam, 2006). Pondering on the
theoretical aspects of culture is not among the priorities of acculturation research. However, the discourse of multiculturalism has promoted, both explicitly and implicitly, certain notions of culture which need to be scrutinized. This section will bridge the discussions to Chapter Two.

Among the critiques on multiculturalism, or at least some versions of it, is how culture is perceived, conceptualized, promoted, and acted upon. Brotz (1980), for example, was among the first to refer to the muddled state of multiculturalism in Canada due to the vagueness of the term ‘culture’. He believed that if we use culture as a synonym to ‘way of life’, then “there are no ethnic differences in Canada about the desirability of the bourgeois-democratic way of life” (p. 41). Using an essentialist notion of culture is another common charge from opponents of multiculturalism (e.g., from Barry, 2001). The philosophical dimensions of these debates are beyond this chapter (one can see for example, Mason, 2007). However, culture is not problem-free for advocates of multiculturalism as well. Thompson (1993) views culture as a “clumpish term” which gathers too many activities and attributes in a single bundle and hence confuses or disguises the necessary distinctions among them.

One problematic conception of culture, called a billiard-ball conception by Tully (1995), rooted in the idea of uniformity of nation-states, portrays cultures as “separated, bounded, and internally uniform” (p. 10) entities. This concept, Tully suggests, has gradually been replaced by “the view of cultures as overlapping, interactive and internally negotiated” (p.10). In Blommaert and Verschueren’s (1998) view, this notion of culture lacks dynamics and flexibility and assumes that “people are supposed to have, once and for all, identifiable ‘roots’” (pp. 17-18).
Phillips (2007) has elaborated on this conception and challenges the idea of culture as a uniform, static, non-negotiable, and solid entity broadly shared by a group as well as the power of culture as a causal force; that is, people act in certain ways because their culture dictates so. She argues that culture is not bounded because people draw on local, national, and international resources in re/shaping their culture. Also, contestations over meanings, practices, and values make culture a non-homogenous entity. Finally, the claims about authoritarian meanings of cultural values and practices include different political agendas rooted in the inter-group power struggles. This concept, Phillips suggests, shows people make cultures rather than behaving according to their cultures. Such a conception, according to Phillips (2007), exaggerates the differences between cultural groups (especially between the West and the “other”) and denies human agency.

Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) reflect the same voice from Europe. They refer to three ad hoc features of culture as: (1) having clear-cut boundaries and hence creating a cultural gap between ‘us’ and ‘them’; (2) equating culture with differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’; (3) assuming that ‘their’ culture belongs to the past when compared to ‘ours’. They further notice that:

Vagueness about migrant communities’ ‘culture’ has produced an unscrupulous and often totally unfounded use of the term. *Whatever the immigrant may be or do, it is always getting culturalized, a process which contributes significantly to the abnormalization of the foreigner.* (p. 93, emphasis in the original)

There is another problem with the conception of culture in the multiculturalism discourse of liberal democracies; i.e., culture is reserved for minority groups and non-Westerners (Phillips, 2007). She indicates that when an individual from the majority does not abide by laws and rules, s/he is labelled as greedy, selfish, immoral, or cruel.
However, in case of such acts from minority groups, the culture is blamed. This point is best illustrated in the following example by Narayan (1997):

While Indian women repeatedly suffer ‘death by culture’ in a range of scholarly and popular works, even as the elements of culture proffered do little to explain their deaths, American women seem relatively immune to such analyses of ‘death or injury by culture’ even as they are victimized by the fairly distinctive American phenomenon of widespread gun-related violence. (p. 117)

With these notions of culture, the line of argument is complete: culture is something about “the other” and culture is static and fixed; therefore, the other always remains the other. In words of Blommaert and Verschueren (1998), they are “condemned to remain the other: the eternal other” (p. 18).

In reaction to the limited meaning of the notion of culture in Canadian multiculturalism, Price (1978, p. 85) argues that the only surviving traditions of minority groups were those “innocuous ones that escape the conforming crush of law, such as religious practices, music and tastes in food.”

**What is Culture Anyway?**

Lowell (1934) suggests that nothing in the world is more elusive than culture and "an attempt to encompass its meaning in words is like trying to seize the air in the hand, when one finds that it is everywhere except within one's grasp" (p. 115). Similarly, Hall (1980) states that he cannot provide a single, unproblematic definition of culture and I would add why should we assume there is one? He suggests that "the concept remains a complex one—a site of convergent interests, rather than a logically or conceptually clarified idea" (p. 522). As evidence for this complexity, in their famous review of the concept of culture, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) found 164 different meanings and one can guess that this number has significantly increased since then.
Having in mind the critiques mentioned in the previous section, I will adopt Bullivant’s (1981) fairly broad definition which views culture as dynamic and evolving. This definition fits educational settings best and also acquiring a new culture by this definition does not require abandoning one’s old culture. For Bullivant,

Culture can be thought of as the knowledge and conceptions, embodied in symbolic and non-symbolic communication modes, about the technology and skills, customary behaviours, values, beliefs and attitudes, a society has evolved from its historical past, and progressively modifies and augments to and cope with the present and anticipated future problems of its existence. (p. 19)

Later, Bullivant (1987) suggests a similar definition:

Culture is a generalized complex of interdependent, valued traditional and current public knowledge and conceptions, embodied in behaviours and artefacts, and transmitted to present and new members through systems of signs and symbols, which a society has evolved historically and progressively modifies and augments to give meaning to and cope with its definition of present and future existential problems. (p. 6)

These two definitions can be thought as complementary and both emphasize the instrumental role of culture as a program for the survival of the society. Although, viewing the modifications of this program as being always “progressive” seems problematic to me. Bullivant (1987) acknowledges “the intrinsic expressive” importance of culture; i.e., the encapsulated important values which “give quality to human existence through such activities as recreation, religion, arts, crafts and similar aesthetics pursuits” (p. 6). Bullivant (1993) elaborates on his definition and explains that people’s behaviour and artifacts are not part of their culture; rather they are the embodiment of a cultural program or cultural forms of a cultural program. In his own words

behavior is not culture, rather, behavior “contains” it. […] People have to know the kinds of knowledge and ideas they must have to carry out a certain kind of behavior properly […] and also to understand what the behavior they see is all about. (p. 35).
Since we talk a lot about values, it is important to know what we mean. According to Valentine (1968), values “include the ideals, the aims and ends, the ethical and aesthetic standards, and the criteria of knowledge and wisdom embodied in it, taught to and modified by each human generation” (p. 7).

This distinction between instrumental and expressive is analytically useful for the process of acculturation. In Suárez-Orozco’s (2000) words,

By instrumental culture, I mean the skills, competencies, and social behaviors that are required successfully to make a living and contribute to society. By expressive culture, I mean the realm of values, worldviews, and the patterning of interpersonal relations that give meaning and sustain the sense of self. (p. 20)

For example, Suárez-Orozco notices that immigrant parents are willing for their children to acquire instrumental culture of the host society and often this has been the sole purpose of immigration for them. However, these parents “are decidedly more ambivalent about their children’s exposure to some of the "expressive" elements of culture in the new land” (p. 20). If we want to use Bullivant’s (1993) framework, then expressive behaviour and instrumental behaviour based on expressive and instrumental knowledge and ideas would be more appropriate than expressive and instrumental culture.

**Culture, Race, Ethnicity**

Acculturation is closely related and has overlaps with issues of ethnic/cultural identity (how and to what degree individuals view themselves as members of groups) and cultural orientation (individuals’ feeling and engagement in different cultures) (Tsai, Chentsova-Dutton, & Wong, 2002). For example, changes in acculturation lead to changes in identification (Trimble, 2003). An ethnic group, according to Feagin (1978), is a group “which is socially distinguished or set apart, by others and/or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or nationality characteristics” (p. 9). John Berry uses the term
“ethnocultural group” in his work on acculturation. Trimble suggested that “the terms ethnic and race often are used interchangeably” (p. 8) and quoted Helms’ (1990) definition of racial identity as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares with a particular racial group” (p. 3). According to Trimble (2003), the three terms ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, and ‘cultural’ may share a meaning but only in that people congregate according to common core characteristics. The source of the core characteristics can be criteria established and deeply held by the in-group, but out-groups can also set their own criteria for designating and differentiating one group from another. (p. 8)

Trimble maintained that using race, ethnicity, and culture for distinguishing a group is an effort to be culturally distinctive but this labelling at the same time promotes stereotypes and overgeneralizations. Therefore, he suggests investigation of acculturation always must include identity. For a detailed discussion on ethnic identity and acculturation, read Phinney (2003). Also, for a detailed discussion on the interwoven nature of race, ethnicity, and culture refer to Skrentny (2008).

**Cultural Transmission or Acquisition?**

Another important question is how culture is acquired or what is the process of being “cultured”? Wolcott (1991) has investigated the process of achieving cultural competencies. He argues that first anthropologists viewed the process as “cultural transmission” with the assumption "that people in a society behave in the same way under the same circumstances" (p. 253). Next, there was a shift to 'culture acquisition' but cultural transmission was not ruled out since the two notions were closely related. Meanwhile, Wolcott argues, cultural transmission studies are being redefined "as calculated or intentional intervention processes" (p. 256). Wolcott elaborates on the concept of propriospect, coined and proposed by Ward Goodenough who defined it "as
the totality of the private, subjective view of the world and its content that each human develops out of personal experience” (Goodenough, 1971, p. 36, cited in Wolcott, 1991, p. 258).

Wolcott continues, "propriospect, then, points not to culture in an abstract, collective sense but to the unique version of culture(s) each of us creates out of the individual experience. More than that, however, propriospect refers to the aggregated version of all the cultural settings or activities of which any one human is aware" (1991, p.258). Whether one accepts Wolcott's conception or not, the valuable element is viewing cultures “as something known partly in common, yet susceptible to variations bounded only by the limits of variability itself” (p. 259). In this way, adding new cultural competencies does not require abandoning those an individual already possesses.

**Culture and Education**

Having defined culture, we can ask how culture is manifested in educational settings and specifically in schools. Theorists from sociology, anthropology, psychology, and cultural studies offer different and complementary perspectives in answering this question. For a brief review of these perspectives, one can read Burtonwood (1986). But one of the first things that one notices in response to this question is that the very act of learning has been described as enculturation. This is best explained by Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) and is well worth a long quote:

From a very early age and throughout their lives, people, consciously or unconsciously, adopt the behavior and belief systems of new social groups. Given the chance to observe and practice in situ the behavior of members of a culture, people pick up relevant jargon, imitate behavior, and gradually start to act in accordance with its norms. These cultural practices are often recondite and extremely complex. Nonetheless, given the opportunity to observe and practice them, people adopt them with great success. Students, for instance, can quickly get an implicit sense of what is suitable diction, what makes a relevant question,
what is legitimate or illegitimate behavior in a particular activity. The ease and success with which people do this (as opposed to the intricacy of describing what it entails) belie the immense importance of the process and obscures the fact that what they pick up is a product of the ambient culture rather than of explicit teaching. (p. 34)

In other words, education reflects a selection of the culture of society. Williams (1965) reminds us that education is not “a fixed abstraction [or], a settled body of teaching and learning” (p. 145) He emphasizes that the organization of education “can be seen to express, consciously and unconsciously, the wider organization of a culture and a society”. Similarly, he argues, the content of education expresses “certain basic elements in the culture”. Hence, education can be viewed as “a particular selection, a particular set of emphases and omissions” (p.145).

Williams (1965) says that a major general purpose of education is “training the members of a group to the ‘social character’ or ‘pattern of culture’ which is dominant in the group or by which the group lives” (p.146). When this social character is generally accepted, it is viewed as “natural” rather than one possible choice among many alternatives. However, when the social character changes or when it has alternatives in a society, it may not be seen as “natural training” by everybody and some see it as indoctrination. In Williams’ view, three related but distinguishable goals of education are: “the accepted behaviour and values” of society, “the general knowledge and attitudes appropriate” for an educated person, and “a particular skill by which” that person will earn his/her living, (p.147).

I think that Williams has used “education” for “schooling”, the same way as many people use these terms interchangeably. For me, the basic elements of education are socialization and enculturation. Learning also can be thought as enculturation and hence
does not occur solely at schools. Training, which is mostly concerned with skills, is only part of what happens at schools.

*Cultural Capital*

Notions of social and cultural capital are necessary to understand the acculturation choices of immigrants (Steinbach, 2007). These concepts first appeared in Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) in order to explain the different educational outcomes of French students. They argued that economic obstacles were not enough to explain the disparities in the educational outcomes of students from different social classes. They maintained that non-monetary forms of capital have an important role in creating those disparities. Later, Bourdieu (1983) elaborates on the three forms of capital, i.e., economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Under certain conditions, social capital and cultural capital are convertible to economic capital.

Social capital, according to him, is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 249). It has been argued that government programs should compensate for immigrants’ lack of social capital in their new host society (Omidvar & Richmond, 2005; Sloane-Seale, 2005). Data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) indicate that new Canadians are being helped primarily by friends and relatives, and not by official government programs (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Cultural capital, Bourdieu suggests, may exist in three forms:

- in the *embodied* state, i.e. in the form of long lasting dispositions of the mind and body;
- in the *objectified* state, in forms of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.);
- and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as […] in the case of
Educational qualifications, for Bourdieu, are institutionalized forms of cultural capital.

McLaren (1998) suggests a more practical definition of cultural capital as “the general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed from one generation to another. Cultural capital represents ways of talking, acting, and socializing, as well as language practices, values, and styles of dress and behavior” (p. 193). Furthermore, McLaren argues that “schools generally value and reward those who exhibit the dominant cultural capital” (p.193).

For an elaboration on the cultural capital theory and its role in school inequalities see Barone (2006) and Reay (2004). I need to mention that accepting Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital does not imply that minority cultures do not have powerful resources. Conceptualizing a theory of community cultural wealth, Yosso (2005) discusses how Bourdieu’s theory “has been used to assert that some communities are culturally wealthy while others are culturally poor” (p. 76). Similarly, Nee and Sanders (2001) demonstrate how immigrant families bring with them a huge amount of human-cultural capital which is not appreciated in the host society. One may ask, hence, is this capital at all?

**Culture of/at School**

The term “school culture” has been used interchangeably with other concepts such as climate, ethos, and saga; hence, it has no clear and consistent definition (Tischler, 2004). From his review of the literature, Tischler defines school culture as “encompassing many components, including but not limited to: mission and vision, norms, internal and external relationships, values communication and evaluation approaches” (p. 65). One may argue that this definition applies to any institution. Many
other definitions reviewed by Tischler (2004) do not add anything more specific about schools.

Forcese and Richer (1975) suggest that “in Canada, regional variations in education have realized different political socialization inputs” (p. 27). These different socializations, they argue, can help us understand some of contemporary Canadian political conflicts. They suggest that “the major learning in socialization involves the culture of the society or group concerned. The primary components are represented by [...] roles, norms, and values” (p. 28). Three agencies of socialization, they say, are family, school, and peers. Furthermore, in industrialized countries, the importance of schools increases at the expense of that of family. Forcese and Richer (1975) contend that simple symbols in Canadian schools, such as a portrait or a daily song, “serve effectively to orient children to political systems” (p. 27).

In her proposal for teaching culture in the elementary school foreign language classrooms, Pesola (1991) is more specific on culture at schools. First, she listed the goals of teaching culture in language programs from Lafayette (1988). Pesola suggests that while these goals were intended for older students, many of them are applicable to elementary students as well. Among these goals are being able to recognize or explain “major historical events, major institutions (administrative, political, religious, educational, etc.); [...] “passive everyday cultural patterns (social stratification, marriage, work, etc.)” (Pesola, p. 336). Next, she quotes the list of “universals of culture” from Cleaveland, Craven, and Danfelser (1979):

I. Material culture (food, clothing and adornment of the body; tools and weapons; housing and shelter; transportation; personal possessions; household artifacts). II. The arts, play, and reactions (forms of the arts, play, and recreation; folk arts and fine arts; standards of beauty and taste). III. Language and nonverbal
communication (nonverbal communication; language). IV. Social organization (societies, families, kinship systems). V. Social control (systems and governmental institutions; rewards and punishments). VI. Conflict and welfare (kinds of conflict; kinds of welfare). VII. Economic organizations (systems of trade and exchange; producing and manufacturing; property; division of labor; standard of living). VIII. Education (informal education, formal education). IX. World view (belief systems; religion). (p. 4)

Finally, she proposes a thematic approach for teaching culture in terms of cultural symbols (e.g., flags, heros from history or myth), cultural products (e.g., visual arts, musical arts, folk arts), and cultural practices (e.g., greeting, shopping, home and school life, patterns of politeness).

Looking at these suggestions, one may ask that given Canadians’ differences on social class, race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, whose culture should be taught at schools? However, I would suggest that the more important question is: Whose culture is currently taught at schools? If as Bullivant (1993) notices, all “instructions, knowledge, and information” (p. 33) at schools are selected from the culture of society, what are features and characteristics of that selection? The overview that I have presented has led me back to my research question.

Summary

This chapter discussed the concept of acculturation and different approaches in theory and research of the concept. John Berry’s model of acculturation strategies, which will be used in this study, was introduced. Drawing on the discussions of Chapter Two and conflicts and ambiguities of multiculturalism, it was concluded that only certain types of multiculturalism may lead to the integration of immigrants. Also, it was emphasized that children at early ages absorb their attitudes from their environment especially from schools. The remainder of the chapter was devoted to culture as the
subject of acculturation. Critiques of the essentialist notions of culture used in the context of multiculturalism were followed by a working definition of culture and a discussion on culture of school. The next chapter will discuss the methodology of the research.
CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

Crotty (1998) defines methodology as “the strategy, plan of actions, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (p. 3). Following this line, in this chapter I will start with explaining my choice of methodology and the basic assumptions of the methods. Then, I will explain the process of choosing the site of study, obtaining access to the site, and a description of the school and the observed class. The methods for data generation/collection and the theoretical aspects of the employed methods will come next followed by a description of field relationships. Next, I will discuss the process of transcription and data analysis. The chapter will end with a discussion on ethical issues and consent.

Pondering on my motivations for the study and the nature of my research questions, as explained in the introduction, I can conclude that the underpinning theme of my study is culture in the context of an elementary classroom. The theme and the site of study led me to the choice of a case study with ethnographic methods.

Why Case Study?

What was to be studied, i.e., an elementary classroom, brought me to the choice of case study. However, this did not necessarily mean doing a qualitative study, let alone implying a specific method in that domain (Stake, 2005). In using case study, I intend to capture the complexities and particularities of students' experiences. Also, the complexity of enculturation processes, large number of participants, and little possibility of controlling the events, which have no beginning or end points, all make case study a
suitable choice for this study (Stake, 1995). A major feature of case study is that its focus of investigation is a bounded system (Smith, 1978; Stake, 1995) or a delimited object (Merriam, 1998). The period of my stay at school (five weeks), the elementary school and the classroom that I observed are the limits of this case.

**Can We Generalize from a Single Case? Do We Want to?**

The issue of generalization in qualitative studies is an old one. Cronbach’s (1975) question “should social science aspire to reduce behavior to laws?” (p. 116) pins down the fundamental issue at stake. He argued that “too narrow an identification with science, however, has fixed our [i.e., social scientists’] eyes upon an inappropriate goal. The goal of our work, […], is not to amass generalizations atop which a theoretical tower can someday be erected” (p. 126).

While even a brief review of the literature on this issue is beyond the limits of this chapter, I would like to mention some recent works on generalization in qualitative studies and position myself in the debate. An insightful review of the issue can be found in part III of the work edited by Eisner and Peshkin (1990).

Changing his earlier position that single events in education should be treated as singularities, the merits of studying which lie only in their relatability to teachers’ experiences, Bassey (2001) suggests a fuzzy generalization in the form “particular events may lead to particular consequences” (p. 6). As Hammersley (2001) suggests, these predictions can only help us “make judgements about what is likely to happen” [my emphasis] rather than telling us what will happen.

Larsson (2005) offers different lines of reasoning with different degrees of possibility of generalization. Generalization is possible and meaningful, he argues, when
there are similarities between the contexts of the cases or gestals, i.e. “interpretations, concepts, descriptions of processes and patterns” (p. 9). The responsibility of recognizing these similarities, he says, is on the audience based on their “wise judgement.”

Most recently, in an attempt to “re-conceptualize” the “old issues” of generalization, Gobo (2008) has tried “to remedy a situation where statistical inference is deemed the only acceptable method” (p.194). He pictures methodologists in two groups of “most extreme” ones and “more moderate” ones (p. 195) without explaining moderate or extreme relative to what. The former group, he contends, dismisses sampling as a pure positivist notion, while the latter “have complied with the injunction of statisticians but reconceptualized the problem” (p. 195). This reconceptualization, he notices, shows itself in claiming that there are two kinds of generalizations “made in completely different ways” (p. 196): statistical vs. analytical induction, formative vs. naturalistic, and distributive vs. theoretical.

The first type of generalization involves estimating the distribution of particular features within a finite population; the second, eminently theoretical, is concerned with the relations among the variables in any sample of the relevant kind (moreover, the population of relevant cases is potentially infinite). (Gobo, 2008, p. 195)

For Gobo (2008), the acceptance of this dualism “represents the acceptance of statisticians’ diktat” as well as the recognition of “a ‘political’ division into areas of competence” (p. 195). He claims that the majority of qualitative researchers have adopted the moderate stance and this has brought new terms such as “transferability”, “translatability”, “extrapolation”, “working hypothesis”, and generalization with qualifiers such as “naturalistic”, “moderatum”, and “analytic”.
In my view, these debates have their roots in different epistemologies. Epistemologies inform theoretical perspectives, i.e., philosophical stances that inform methodologies and provide contexts for the research process (Crotty, 1998). In fact, if without noticing the philosophical underpinnings of methodologies, we agree with Alasuutari’s (1995) view that “in a sense qualitative and quantitative analysis can be seen as a continuum” (p. 7), then it is easy to accept that the object of qualitative research “is always [my emphasis] to discuss in what regard [his italics] the researcher assumes or argues that the study has general validity beyond the individual case explored” (p. 156). He suggests that generalization is not the right word and relating could be a better term.

While I contend that relating is the connection of a case with the world beyond it, we cannot predict or plan this relation because it is all determined by the reader’s subjectivities. Hence, planning for the establishment of such a “feasible-for-everyone-in-all-places” relation is not always possible. Reducing the issue to a problem of terminology is trivializing the epistemology of qualitative research. In fact, one wonders whether “soft quantitavists” would be a better description for the groups that are called “more moderate” by Gobo (2008).

As Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) argue, correctly in my view, if we subscribe to an epistemology where “meaning is embedded in local, immediate contexts, it follows that generalizations about features of social reality necessarily will be difficult and tentative” (p. 23). I conclude with Wolcott (1994) that there must be a capacity for generalization; otherwise there would be no point to giving such careful attention to the single case. The art of descriptive research, I believe, is in portraying the case at hand so well that readers themselves [my emphasis] make the generalization for us. They fill in or complete the pattern work that we outline only faintly. (p. 131)
This case by no means intends to make general statements about "typical immigrant student" or “typical Canadian school” because I do not believe that there are such things. My personal experiences have brought me to believe that every single immigrant has her/his unique story. These stories vary vastly depending on students' class, gender, sexual orientation, education, religion, ethnic background, language, age, and socio-political and economic situation of their home country. My version of the stories of this case is mediated by my presuppositions.

Ethnography: What Is It?

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) notice that interest in ethnography has its roots in opposition to quantitative methods and as such, while most people agree more or less on what is to be opposed, there exists a disagreement on what it is. Later, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) give a liberal interpretation of the most characteristic form of ethnography as a method or set of methods which “involves the ethnographer’s participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time […] collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research” (p. 1). For Hammersley and Atkinson, the features of ethnography are: studying people’s life in everyday context; collecting data in a flexible manner without pre-fixed arrangement and mainly by observation; focusing on single setting or group; analyzing the data by attributing meaning to human actions.

Different underpinning epistemologies give rise to different kinds of ethnographic studies. Koro-Ljungberg and Greckhamer (2005) have elaborated on the typology of ethnographic studies. They view traditional or classical ethnographic studies in two broad types: naturalistic and constructivist (or interpretative). The naturalist ethnography, they
claim, is based on an objective epistemology that reality exists in the natural environment of the social world and the ethnographer’s job is to capture the ‘true’ or ‘real’ nature of social phenomena. Interpretive ethnography, on the other hand, relies on constructivist epistemology that believes “the construction of knowledge becomes possible when the individual interacts, locates oneself, or views oneself as a part of cultural structures” (Koro-Ljungberg & Greckhamer, 2005, p. 290). Interpretive inquirers acknowledge that reality as well as their account of reality is constructed, sometimes, socially. Also, they are often seeking descriptions of cultural patterns and experiences. Koro-Ljungberg and Greckhamer (2005) claim that over the last two decades we have been witnessing a criticism of realism in ethnography and dissatisfaction regarding culture as the structural (or partial) subject of research and hence with the description of culture as the major job of the ethnographer. This has led to strategic turns in the uses of ethnography and the emergence of critical/feminist and deconstructive ethnographies which are beyond the limits of these pages.

Schram (2003) believes the following are “basic assumptions” for ethnographers: people’s behaviour and meaning-making processes are context-specific; social behaviour reflects “what should occur (ideal behavior), what does occur (actual behavior), and what might occur (projective behavior)” (p. 68); it is possible to distinguish people’s acquired and shared behaviour by inquiring and experiencing. Schram does not make clear ‘shared with whom?’ Does he assume that all members of a group share a single culture? He adds that researchers’ representation of other people’s life is never theirs, rather it is built on points of understanding and misunderstanding between researcher and those people. Further he acknowledges that ethnography provides partial and context-based rather than
exhaustive and absolute descriptions. One should notice that these features more or less are true mainly for the traditional types of ethnography.

**Is This an Ethnography?**

Schram (2003) notices that research questions which are “focused on describing values, beliefs, and behaviors that come into play as people interact regularly” (p. 78), suggest an ethnographic approach. Alternatively, to use Barbour’s (2008) words, since observation is the “central plank” of this study, I can say that this case study uses ethnographic methods.

Given that many authors mention that the duration of observation is an important factor for “immersing in the subject” and the minimum required time for doing ethnography is one year or one school-year (Baszanger & Dodier, 2004; Wolcott, 1999), it seems that I cannot even call my study a mini-ethnography. Wolcott (1999) suggests an ethnographic reconnaissance or a “hurried ethnography” for situations where researchers are given prepared guidelines to conduct predetermined interviews among already-identified informants. But this is not the case for my study.

An extended period of time was not an option because of the limitations put forward by school boards and also my plan of study. I had suggested staying one month in the class because I thought this period is enough to capture the routine activities of the classroom and includes all the special activities that students are engaged in. I can say that I used ethnographic methods in a case study or used ethnography as a way of looking (Wolcott, 1999). Wolcott (1999) urges us to make a distinction between doing ethnography and borrowing ethnographic techniques. The latter, he argues, emphasizes data collection methods without any assumption about how these data are going to be
used and it just implies a “fieldwork” approach. He views fieldwork as a way of looking:
important, and “the mainstay of ethnography” (p. 42). Going beyond a way of looking,
for Wolcott, means having directions on where, when, for how long, and to what one
should pay attention. It is a way of seeing with sharing “ideas about a way of viewing
human social behavior” (p. 66) as ethnographers.

Choosing the Site

I decided to study elementary students, rather than middle or high school level
students, because older students tend to adopt and play the rules of the games in their new
environment (especially at high school level). Therefore, after a few years immigrant
students have gone through a good portion of their transition process. My best choice
seemed to be grade four students who have recently immigrated to Canada and have two
to three years of schooling in another country. Students in lower grades may not have had
that experience. I needed to find an elementary school with a large multicultural
population. Other than applying to publicly-funded school boards, which accommodate
the majority of Canadian students, I had no other restriction in choosing a school. Since I
do not know French, French immersion schools were not an option for me. My first
choices were the school boards closer to my place of living. But, as I will explain in the
following section, those were not available.

The Journey to the Site

Soon after receiving the approval from the General Research Ethics Board at
Queen’s University, i.e. in April 2007, I started to apply for obtaining access to school
boards. I proved to be too naïve to expect that I would be doing my research in a school
before the end of the school year. I applied to as many school boards as possible. First, I
started with boards which were geographically closer to my place, as most researchers do because of the limited financial resources (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). However, after rejection letters started to arrive, I had to broaden the geographical boundaries of my search. On the verge of complete hopelessness for finding any school, I received an approval from a school board in one of the Western provinces.

In the process of receiving rejection letters, one after another, I was trying to make sense of the processes and speculate the reasons behind these rejections. While this is not the right place for elaborating on the complexities of gaining access to schools, I would like to mention two personal observations. First, as evident from application forms of many school boards, research at schools is expected to be carried out from an experimental viewpoint. To me, questions about “sample size”, “specific hypotheses tested”, “data sampling”, and “tests and questionnaires” reflect a specific view of educational research which may not welcome qualitative research. Second, I was told by many “gate keepers” that classroom observation has been a big no-no “for a long time.” One administrator asked me “one month, everyday from beginning to the end at school? You are kidding me. This could never happen. No principal in this board would agree with this.” This confirms Barbour’s (2008) remark that, most recently, observational studies are not very common. She attributes this to the lack of powerful external sponsors and more strict requirements of ethical review committees.

I spent a month and a half looking for a principal interested in my research proposal in the board which gave me permission for the study. This effort was mainly through faculty members who knew someone and expected that there might be
connections between those individuals and people in the board. None of these efforts worked; therefore, I decided to go and see what would happen next.

After arriving with the approval from the school board, I started calling different schools in order to make an appointment with principals and show them my proposal to see if they would agree with carrying out research in their schools. I did not have any script for calling, but after several times, it became a script with little change: “Hi, I am a PhD student from the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University. I have the approval of your board in order to do my research in an elementary school. I need an appointment with the principal to show my proposal and ask about the possibility of doing research at your school.” I repeated this script 56 times. Only in 5 cases was I able to talk directly to principals. Three of these five principals rejected my request right away, either because they were a French immersion school which did not fit my purpose, or because they were in the process of a move, or simply without any explanation. For the rest of them, i.e., 51 schools, after talking to a staff member or secretary, I left a voice message with the exact same script. Only four principals returned my call. I was able to secure five appointments. In all appointments, I was told that I would hear from them after consulting with the teacher. Finally, I got a call from a teacher who had read my proposal and agreed to participate. Later, two other principals called me and let me know their agreement.

I should mention that there were a few exceptions to the aforementioned script. Before heading to the city, through several proxies of connections, I had obtained a couple of “good” names from the board which I could mention as the potential supporters
of my research for certain schools. Unfortunately those contacts proved to be of no benefit.

**The Site: Maple Wood Public School**

Located in an area of high immigration population, Maple Wood Public School\(^1\) opened in the early 1960’s. In 2007-2008, it had approximately 240 students from Kindergarten to Grade 7. The enrolment has been continuously decreasing over the past few years and the school has lost 125 students in the last 10 years (40 students in the last 5 years). It accepts students who live in a specific zone but cross-boundary enrolments are not rare, especially in the kindergarten years. It had 35 staff but not all of them were working there full-time and many teachers were sharing jobs. The students were from different backgrounds, representing more than 25 languages, but mostly from East Asia.

According to Provincial Electoral Profiles, in the electoral riding where the school is located only about 40% of the people have English as their mother tongue/home language. The school had a hot lunch program and according to the school secretary, “fifty to sixty percent of students may have malnutrition and 10% could come to school without breakfast.”

The school used to be formally “recognized” as an inner-city school which received special funding from the Board. This changed five years ago when the school was stripped of its ‘status’. This meant losing more than $30,000 and three full-time staff which used to be at the school as family supporter, staff assistant, and counsellor. While the staff believed nothing had changed in the life of students, the school Board explanation for changing the inner-city “status” was a demographic change in the area, i.e. income and the level of education of the population. On the other hand, for more than

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\(^1\) All names have been changed to ensure anonymity.
a decade, the Board has been in an on-going battle with the provincial government over the funding allocated for inner-city schools; a battle which only brought more and more cuts even in the blooming days of surpluses. This year only 14% of elementary schools in the Board were eligible for that funding.

**The Grade 3-4 Class**

The grade 3-4 class which I observed had 24 students, 13 female (6 in grade 3 and 7 in grade 4) and 11 male (5 in grade 3 and 6 in grade 4). The “home languages” of these students, as declared by their parents to the school, included: Cantonese (15 students), English (4 students), Vietnamese (2 students), Japanese (1 student), Tagalog (1 student), and Phillipino (1 student). The female teacher, Mrs. Kate, with a Euro-Canadian background had 16 years of teaching experience. Recently she had earned a Master’s degree in Education through distance education. She took Wednesdays off in order to fill her required voluntary hours in the Catholic school where her daughter was studying. On Wednesdays, a substitute teacher taught the class. I spent five weeks (full day everyday) in the class in November and December, 2007. I paid another short visit to the school in spring 2008 when I was in the city for a personal reason. During the second visit, I stayed two days at the school, observed the same grade 3-4 classroom, and had another interview with the teacher.

All the staff at the school, especially the grade 3-4 teacher, Mrs. Kate, were quite supportive of my research. They readily provided all information or documents that I requested. Any staff member whom I asked to interview did not hesitate in responding positively. Mrs. Kate invited me to all her meetings with parents and other staff members and asked for her colleagues’ permission for my presence. I did not record those meetings
but took notes of them. Mrs. Kate gave me access to all her books, notebooks, lesson plans, and whatever else I asked for. She was open and talked easily about everything. She was not apologetic in talking about issues which she could guess we had different opinions.

**Data Collection/ Generation**

Drawing on Barbour (2008), Mason (1996), and May (2001), I prefer to use the term data generation (or data production) instead of data collection. While the former acknowledges the active role of researchers in the interaction with participants and the dynamic nature of the knowledge constructed through the research which has influence on researchers, the latter implies that data are “out there” to be collected by researcher.

Creswell (1998) notes that in ethnography, data usually come from participant observation, interviews, artefacts, and documents. By participant observation, he means an observational role in which the researcher takes part in activities in the site s/he observes. Brewer (2000) claims that participant observation is the technique most closely associated with ethnography and it means “the researcher’s own attitude changes, fears and anxieties, and social meanings” (p. 59) while being in the field are part of the data.

The goal is to keep a balance between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ views. Brewer argues that while getting too close or “going native” has the danger of losing critical views, keeping a distance and a professional identity with no rapport contradicts the method. For him, there is a continuum of participation of the observer in the site from complete/pure observer who is not involved in any activity to the complete/pure participant who tries to fully engage in the activities of the site under study. Between these two are variations of participant observation and variants of observant participation.
One could see that Brewer’s (2000) continuum of observer participant in the site from complete/pure observer to complete pure participant is a complete/pure fantasy at these terminal points. There is no complete observer who is not involved in any activity; this observer is affecting the activity simply by being there; one can just ask anyone else present if this observer is invisible. Also, there is no complete/pure participant given the assorted differences in histories and objectives between the “pure” participant and everyone else involved in the situation. Hammersley and Atkins (1995) argue, correctly in my view, that we need to abandon the idea of standardizing the social character of research, i.e., becoming “full participant” or “a fly on the wall”, in order to understand that all data are mediated and the researcher “is the research instrument par excellence” (p. 19).

In a description of ethnographic techniques, Wolcott (1999) refers to experiencing (getting information from all senses), enquiring (interviewing), and examining (archival activities). Under the title of enquiring, he mentions the following strategies: “casual conversation; life history, life cycle interview; key informant interviewing; semi-structured interview; survey; household census, ethnogenealogy; questionnaire (written and/or oral); projective techniques; other measurement techniques” (p. 52).

My data mainly consist of classroom observations with audio-recording of the sessions. Interviews with a number of students and teachers as well as students’ works are used as the complementary sources of data in order to explain, clarify, check, or elaborate on the transcriptions and observation notes. Generally speaking, recording observations provides a more detailed and accurate report, permits more careful analysis, frees the researcher from the task of recording and gives her/him an opportunity to
concentrate on the contextual information (Foster, 1996). In the following sections, I will elaborate on these data sources.

**Observation**

Schram (2003) reminds us that a researcher “cannot be everywhere at once or take in every possible viewpoint at the same time” (p. 97). One usually engages in observing certain activities and persons rather than others. As Schram (2003) argues, by chance, intentional choice, or under the influence of the politics of the setting, an observer will be exposed to differing perspectives. Therefore, the aim of observation is “to uncover any number of possible truths or meanings manifested in the experiences or words of participants” (p. 97) or, in Geertz’s (1986) words accessing participants’ “experience near” through “distant experience.”

Walsh, Tobin, and Graue (1993) indicate that the social, cognitive, and political distance between the adult researcher and children makes interviewing and observation of children much more difficult than with adults. They reject the possibility of minimizing the differences between adults and children and do not “believe that these differences can be minimized, or, more importantly, that they should be” (p. 471). They support this belief with Geertz’s (1986) idea of not being able to live other people’s lives and only the possibility of having these lives through their expressions just like “scratching the surface” (p. 373). In the same vein, Fine and Sandstrom (1988) contend that children always have an unequal and lower status compared to the adult researcher mainly because of their different social roles that have been influenced “by age, cognitive development, physical maturity, and acquisition of social responsibility” (p. 14). Building trust with students is an important issue in the process of data collection.
According to Fine and Sandstrom (1988), although adopting some of the behaviours of the students is possible and helpful for the rapport, a false attempt to be a peer may backfire and cause discomfort. They argue that children possess a subculture of their own with secret elements and too often adults have a deceptive sense of déjà vu because they have passed through childhood. They also warn against taking for granted the similarity of children’s culture to adult’s culture simply because they live within the same mainstream of society. This underlines the difficulties of understanding children’s social meanings or “viewing the world through their [children’s] hearts and minds” (p. 12).

Holliday (2007) notices that in a rich setting one could record everything but this will lead to an unmanageable data set. On the other hand, he warns against randomly selecting data which would end up with “a mish-mash of unconnected data” (p. 73). His advice is starting with a broad focus in order to survey the setting and then deciding where one needs to focus more closely.

Creswell (1998) recommends designing an observational protocol for note-taking. Scott and Usher (1999) have elaborated on the development of observation protocols, or instruments as they call it. They suggest that more flexible semi-structured observational data have the advantage of not prejudging the subject matter and put the researcher in a better position to correct the errors of observation.

All that said about the theoretical aspects of observation, my main dilemma in the classroom was to stay focused and not be side-tracked by many other interesting things happening at the same time. This was very difficult because everything can be viewed and framed as cultural. For example, due to my sensitivity to gender issues, my very first
note in the classroom was written when Mrs. Kate wanted to introduce me to students. She started “girls and boys! We have a guest today.” Later, I noticed that she is consistent in addressing the class with the phrase “boys and girls” rather than “girls, and boys!” The second day, I had to warn myself: “you are not here to record gender differences.” Another example was also in the first week when I started to take notes about students from different ethnic backgrounds. Again, the following day I had to warn myself “you are not here to observe ethnic difference” because ethnicity was not the focus of my study. Also, it was not always easy to decide whether I should take notes of Mrs. Kate’s teachings or what students were doing at the same time. Reflecting on this issue retrospectively, I cannot claim that I was not “distracted” by things that I had not planned and thought about.

*Intervention/Participation*

Before starting my research, I had a concern that my presence would disrupt the setting being studied. While I was aware of the impossibility of eliminating the influence of my presence, I wanted to minimize it. This was not an easy task since an adult among children is very similar to “the white researcher in black society; the male researcher studying women, or the ethnologist observing a distant tribal culture” (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988, p. 13). On the other hand, some teachers feel uncomfortable being watched while they are “on stage.” Master (1983) contends that “being observed is something many ESL teachers find a troubling event” (p. 497) and “the observer is an invasive presence in the classroom” (p.498) who has the full responsibility to observe “the etiquette of observation” in the class. As part of his suggested etiquette, we learn

an observer taking notes cannot be a participant in the class at the same time. Hence, an observer who is continuously writing can distract the teacher, just as a
student reading a newspaper can. Notetaking should therefore be kept to a minimum. (p. 500)

While his discussion is focused on administrative observations, he emphasized that “any observer is an invader” (p. 501). From my experience, I could say that I did not feel such a discomfort from the teacher.

For most of my stay at school, I was sitting in a chair close to the teacher’s desk and taking notes. Sometimes when students were working, I walked around the classroom to see more closely how they work, interact with each other, and with the teacher. Never did I attempt to help students with any task or answer their questions unless I was asked by the teacher to do so (quite a few times). The only exception was when the class had a lesson on the provincial government, I suggested the teacher take the students for a visit to the office of the local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP), a ten-minute walk from the school. The teacher liked the idea very much and we went to the MPP’s office with students from other classes and two other teachers.

Sometimes the teacher asked me to make copies, take something for her from the office, or supervise students for a few minutes. I always was happy to offer these small services. However, there were occasions where I felt a tension between my desire to stay and observe and my wish to do what she had asked me. On the day of my departure, when I asked the teacher to give me feedback about my presence there, she said “the best thing was that you never said a word during my teaching although I could see in your eyes that you had something to say.”

On the first few days of my stay, the teacher asked me a couple of times “so what are you noticing?” and I said that “I cannot say anything before going to my notes and recordings.” In the second week of my stay, when our talk was on standardized testing,
she asked my view and I did not hide my disagreement with it, although she believed “there is a place for it.” From there, she got a sense of where I may stand on educational issues. In our daily chats, she smilingly more than once said that “I know you may not agree but we agree to disagree.” In the last week of my stay, she told me that our chats about embedded values in educational practices had been very useful for her.

**Interviews**

According to Mason (2002), “interview methodology begins from the assumption that it is possible to investigate elements of the social by asking people to talk, and to gather or construct knowledge by listening to and interpreting what they say and to how they say it” (p. 225). She argues, validly in my view, that the interview is not an information-gathering or knowledge-excavation exercise. Rather, it is a complex interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, as co-participants, in the process of knowledge construction.

Similarly, for Rapley (2004), interviews are “social encounters where speakers collaborate in producing retrospective (and prospective) accounts or versions of their past (or future) actions, experiences, and feelings” (p. 16, emphasis in the original]. As such, as Mason (2002) points out, interviewees’ accounts, should not be read “as straightforward descriptions of social experience” (p. 237) or “reality”.

Silverman (2006) notices that interviews offer representations of people’s experience rather than directly telling us those experiences or getting us to other people’s head. I agree with what Silverman (2006) calls a constructionist view; i.e., rather than hearing “interview responses simply as true or false reports on reality, […] we can treat such responses as displays of perspectives and moral forms which draw upon available
cultural resources” (p. 144). In the process of interview, the interviewer and the
interviewee “construct some version of the world appropriate to what we take to be self-
evident about the person to whom we are speaking and the context of the question” (p.
118).

Students were interviewed in pairs with the hope that the discussion between the
children would enrich the data and lead me to the kind of questions I should ask (Walsh,
Tobin, & Graue, 1993). This technique also helps have a more comfortable and less
intimidating environment since kids are more relaxed when they are with their friends
(Walsh, Tobin, & Graue) and group interviewing helps reduce the power differential
(Eder & Fingerson, 2001). Most of the interviews with the students took place at recess
time when we were sitting on the floor in a corner of the classroom and the teacher was
helping a couple of students.

Interviews were not so structured that it would not allow the interviewees to talk
about what I may not have asked or interpreting the social worlds in ways I had not
thought of (Mason, 2002). However, it was not ‘structure-free’ “not least because the
agendas and assumptions of both interviewer and interviewee [would] inevitably impose
frameworks for meaningful interaction” (p. 231). I only tried to minimize my role in the
sequencing of the dialogue (Mason, 2002).

These informally structured interviews were almost half an hour in length and
were audio-recorded and transcribed. Samples of interview questions are included in
Appendix C. While I was able to interview all the staff members whom I had in mind, I
did not receive the approval of many parents for interviewing their children. The reason
for their disagreement, in my view, was the overall lack of communication between the
school and parents. Everyday Mrs. Kate asked students to return these letters of information to her and many students said that their parent did not have time to read the letter. Although I had translated my letter of information for parents, many of these parents were not able to read in their first language.

*Students’ Collected Works*

Mason (2002) argues that we need to discuss questions about “the elements of the social which cannot be expressed through talk” (p. 237). She notices that some of these elements may be observed but some other potentially significant elements, such as “processes of thought, feeling, emotion, sentiment” cannot be observed and researching them is inherently problematic. Mason suggests that some of these elements may be captured in non-verbal products, such as drawings, that can be treated as a text with a generous definition. Visual methods, Mason warns us, should not be considered “less constructed or more directly representational than verbal interview methods” (p. 238-239).

With this view in mind, I collected homework of the students whose parents had given me permission to do so and I use them in my analysis. Again only a few parents agreed that the work of their children be collected. In my view, this was due to lack of understanding. For example, some parents have agreed with the participation of their children without specifying which part of the study (i.e., interview, collection of works, etc.). Two students did not return the forms and said that their parents no longer wanted them to participate in the study because “they did not know what it was.”
Field Relations

One of my major concerns was to establish the required close relationship with teachers and students so that I could “move toward being a tolerated insider in children’s society” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.86). Learning from Bogdan and Biklen (2003), I had in mind to break out of adult habits such as viewing “childhood as an absolute category rather than as a social construction” (p. 86), not taking seriously what children say, evaluating children’s behaviour, and taking charge with them.

My relationship with the teacher, Mrs. Kate, went quite smoothly and well. I do not remember any incident which may have caused a sense of unease/discomfort for either of us, at least not any that I could feel/understand. She had nothing to hide, in her own words “like an open book.” I was free to go over all her books, documents, lesson plans, and curricular guides. I never felt she was doing something because of my presence. In many cases, she volunteered background information about the school, students, or events. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) call this voluntary information “unsolicited accounts” of the setting which may be given by participants at the early stages of the research for “making sure that the researcher understands the situation ‘correctly’” (p. 127). In a few cases, I found these accounts as responses to her assumptions about my possible unspoken reflections on what was going on in the class. For example, one day students had a test on social studies and I asked for a copy of the test for myself. She gave me a copy and in a few minutes she came to me and said “well this test is mostly an information recall and may not be considered very informative. But sometimes we do that and I believe recall has a place for itself.”
She warmly introduced me to her colleagues at school as a “shadow” in her class, a term that I had not heard of before. Later I found out that Waxman, Huang, and Wang (1997) have defined shadowing as “a quasi-ethnographic observation method designed to gather qualitative data on the classroom experiences of individual students during a typical class period or school day” (p. 347).

I attended almost all of the teacher’s meetings with parents and other teachers. In all these cases, she volunteered to ask others’ permission for my participation, something that I may have considered too much to ask for. My rule was never to ask for anything beyond her class unless she suggested it. It was hard for me to understand the relationships among the staff and appropriateness of such requests.

On the first day of my visit, after a brief description of me as a student who was trying to do some “homework” for my university, she asked me to say something about myself. I told them about my city in Canada, my family, my country of origin, my teaching history, my favourite foods, my interest in poetry, cooking, and traveling and how terrible I am at drawing but said little about research. On the same day, when the teacher asked me how I wished the students to call me, I said “Majid”, and she asked with a hesitation “just Majid?” and I responded “yes.” While I have never thought of this before that moment, I am glad about my decision. I think this allowed a much closer relationship than what would be possible if they called me Mr. Malekan. Even on the occasions that the teacher asked me to supervise the students for a few minutes in her absence, I tried not to give instructions or do anything from the position of power. I never reported any incident from the class to the teacher. For example, one day while the teacher was talking over the phone and students were putting their tests on the teacher’s
desk, a student came to the desk and after seeing the answer on one of the students’ test went back to her seat to correct her answer; she looked at me and I smiled. Witnessing incidents like students telling me “give me five” in the hallways or a student asking me about my jacket and where I bought it, led me to believe that they were comfortable, or at least not uncomfortable, with me.

**Transcription**

Poland (2002) reminds us that the conventional understanding of the accuracy/error of transcription in terms of the inconsistency between the transcript and the audio recording is not adequate. He suggests problematizing “verbatim” because it does not capture interpersonal interactions and nonverbal communications. Among those nonverbal aspects, he refers to “body language, facial expressions, eye gazes […], nods, smiles or frowns […], the physical setting, the ways participants are addressed” (p. 635).

Poland and Pederson’s (1998) view is worth a long quote:

> Transcription is a transformative process, taking live conversation and changing it into a textual representation of talk. Hence, transcripts are silent in several ways. They are, for instance, silent about body language, such as gestures, facial expressions (the meaningful glance), and positioning, despite the complex devices some employ to record the nonverbal aspects of speech. Reading a transcript then becomes like reading the text of a play; one has to imagine for oneself the scene, locate the actors in a setting, and embody the silent voices on the page.” (p. 193)

This view makes more sense taking into account Poland’s (2002) call for problematizing the authority of verbatim. By noticing that interpersonal and nonverbal interactions missed from the verbatim transcription (e.g., facial expressions, nods, smiles, frowns, intonations of voice, pauses, sighs), Poland invites us to look at transcripts as contextually constructed coauthorship and to be mindful of their limitations.
**Data Presentation**

The data will be presented in Chapters 6 to 9. The first chapter covers my description of the school, the classroom, students, and teachers and includes physical settings, demographics, and resources. Chapter 7 is an account of different classroom activities on the days when the main teacher taught the class. Since these activities happened during different days of a week, I have pulled them together into a composite day. A similar account of Wednesdays, when the substitute teacher was teaching the class is presented in Chapter 8. Finally, Chapter 9 includes several critical vignettes or important points of the study such as activities for Christmas holidays, communications with students and parents, multicultural education as practiced in the class, and a case of experienced curriculum on diversity.

These chapters on data presentation will conclude with a summary which captures what is most related to my research question in that chapter. Once again, I do not claim any objectivity on why these vignettes seemed important to me; neither do I for the organization of the data presentation.

I need to mention two points about the presented data. First, since I did not intend to do context analysis, I removed most of the nonverbal elements of speech such as pauses, smiles, and stutters. I also removed many “pet phrases” or “verbal tics” such as “you know.” Grammatical errors were also corrected in this process of “data cleaning.” Secondly, the quotes from teachers from non-teaching occasions are not all from interviews. Since all classroom sessions were audio-recorded, some of these quotes are from recordings of my conversations with teachers while students were working.
Data Analysis

The long process of data analysis for me started with my field notes at the school. I was also taking notes while transcribing. However, when I “formally” started my data analysis, I needed to choose my analytic framework. In Chapter 2, I argued that, officially, multicultural education is the context of schooling for minority students. Additionally, John Berry’s model of acculturation views multiculturalism in the host society as a necessary condition for the integration of immigrants. Drawing on these two arguments, I chose culturally responsive teaching, which is a framework for actualization of multicultural education, as my analytical framework. The first part of Chapter 10 on data analysis, therefore, contrasts data to this analytical framework.

Furthermore, by following the steps suggested by LeCompte (2000), other themes were raised from the data. By reading several times through the cleaned and tidied up data, I collected pieces relevant to my research question that needed to be coded or in LeCompte’s words, “items or units of analysis” (p. 148). These items were found by systematically looking for frequency of happening, omission of occurrence, and declaration by participants. The third step, as introduced by LeCompte, was “comparing and contrasting items” in order to find “stable sets of items” (p. 148) or “things that go together” (p. 150). The final step involved creating themes or patterns which “are made up of taxonomies that seem to fit together or be related to one another.” (p. 150). The second part of Chapter 10 discusses themes raised from the process of data analysis.

Ethics

While I needed to meet all the requirements of Queen’s University for ethical review (such as parents’ consent letters, consent letters from the board, school, and
teachers, anonymity of the participants, and the confidentiality of the data), they were not my only concerns. I had to bear in mind that elementary students may be particularly vulnerable for the following reasons: a power imbalance exists between them and the researcher; children have more difficulty than adults in understanding the research process due to their development characteristics and life experience; and the institutional context of research makes it difficult for the students not to cooperate (Stanley & Sieber, 1992).

Fine and Sandstrom (1988) have elaborated on ethical issues in research with minors. They mention three issues that are especially important: (1) adults’ responsibility in handling the potential harmful situations, that is when (not) to intervene in those situations, (2) the consequences of accepting a “policing role” as an adult; they recommend that the researcher not accept to be a disciplinarian, and (3) the problems of attaining informed consent and explaining the inquiry in an understandable manner. In this issue, they emphasize confidentiality and the right of children to opt out of the participation and also the difficulty of explaining the research purposes for them in such a way that it does not undermine the credibility of the research.

The ethical issues of research have deep roots in moral philosophy. These roots go much beyond the “routine” consent forms signed by adults (school authorities and parents). As an example, a special issue of Journal of Philosophy of Education brings together the different viewpoints on “issues of access and consent, virtue, conflict, the dominance of the modes of reasoning in the character and conduct of the research” (McNamee, 2001, p. 310). Central to many discussions in this area is a negotiated,
educated, and ongoing consent from children in addition to the permission from the “gate-keepers” of the access.

I totally agree with Milne (2005) that “concepts such as informed consent, risk/benefit analysis, and confidentiality are not inherent truths of ethics or categorical imperatives. They are constructs that have emerged from specific ethical philosophies” (p. 33). Barbour (2008), along with others, suggests that “we use the concept of ‘process consent’ instead of the blanket term of ‘informed consent’ which suggests […] that this is ‘once-and-for-all’ procedure to be attended at the outset of the project and never thereafter revisited” (p. 78). They cannot deal with the consequences of negligence after the approval of the application. Barbour (2008) suggests that ethical dilemmas, that are endemic to research, should be resolved spontaneously and according to the situation.

Munhall (1988) claims that the concept of “informed consent” evolved out of experimental research. For qualitative research which is conducted “in an ever-changing field”, she suggests the concept of process consent in which “continually informing and asking permission establishes the needed trust to go on further in an ethical manner” (p. 157).

As an alternative to broaden the perception of ethical responsibility, Eder and Fingerson (2001) suggest reciprocity may be considered a response to power dynamics of research with children; i.e., giving back something in return for receiving information from children or their community. In my first visit with the principal, I offered to volunteer my time in any area where the school may need my help. Specifically, I offered organizing workshops for professional development. The principal liked this idea and his suggestion was “probably workshops on science where female teachers may feel less
self-confident.” I repeated my offer several times later, but it did not happen because of the tight schedule in the last days of the year when teachers were under the pressure of preparing report cards and a Christmas party.

I had no problem in contacting staff members and asking them questions about what they did and what they knew about the school and its routines. However, obtaining students’ and their parents’ consent was not easy due to the communication problem. I sent the Cantonese and Vietnamese translation of the consent form along with the English version for the students whose language at home was not English (These letters and their translations are included in Appendix A). The parents of the Japanese student were fluent in English and did not need translation and I could not find anyone to translate the forms into Tagalog and Philippino. I was told by the teacher that the translation may not solve the problem because some of the parents could not read in their home language either. Overall, parents of seven students agreed to having their child be interviewed. One of them changed her mind when we asked her to clarify which part of the study (observation, interview, collecting their works) she agreed with. I will discuss the issue of communication more in the chapter on the analysis of data.

**Summary**

In this chapter I explained the reasons for choosing my research methods and elaborated on theoretical issues underpinning these methods. The processes of data generation/collection as well as their scope and limitations were discussed as well. I also described how I chose the site of the study and how I obtained access to it. Finally, I gave a description of the research site, my field relationships, and the ethical issues relevant to my research. In the following four chapters, I will present the data from the study.
CHAPTER 6
THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In this first chapter on data presentation, I use my field notes, school and board policies and documents, interview data, and photographs taken at the site to give a description of the context of the study. I believe photos will give an especially better grasp of the physical environment of the study, an aspect which is often taken for granted (Patton, 2002). In addition to the physical setting of the school and the grade 3-4 classroom, available resources at the school and classroom level (especially for ESL students), demographic information, and existing programs will be presented here.

Maple Wood School

Located in an area of high immigration population in Western Canada, Maple Wood Public School opened in the early 1960’s. It is part of a school board with a very high percentage of immigrant students. The board has a long history of developing multicultural policies and programs. These policies and programs have changed and had ups and downs in the last four decades, as has been the case in other school boards. According to Gibson’s (1976) typology, discussed in Chapter 2, the school board policies at present could be considered type 3 or education for cultural pluralism.

Demographics. According to Provincial Electoral Profiles, in the electoral riding where the school is located only about 40% of the people have English as their mother tongue/home language. The school had a hot lunch program to which students

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2 Throughout the chapters on data presentation, names of people and places have been changed for the sake of anonymity. Also, the name of institutes as well as certain positions, programs, and documents that could lead to the identification of the site have been changed. All pictures have been taken in the presence of the teacher with her full agreement. They had no identifying information, or have been edited to erase any identifying element.

3 These policies have not been reproduced here and have not been quoted in order to maintain anonymity.
contributed as much as they could afford (the money was collected by the Board and nobody at school knew how much each student contributed). As mentioned in the last chapter, according to the school secretary’s estimation, “fifty to sixty percent of students may have malnutrition and 10% could come to school without breakfast.”

From teachers’ appearance, I guessed that only three of them had Asian backgrounds. I confirmed this point after talking to those three teachers. The principal, a White male with European background, had started his job as principal the same school year. Mrs. Kate, the classroom teacher with whom I worked, made the following comment on principals of the school:

The rule, I think, is that the administrator be changed every 3 years. But I have heard that some schools have been more stable with principals working for 7 years. But our school has been described as an easy-going school. So we either get brand-new administrators or retiring administrators. We have had a new administrator every three years since I have been here. That’s because our parents complain less. If the school was on the other side of the city, that wouldn’t be the case; this is my opinion.

**Physical setting and resources.** While this was the only school in the board that I had a chance to visit thoroughly, I could say that the school building was in a relatively decent shape. It had a very large playground which was mostly covered by grass and partly by concrete. Classrooms are arranged in a way where all K-2 classes are in one wing of the building with their own staff room. Grade 3 to 7 classrooms and their staff room are in another wing. The school had a big gymnasium, a relatively large library, and a computer room (or computer lab). Almost 50% of the computers in the computer room were not working. The school had only one video projector which was kept in principal’s office and I did not see any overhead projector in the classroom. None of the five teachers whom I asked knew how to work this projector.
While I never asked about the financial situation of the school, I believe that the school must have been in financial straits. For example, two grade three students did not have a spelling book and the teacher had to copy the lesson for them. For a presentation on social studies, teachers needed $50 to buy food and decorating materials and the principal had told teachers that he could not pay the money. Three teachers and I volunteered to pay for that event but later I was told that the principal changed his mind and paid the money. I had a feeling that maybe those three teachers decided not to accept my money and paid it themselves.

**School walls.** All school walls were covered by paintings and posters mostly produced by students. Generally, students of each class had their posters on hallways in the vicinity of their classroom. Paintings on the stairway walls seemed more professional as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

*Figure 2. Painting on the stairway.*

*Figure 3. Painting on the stairway.*

The walls near the main entrance and around the office were covered with notices for students and parents. Figures 4 and 5 show two of the notices for students.
Figure 4. A notice for Valentine’s day sale.

Figure 5. A notice for Backwards day (students wearing their clothes backward).
There was one notice with a Chinese translation. The notice signed by the school board and another local educational institute asked parents and grandparents to get together on Wednesday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30 in order to:

- Get to know other parents and grandparents.
- Learn how to support your children at school.
- Learn what the community and city has to offer.
- Go on field trips.

The agenda for two consecutive weeks was:

- December 12: Opening tea party
- December 19: Christmas crafts and cookies.

**General notes about the school.** The followings are some general points from my field notes about the school:

- I never witnessed the principal’s visit to the grade 3-4 class or any other class which I had chance to observe.
- There was no mentorship relationship between experienced teachers and the new ones.
- I did not witness any collaboration or co-teaching among teachers. Even when three teachers split teaching social studies of grade 5 and 4 among themselves, neither knew what the other one had done.
- No workshop, or guest-speaker lecture, was held during those weeks and Mrs. Kate told me there was none during the rest of the year.
- The school Website had not been updated since 2006 and the administrative staff named in the Website no longer worked there.

**Beyond Official Numbers: A Few Anecdotes from Students’ Life**

While I do not have enough information on requirements and the process of giving schools the “status” of an inner city school, many staff members believed that the change in the school status was more a matter of budgetary limitations than a change in the demographic of the area, although one staff member had a different opinion.

Specifically Mrs. Taha, a resource teacher at the school, commented that

It’s very different from when I first got here. [it was] more low income family; now it’s changing, I think we have more middle-class families here. But overall,
always supportive. Parents come in when they have concerns, but very respectful of teachers and what’s going on here. And the kids, too, very, very respectful.

When I asked Mrs. Taha how this change in the demographics had changed the situation of ESL students, her response was

They may come from better families, more wealthy, but I still think learning is the same. [...] Yeah, I think the more wealthier the family, the parents do speak English, whereas the families that have parents working all the time, just trying to make ends meet, they’re speaking their native language. So I see more of those kinds of kids here in this Centre.

A few anecdotes in this section may give a sense of some students’ life.

Mrs. Kate, the grade 3-4 teacher, read for me from the writing of one her former students who at the time was in grade 6 or 7 (she was not sure). She told me this writing could somehow reflect the “culture of the school” or at least part of it.

My mom is great. My dad always targets his rudeness and obnoxiousness at me. I have no idea why, but I know [this part is cut off. Something]. When I was five years old, he still does not treat my sister properly. But I don’t think it is as much as I have to endure. He does not often physically hurt me, but he does emotionally. Sometimes he likes to come into my room when I am busy and wipes his clean, dirty, I can often tell, hands on my face. It annoys me so much. Fortunately, he is only visible three times a year. So I am not that mad about it. I have survived six years that I know of under the same roof of my father and he was not so bad. I finally stopped ignoring him at about nine and now that I am eleven, he has begun leaving me alone. I thank him a lot for that. I am glad he is finally stopped picking on me and may be I just soon might get a liking for him. If you could wish for a dad what would he be like.

Reflecting on this piece, Mrs. Kate continued:

I would say this is something----. For lots of children here they live and every story is unique. You know like ---one father committed suicide and another father is dead. You know another father left the Mom. Another father has just found out-- his dad has cancer, he can’t move and so his Mom does everything. And---- Yeah, it just goes on and on, it is very sad. Another father, it was kind of funny, she came to me about her parents because the mom always talked to me; so where is the dad? Oh, he works, you know, fifteen hours in a restaurant and she only sees him on the weekends and the cancer just came out. I asked, does he sleep at home? She said, O yeah but she comes home and he already in bed and he is sleepy when she wakes-up for school and
she never sees him. So, it's like---- And then when he is around on the weekends, all he does, he spoils her because he never sees her so. So she is the [?] he is more of a bother because he just---, he is not really there and so the mom has no support. She has no family to help her, assist her, her daughter. Very sad!  

Also, in Mrs. Kate’s class there was a student, Simon, whose father had committed suicide a year ago. The family had difficult times not only because of losing the father but also due to the stigma of the suicide in their community. Simon’s older brother was also at Maple Wood. The older brother was suffering from some mental health issues. During my stay, I saw the brother twice crying and screaming on the floor and nobody could calm him. On another occasion, on the morning of the day of the Christmas Concert, Simon’s brother was sitting for hours in the space under the stairway with his head between his legs without talking to anybody. He even refused to talk to the head teacher who was the acting principal. She told me “It didn’t work; I do not know how to do counselling.” Just by accident, a member from the Board Counselling Team showed up and went and sat beside the student. The counsellor told me that he will contact another counsellor who regularly worked with Simon’s brother. The secretary who witnessed this told me

They are a really low-income family. I will be going Christmas shopping for him from the little fund that we have. It is a fund from a former Trustee in the board who used to be a teacher. All inner city schools get it and we get it although we are no longer on the list. We can buy school supplies, clothing, music lessons, and, sports. You ask when you need and they send the cheque per request. It used to be around a $1000 a year.

The Grade 3-4 Class

In the previous chapter, I explained the demographics of the class. I need to mention that only one student had a non-English first name. I noticed that only eight

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4 I guess by “culture of the school”, Mrs. Kate meant the socio-economic background or culture of students.
students, out of 25, had ordered the portraits taken by the school. Also, on an occasion when students were asked to bring food for a celebration, only 10 students brought food.

The female teacher, Mrs. Kate, took Wednesdays off in order to fill her required voluntary hours in the Catholic school where her daughter was studying. On Wednesdays, a substitute teacher, Ms. Rose, taught the class. Ms. Rose taught only one day at Maple Wood School but she was substitute teaching one day per week in another school.

**Physical setting.** Located on the first floor of the building, the classroom had two doors: one opening to the hallway and the other opening to the playground. Students usually waited behind the door in the playground for the teacher to open the door for them. The classroom had very good natural light from the windows opening to the playground.

A wall separated the classroom from the cloakroom where students’ cubbies and hangers were mounted on the other side of the wall. The cloakroom led to a closet which contained stationary supplies, some books, and curriculum documents. Two big sliding green chalkboards ran on two sides of the class. Bookshelves were located on the side facing the playground. Six desks were placed in the middle of classroom. The arrangement of these desks is shown in Figure 8. On my second visit to the school, I noticed that students’ sitting arrangement had changed. Mrs. Kate told me that she usually changed the sitting arrangement three times a year and each student had a chance to pick a friend with whom s/he would like to sit. No distinction was made between students in grade 3 and 4.
Figure 6. The cloakroom.

Figure 7. The Classroom.
Figure 8. A Sketch of the classroom sitting arrangement (G=Girl, B=Boy).
As shown in Figures 7 and 9, in front of every student in the class there was a folded piece of red cardboard decorated with the Remembrance Day poppy. The outer side of this piece includes the word “Goals” and the student’s name. The inner part included the goals that each student had set for herself/himself with Mrs. Kate’s help. These goals were mostly academic, similar to expectations expressed in curriculum documents, but they were individually customized. During my five weeks’ stay, I never witnessed a student looking at those goals.

Figure 9. Goals in front of every student.
Computer and technology. There was one rather old computer in the corner of the classroom. During my five-week stay, I never saw any student working with that computer. In fact, the teacher could not log into the computer due to technical difficulties. She told me that she had been waiting for weeks for the problem to get fixed. During my stay, the technician came and solved the problem. However, the teacher could not print from that computer on two occasions when she needed it.

On my second visit to the school in spring 2008, I noticed that the computer in the class had been replaced by a brand-new one. The teacher told me that the new computers came as a result of changing the networking system of the board. The only difference that the teacher saw was that the students were no longer allowed to work with the computer. “They were not working with it anyway”, she added.

Other than the computer, there was a tape recorder in a corner of Mrs. Kate’s class. On three occasions during my stay, Mrs. Kate told a couple of students who had finished their work early to go that corner and listen to tapes.

Classroom walls. All walls were filled with posters, some of which were students’ profiles produced by themselves with the teacher’s help. They included personal information and what they were interested in. Other posters were cultural/educational either bought (Figures 10 and 11) or produced by the teacher (the left poster in Figure 10 and the flag salute in Figure 12). Figures 12 and 13 show two posters which were placed right beside the door of the classroom.
Figure 10. An example of educational posters on the wall.

Figure 11. Posters on the classroom walls and a desk for stationery.
Figure 12. A poster of the flag salute.

Figure 13. Canada map and some posters made by the teacher on students’ behaviour and attitudes.
On the side of the classroom with windows facing the playgrounds, there were desks for displaying books or samples of students’ work during their activities. Figures 13, 14, and 15 show some of these desks.

*Figure 14. Students' work from a science activity.*

*Figure 15. Books and tools related to a science activity.*
Figure 16. Science related books on a desk.

Figure 17. Samples of Students' work on a desk.
The Staff Room

As mentioned earlier, teachers for K-2 had their own staff room. In the staff room, I always sat close to Mrs. Kate or one of her close friends unless all chairs nearby were taken. I am not sure this was because I felt more comfortable or had something to say to them or what. I did not take my notepad to the staff room because I did not have permission for that. Also, I thought it would be intrusive and inappropriate. However, I concluded two points from my observations in the staff room. First, there was little professional talk among teachers. On only five occasions, I overheard a brief chat about issues related to school and teaching. On another occasion, teachers talked very briefly about a change in the board administration. During my stay at the school, there were a couple of very “hot” issues in the city which were discussed and debated in the local and national media. To my surprise, I did not hear any of those issues even being mentioned in the staff room. Most of the time, teachers were talking, in groups of 2-4, about their personal and family life.

The second point was a mild tension among teachers to the extent that I wrote in my notes “this does not seem a very friendly environment.” There were issues from the past which I never asked about. Mrs. Kate shared one of these stories about a staff member who “had problems with most people.” At the end of my stay, I concluded that siding with the teachers’ union and standardized testing were among the major issues which split the staff. I think Mrs. Kate confirmed this perception of a divide among teachers when she told me

One day we went to another school in the area for a visit. Same area, same population, same ESL and LAC students. But they scored much higher on the province test. To me, this is because they work as a team.
The Teacher’s Background and Education

Mrs. Kate, the grade 3-4 teacher, was an immigrant with European background. She had been teaching for 16 years and had started her work at this school in 2002.

I graduated from [her university] with a bachelor of general studies [BGS] and when I originally went to [her university], after my first term, I kind of panicked and quit for a year and I did not want to go back to school and I lost a year. So when after five years I had my BGS, but because I lost a year, I had to go back to do courses to make up; because I didn’t have enough courses. At that time, you could get into the TEP (Teacher Education Program) without a degree. So I was short my courses for my degree and everyone was saying just apply for TEP because you could get in without a degree and it takes a lot to get accepted. Because you usually didn’t get accepted the first time. But I got accepted the first time and I think partly because I was volunteering at a Catholic School. I was helping as a pair professional, they call it, so I was helping teachers in the classroom and volunteering. So I was volunteering and in the Catholic school you don’t have to be a teacher to teach.

She had finished her courses at nights while working as a substitute teacher in public schools. After finishing her degree, she started her full time job in a Catholic school and worked there for seven years teaching grades 2 and 4. She was overwhelmed with the workload of the school and extracurricular activities especially after the arrival of her second baby. Therefore, she moved to the public school board of the city in 1999.

I ended up getting a job as ESL teacher but because I didn’t have any ESL courses at that time, I was told by the district that I had to have at least one course and they would hire me as ESL teacher only if I went back to school and took an ESL course. If I was enrolled in the course, they would hire me. So I took an ESL course while I was working at, at that time it was Kingsbridge elementary school, so there were three of us that went for this course. So we go one night a week, it was a City University course. I took this ESL course while I was doing the ESL job.

She took Wednesday off to fill her volunteer duties at her daughter’s school where all parents had to do certain hours of voluntary work. At that Catholic school, she tested grade 2 and 4 students whom she suspected had learning difficulties in order to make recommendations. On Wednesdays, a substitute teacher, Ms. Rose, taught the grade 3-4
class. Mrs. Kate had set the agenda for Wednesday and Mrs. Rose taught according to that agenda. They had a notebook for communication on what had happened on Wednesdays (from Ms. Rose) or what special things needed to be done (from Mrs. Kate). They also called each other if they needed.

**Ms. Rose: Wednesdays’ Teacher**

Ms. Rose, the contract teacher who taught grade 3-4 students on Wednesday, also had a European background. Born and raised in the same city, she had an undergraduate degree in Psychology and History. She had finished her BEd in 2005 and 2007-2008 was her third teaching year. She had started her work at Maple Wood School in late October 2007. In September and October, another substitute teacher from the Board taught these students on Wednesdays. She had another contract job and was teaching in grade one in another school in the Board.

When I asked how things worked for her in terms of coordinating with Mrs. Kate, she said

Well, Mrs. Kate has been doing this job for 8 years. So, she’s got a system developed already. Yeah! So, when I came to this position, there was somebody before me and there were certain subjects of the day they taught and I just kept those. So, I kept the same subject in terms of subject matter or themes I keep in mind what she was doing or follow her year plan. So, we talk about different things. May be coming up....Really this is my six, seven times with them. So trying to get used to things.

And this was in December 2007.

**Mrs. Kate: My Impression**

The following are excerpts from my field notes on how I perceived/judged Mrs. Kate’s professional attitudes. These were written on different occasions and are summarized here to remove the redundancies.
She cares a lot about her students. I think this is somehow related to her role as a mother because she mentions her children all the time and compares her students with her children. Although I cannot see much sensitivity to students’ cultural differences, she is aware of their socio-economic situation and is sensitive to students as human beings. During these weeks on several occasions she has skipped her lunch and recess time to work with students. Many times she stayed at school after hours to help students. Almost everyday she took students’ work home for marking. She is doing her best against all odds.

Her patience is way beyond that of the teachers in the classrooms on this level. I never witnessed her raising her voice or getting angry. These are the same students whom Ms. Rose has to yell at so many times on Wednesdays. Does Ms. Rose really have to yell? I don’t know. I guess part of this may be because of Mrs. Kate’s experience; students interact differently with her. But part of it is building a relationship with students. The day that another substitute teacher came from the board, the situation was even worse than Wednesdays. That teacher had to send two students to the office. This had never happened before.

The Split Within: Creativity versus Skills?

As mentioned earlier, K-2 and 3-7 classrooms were in two different wings of the building. In the first week, Mrs. Kate talked about a “major split” between the teachers. It was a disagreement between lower grade teachers (K-2) on one side, and teachers in upper grades on the other. Mrs. Kate’s first explanation was that “they [lower grades teachers] put more emphasis on students’ creativity, but when these students come to us, they cannot read.” But very soon she brought up the issue of standards and standardized testing: “I strongly believe standards have a place, whether high or low that is another issue.”

In order to hear more about this disagreement, I asked Mrs. Kate to introduce me to one of the K-2 teachers. Apparently, this was not easy since the tension between these two groups of teachers was high. She remembered unpleasant stories from the past and how teachers avoided each other even for basics. However, Mrs. Kate asked Mrs. Carlson, who was more “approachable” and had “a fairly good relationship” with her, if I could interview her. After the interview, I wrote in my field notes:
It is interesting that the teacher whom Mrs. Kate introduced to me from K-2 had the same country of origin as Mrs. Kate. Also, Mrs. Kate’s best friend among the intermediate teachers, Mrs. Hills, was also from the same country. Do “they” hang out only with the people like themselves just as “we” do?

Mrs. Carlson was a kindergarten teacher with eight years of experience in Maple Wood school. She was born and raised in Canada and had a European background. On the question of different perceptions between elementary and intermediate teachers at Maple Wood School, Mrs. Carlson commented

There is a big difference between primary teachers and intermediate teachers. [...] Big. Because we get the children that are coming to the kindergarten. Some have never been to preschool. Some are just coming to the country. Some have been to preschool; and so we it is almost like that phrase from Forrest Gump movie “you never know what you are gonna get” That is what it looks like here. In kindergarten they come in, you end up saying wow that person might have special needs. That person has never been to school and is a real social problem for them to be at school in that first year. And so the very first year of the kindergarten is spent trying to get them in routine, trying to get them used to be independent and sometimes I feel that when they go through kindergarten, grade 1 or grade 2 here, and they go up to the other wing, in past, we have often been criticized. They feel that we haven’t been teaching the skills they need to have in order to cope with grade 3. [...] Because students have been dealing with the ESL-ness and the fact that many of them have never been to school, by the time they get to grade 3, they are a little behind the academics, a lot of them. Because they are struggling with all those other factors that are not enabling them to learn what they need to learn. So if they are getting at grade 3, say that if they are not reading at grade 3 level, there may be a little bit of the assumption that: oh you people [...] never taught the reading skills because they are not at that grade level. Which we know how far that kids have come. We really do. And they have made those milestones for us. We are amazed by the time they finish grade 2, like wow remember that kid in kindergarten. Now look at them. But for them, no like they are not up to par. That is the struggle we feel most [...] here.

After the interview, I talked with Mrs. Kate about the interview and she told me about her reasons or, in her words, “biases” in picking one of the K-2 teachers. She also remembered when she was a resource teacher for another teacher, that teacher had slammed the door in her face and they were not saying hello even passing by. She had
also told Mrs. Kate that teachers with views such as Mrs. Kate’s were not welcomed into her classroom. However, later they agreed to disagree and Mrs. Kate told me if she would be the resource teacher for her, she would do it differently.

**ESL-ness: Who Takes Care of It and How?**

The board recognizes two types of students with special needs: ESL students and LAC (Learning Assistance Center) students. Mrs. Taha, the resource teacher, explained the difference between these two as follows:

The ESL kids, their English is their second language. They get five years of ESL support in this board. After the five years, they become delisted. So we no longer get funding for these ESL kids. But a lot of the kids, five years isn’t enough to learn English. Even some Canadian-born kids, their first language is their own native tongue. So even after five years, it is not enough. They go home and speak their own language, and English is very limited at home. They only get English at school. So after that, they go on to my LAC list. […] [As for] the Learning Assistance Centre, we don’t get certain amount of money per child like the ESL kids. And so a lot of my learning assistance kids are ESL kids that have reached their five year limit, and still need support. The real LAC kids are kids that are Canadian-born, English is their first language. They may have a learning disability or not. They could just be slow in one particular area, and they need support there. Some LAC kids attend LAC just for a short period of time, maybe one term. They need extra support in reading comprehension skills. Once they do that, they kind of figure that out, then they go back to the classroom, and then hope they can cope. Some are able to cope, some aren’t. If they aren’t, some of them may come back for the second term. Some kids stay all year, for years and years at LAC, all depends on the situation.

As shown in the previous section, ESL students are a challenge for the school and teachers. This brought me to the question of teachers’ qualifications in terms of addressing these students’ needs. I asked this question of Mrs. Kate and here is her answer:

So when I got started, I guess it was 1999 and not at this school and they had ESL Teachers and LAC [Learning Assistance Center] teachers; so when you apply for a job, you had to have at least two ESL courses to be an ESL teacher to be hired and so. […] So if you are hired as an ESL teacher, you have to have at least two ESL courses from University. And if you hired as LAC teacher, you have to have
at least two LAC courses on learning disabilities. And then you were hired as teacher but then about in 2000 and 2001 with the budget cuts, they said that we are not gonna have ESL and LAC teachers because ESL teachers can do LAC and LAC can do ESL; and they are very different disciplines. But what they did, the school board lumped under one and they called it 'Resource'. [...] So now they are saying that jack of all trades. Anyone can do anything. (Laughing------)!

[Also], because Library is also under incremental; that was around the same time in 2000 and they got rid of ESL and LAC. And they got rid of library as a discipline. Like the librarian used to teach study skills and research and she used to teach like how to use technology, to research; how to research topics and how to decipher through all the information. But whereas now librarian does not have time to do that because part of her time is now incremental which is if there is a little bit of resource left over, she has to do it.

[Now the librarian] does ESL, LAC, and library. So next year, the librarian of this school --part of her week will be library, part of her work will be ESL, part of her week will be LAC and part of her week will be teaching grade 7. [...]This year she has ESL, LAC, and Library.

**Resource Teachers: Now and Then**

Mrs. Taha, the resource teacher for Mrs. Kate’s students, had 20 years of experience in teaching. She was born, raised, and educated in the same city where the school board was located. Her parents had an Asian background. She had started as a classroom teacher and continued as a music teacher. She had been working as a resource teacher since 2002. As a resource teacher, her job was supporting the classroom teacher with the learning needs of ESL children, the LAC children, and the special needs children. She was working four days a week and counted as an 80% resource teacher. With two other teachers (one 80% and the other 30%), there were a total of 1.9 resource teachers for the school. This total number was decided by the board on the basis of ESL, LAC, and special need students. Mrs. Taha told me that they receive some money to spend on resource materials: “maybe just a few hundred dollars, very little” and “it gets cut back every single year.”

Commenting on the issue of ESL and LAC students, she said:
It all comes down to money and resources. We’re constantly looking for resources, looking for the money. I need this program to work with this child, with this group, and I feel like I am begging for the money. And it shouldn’t be like that, because when I first started like 20 years ago, I was a music teacher, I had a lot of money every single year for the first 10 years. And I had to spend that money whether I need it or not. I had the money to spend on music resources. Now that’s gone, and that’s one of the reasons I got out of teaching music, because I was frustrated with lack of money. If I don’t have the money to buy resources, how can I do my job? And I see even more in resource. There’s just nothing, nothing here. When I started five years ago, I carried on after, you know so many resource teachers, right? The resource room should be just full of resources to use. It wasn’t like that. It was like starting with an empty classroom, which it was I think. So with the empty classroom, you have to go to the principal, and you know, I am a new resource teacher, help me out here. I can’t do my job with nothing. No books, no supplies, how can I do my job? And every year, I have to do that, beg for the money, so that I could provide the kids with something.

Mrs. Taha also explained how 5 years ago she used to, instead of taking the groups to a separate classroom, she would look at the textbooks, and then make activities for the classroom teachers that ESL students could do. She did this for language, science, and social studies by preparing worksheets, units, and activities. She no longer had enough time to do that. Now classroom teachers are supposed to make those modifications for ESL, LAC, and special needs students. However, according to Mrs. Taha:

In reality, they can’t. right, and the kids are suffering. Exactly, they are. They are not getting the background knowledge that I used to give them. OK, the next science unit is on cells, let’s talk about the cells, what are cells? And I would give them all these before the classroom teacher, let’s do the activities together, and then they will go down to the class the classroom teacher. But that doesn’t happen any more, because I don’t have the time, because I have too many kids. […] That’s the biggest frustration for my job: the lack of time and lack of resources. I never thought about that until now, you said five years ago. Yeah, five years ago, I had 30 kids, now I have 67. I never thought about that when you asked me. What did I do five years ago, that’s exactly that, and I never thought about it until now.
The Literacy Program

The school board had started a literacy program about a decade ago. Joining the program was not mandatory for schools, but in 2007 almost 90 percent of elementary schools had participated in the program. Mrs. Kate was the coordinator of the program for intermediate level and the primary level had a separate coordinator. The program on paper had ambitious goals and had incorporated different aspects of literacy at the school and in the classroom. However, according to Mrs. Kate, its implementation varied vastly across schools. In the original plan, schools and teachers were supposed to get directions on teaching and assessment of reading and writing, act on those directions, and regularly report the result of those assessments to the board.

In Maple Wood School, teachers were divided on their opinion about this program. Teachers could choose to be in the program or not, but a school needed an 80% consensus for being in the program. Therefore, at least 80% of teachers were participating in it whether they liked it or not because some money came to the school with that participation. My understanding of the implementation of the program was that in fact, teachers did what they used to do and filled the charts given by the board for the assessment of reading and writing. They also had monthly meetings with somebody from the board. I went to one of the meetings with the person from the board and my field note after that meeting reads:

*I felt that even the person from the board knows what is going on and this whole “program” is an exchange of money for numbers. But from her background, she seems an experienced teacher. Why is she doing this? Why is she pretending? Is she hopeful that this becomes a routine and later goes more deeply? I don’t know. I can’t understand.*
Mrs. Kate believed that because of the financial situation of the school, the work was worth the money given by the board: “they want the numbers, we want the money.” I asked her how much money was given for how much work? Mrs. Kate calculated the time spent on getting those numbers from her colleagues and putting them together and came up with 8 hours of work per month for a total fund of $1500 and smilingly said “maybe not worth it, but still the school needs it.”

In my second visit to the school I found that the program had changed. Some important changes were: (1) there was no longer any money attached to it, (2) the assessment and tracking system was gone because “it was a management decision and was imposed from above”, and (3) coordinators from the board had more regular visits to schools.

Summary

Located in an area where only 40% of people have English as their home language, Maple Wood School had almost 240 students who represented more than 25 languages but were mainly immigrants from East Asia. The school was officially stripped of its status as an inner city school and no longer received the funding associated with the status. However, teachers believed that the change in the school status was based on the budget limitations rather than the reality of students’ lives which reflected their struggle with poverty. Mrs. Kate, the female teacher of the grade 3-4 class, with a Euro-Canadian background, had 16 years of teaching experience and took Wednesday off when another teacher, Ms. Rose taught the class. There was an ongoing tension between the K-2 and 3-7 teachers whose classrooms were in two different wings of the building. The K-2 teachers were perceived, by the other group, to spend too much time on encouraging free
play and creativity and too little on teaching basic literacy skills. The school suffered from the lack of resources especially for ESL students who did not have access to adequately educated staff and material resources. The situation for ESL students had been worsening during the last decade. The school had joined a literacy program and grade 4 students took the literacy test.

The next chapter will provide a description of day to day life of the classroom.
CHAPTER 7
A COMPOSITE DAY

Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 5, “A Composite Day” summarizes a whole range of activities that took place in the grade 3-4 class during my stay at the school. The term “composite” reflects the fact that these activities took place in that period and not in a single day. In fact, the sections of this chapter are named after the sessions shown in the class timetable (included in Appendix D). Hence, “a composite day” is a viable way of presenting the activities that took place in the class. This chapter focuses on classroom activities during the days when Mrs. Kate was teaching. A similar account of Wednesdays, when the substitute teacher, Ms. Rose, taught the class, will be presented in the next chapter.

School began at 8:55 am with the warning bell. Classes began at 9 am and had a recess which started at 10:25 am and lasted for 20 minutes. Classes resumed at 10:45 and continued till 12 when it was time for the lunch break. Students returned to class at 12:55 and were dismissed at 3 pm. The class had a regular weekly lesson plan with different activities assigned to different time slots. At the end of each day, Mrs. Kate and Ms. Rose filled in the date and made the changes that they had done to the plan in their own handwriting.

Teachers, in full time positions, had two 40-minute blocks per week to prepare their lessons. During this prep-time, students either went to the library or had their music lesson in the gym. The class had two half-hour library sessions every week on
Wednesdays and Fridays. An account of library sessions will be provided in the next chapter where the Wednesday class is discussed.

**Flag Salute and O Canada**

Students came into the class at 9 am and had two or three minutes to settle in their seats. According to the lesson plans, this was a time that “students hang their bags and coats at their cubby, and hand in any homework and/or notices into the “In Box”.” Mrs. Kate greeted the class with “good morning boys and girls” with a loud voice that put an end to students’ talking and students loudly greeted back “good morning Mrs. Kate.” Then, Mrs. Kate reviewed the agenda for the day. Next, students stood behind their chairs and sang the flag salute and *O Canada*, the texts of which were on posters in front of the class. The flag salute read:

> To our flag and to the country it represents, I pledge respect and loyalty. Wave with pride from sea to sea and within your folds, keep us ever united. Be for all a symbol of love, freedom and justice. Keep our flag, keep our Canada. 

Mrs. Kate sang loudly with students and made sure that students were reading “nice and loud” and interjected her comments such as “very nice” or ‘louder.” On a few occasions, after students finished, Mrs Kate reminded students that they should have due respect for the ceremony. For example, she said: “just a reminder, during the flag salute and O Canada I noticed some people doing something, they had their hands in their pocket. During the flag salute and O Canada, we should have our hands by our sides and do nothing else.” After the flag salute, Mrs. Kate reviewed the “shape of the day” with students.

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5 I could not locate any official version of this salute. However, a search in the Internet showed that this version sung in the class had two differences with the pledge said at scout groups: First, the Scout version starts with “to my flag” instead of “to our flag”. Second, in the scout version the last two sentences are “God keep our flag. God protect our Canada.”
Mrs. Kate was the only teacher in the school who had the flag salute and O Canada in her class. She told me that she chose to do so after talking to a professor in her Master’s program and she thought that

kids need to have an identity. The kids don’t identify with their first culture. Their parents want them to integrate. We don’t have an idea of Canadian identity.

I will present more of her ideas on this issue in Chapter 9.

_The Special Person_

Every Monday Mrs. Kate chose one student to read a piece that s/he had written about herself/himself. The student stood in front of the class and read the piece which was titled “All About Me.” Mrs. Kate told me that students had prepared those pieces in September and it had taken them at least four sessions (45 minutes each) to finish it.

Students presented their piece according to the order of their pictures in the students’ picture poster in the classroom. On my first day of visit at school, Norma read the following

My name is Norma Li. I am eight years old. I will be celebrating my birthday on September 15th, 2008. My favourite colour is blue because it makes me to think about good things. I love it sooo much. Also, I like the colour purple. Canada is the country I was born in.

Next I want to talk about my mom. She is a nice mom and I love her. She works at a restaurant downtown. She has to go to work at 10 o’clock am and she comes back from work at 11 o’clock at night. Her favourite colour is bright red.

Lastly, I want to talk about my cousin’s dog Lucky. He is a good dog. Lucky is white and sometimes bites. But he never bit my family except for my cousin Kelvin because my cousin never plays with him. When I am lonely he plays with me. The thing that I don’t like about him is he always pees and poohs everywhere. Do you have a dog? This is all about me, Norma Li.

Students applauded Norma by clapping and Mrs. Kate asked if anybody had a question.

Nobody asked a question and Mrs. Kate commented “good job.” Norma’s text had been edited by Mrs. Kate who had corrected mostly spelling errors.
**Personal Planning and Routines**

Almost always, before starting any lesson or activity, Mrs. Kate tried to get everybody’s attention and checked who was ready and who was not, talked to students about this, or reminded them by thanking students who had followed rules and routines. The simplest way for her to attract everybody’s attention was playing “Simon says.” In this children’s game, usually a player assigned as the commander (called Simon) says what to do and all other players followed Simon’s commands. In Mrs. Kate’s class, she was always the commander and said “Simon says touch your shoulders; Simon says touch your ears; Simon says hands on desk; Simon says shoulders up; Simon says shoulders down; and Simon says deep breath in.” Usually, after the fifth command she had gained everybody’s attention and silence.

Often times, she mentioned that following rules is important for their personal planning. Here is one example for the lesson on the map of Canada:

Mrs. Kate: Boys and girls. Sheila has got her pen, her ruler, Good for her. Mark asked this question what is the third thing he needs to underline. Who can tell us what the answer to that question is? There are three things. Yes [facing a student]? Student: hmm hmmm
Mrs. Kate: Who can answer that? Rebecca?
Rebecca: [saying something in a very low voice]
Mrs. Kate: Title, date, and name.
[Students talking to each other and getting ready]
Mrs. Kate: Let me see who is ready. I see Mark showing me that he is ready. I see Mark, Eva, and Morgan and Karen, and Rebecca, and Erin. It seems most are ready.

Another example is from the same day while teaching social studies:

Mrs. Kate: And we have to make sure we are going to the right spot, so we are going to take the moment to do that. Please …. If you are from the other class, you can just sit on the carpet. When I call your name, come and take your duotangs. Evan, Ryan, I want to see everyone in their spot; Laura, Daiki, [students talking to each other in the background]
Mrs. Kate: STOP, LOOK, LISTENING. If it is not quiet, then people will not hear my voice. So if anyone is still missing their social studies duotang? So Norma! You don’t have yours in your desk?
Norma: Oh I have mine.
Mrs. Kate: Please check in your desk. OK. Now, one moment please. Everybody sitting at their spot. Now everybody has their duotang?
Students [loudly]: Yessssssssssssssss. OK. Now, boys and girls, think about the group that you have been to, and you have only one more group left.

In the same session of teaching social studies, on another occasion she said:

STOP. STOP. LISTENING.
[Students’ talking to each other]
Mrs. Kate: I see Mike is ready. I see Sheryl following directions and Mark and Jane all their papers are out and open and they are copying down their homework and they are getting all organized. Good for you. I will answer questions when you have your hand up. That is the classroom rule. We always follow the rules.

Variations of this talk were repeated at least 4-7 times a day during my stay.

After the bell rang for recess, Mrs. Kate asked students to clear their desk, put everything under and around their desk, and stand behind their chairs. Then she called the teams who were ready to walk to the door and waited for other teams to get ready and be called. Finally, when all teams were at the door, she let them go. During my stay at the school, Mrs. Kate gave students time for a full clean-up of their cubbies, drawers, and desks. Desks were cleaned with wet paper towels and Mrs. Kate instructed them how to wet and not soak the paper towel so it was not dripping. Students were also told not to rush to the washroom, not to scream while they were going there and to take turns for wetting their paper towels. She reminded them that when they grow older, teachers would not give them class time for doing that: “it is your responsibility and you should learn it.”

On one occasion, she asked students to schedule their time for a few activities during the remaining time. She checked their schedules and initialled them.

When I asked Mrs. Kate about the role of routines in her class she told me:
Just as a mother and as a teacher for sixteen years, my experience is: if you don't have routine, the kids get mixed-up. So, they need to know what is expected of them and what it looks like when you do it well. And I feel that I have to, part of my job is to make it very clear to them that, this is what you need to do. This is what it looks like and sounds like. And when it falls apart, like lately with the Christmas concert practices stuff, when they were talking, it is not their fault, it's because they don't know what is expected of them. So, it becomes chaos and it's not because of them. It's because of that unstructured time and what you expect them to do, right? So, I think that routine is important and I think that when kids know clearly what to do, they rise to it.

**Discipline**

Mrs. Kate had different ways of having students follow her directions. For example, she had defined three levels of noise and showed them by selecting three big green, yellow, and red circles. The green circle was for the time when students were working together and allowed to talk to each other. The yellow circle was for reading time when students could whisper to each other. The red circle meant absolute silence. When she felt the allowed level of noise was too high for working, she took it to the next level.

Often times, Mrs. Kate used her reminders, as discussed in the previous section, and added a disciplinary flavour to them by changing the tone or wording. Here are three examples from three different situations:

What I am seeing is not acceptable. I need to talk to Deanna, Andrew, Steven, and Simon at recess time. So I will write your names up. Everybody else, I see some great brainstorming going on, excellent.

I just really get the feeling that I don’t have everybody’s full attention and I really don’t want to share information unless everyone is with me and it’s kind of having a conversation with yourself and I really wanna have a conversation with all of you. So I wanna make sure I have everyone’s full attention. Make sure that you are thinking about what we are talking about and adding into because I really care about what you think about these things. If you haven’t shared yet, I would like to hear from you.
Boys and girls! Remember the class rule! If you have something to say, you raise your hand, I will see your hand and then I will call your name. There is no point in putting your hand up if you are calling out.

Usually those students who had their names on the board were asked to erase it after a while when they started to work and follow the rules. In a few cases, when the names were not erased, students had to stay after the class. Mrs. Kate talked to them, told them that because she cared about them and liked them, she wanted them doing their work properly; they said, “sorry.”

Sometimes, Mrs Kate felt that the whole class was tired or distracted and she used other strategies to bring back order to the class. Here are two examples:

Boys and girls, it is 25 to 2. I get the sense that we are a little bit lazy, a little bit tired this afternoon, maybe we are a little bit excited. But right now you need to settle your body. I can feel the energy in here. Can everybody take our breath in? And out. All the posters are down, all the books are down. Everyone is settled, ready, shoulders up, shoulders down, shoulders all around. Shoulders up, shoulders down, shoulders all around. Hold the breath in and out. One more time.

I am not sure why people who are usually well focused, usually well behaved are doing silly things with their faces, with their hands, with their feet and I don’t know why. Is this because you are tired? Is this because it is Friday? [Students: yeah] Do you wanna run across the building and come back? [Students: yeah] You can run across the building and come back if you want, you can stay or walk but you have three minutes.

As I mentioned before, I never witnessed her forgetting respect for or being harsh, or unkind to her students. Almost always, she used “please” and “thank you” at the end of her sentences. She was very patient when students made mistakes or did not understand something. This patience reflected her own experiences as an elementary student, as evident from the following story that she told in the class:

Whenever I got the spelling word wrong, my teacher got the dictionary and SLAMMED IT on his filing cabinet and said my first name, ‘Janet! THAT IS WRONG. SPELL IT PROPERLY NEXT TIME’. And guess what? I stopped
writing some words, just like Steven because I didn’t wanna spell it wrong. Now, one thing I want you boys and girls to know is that Mrs. Kate is never gonna use a dictionary and slam it on the filing cabinet and say to you ‘SPELL IT RIGHT NEXT TIME. Because guess what happened when Mr. Johnson did that to me. I closed down because I was so afraid to spell it wrong. So Mrs. Kate always says “try your best.” So if you think earth is like this, [writing on the board “erth”] that is OK. But, try it.

She also told me that her experiences with her own children had contributed a lot to her teaching.

**From Mrs. Kate’s Home to Her Class**

One of the first things I noticed was that almost always Mrs. Kate wrote her oral statements on the board. Later in our conversations, she told me that this was from her experience in working with her daughter who had difficulty with her memory. She realized “how little students get when everything is done verbally. So I really try to write on the board a lot.” She shared her experience of how difficult it was for her daughter to finish a simple task such as copying a times table which was so easy for her daughter’s peers. Her daughter’s teacher had suggested using a calculator. But since for her daughter “it was a confidence thing”, she did not want to rely on a calculator. Mrs. Kate concluded that

To me, to say that “just give the kids a calculator, they don’t need times table; it is not important”, for some students, it IS important. They want to have that automatic retrieval, right?

Her daughter had been able to master times table at grade 7 only with Mrs. Kate’s help and getting advice from other professionals. Still, it took very long for her daughter to grasp something and make it her own. Mrs. Kate attributed all this to memory.
Geography

Mrs Kate started the session by asking students to have a piece of lined paper in front of them and write “map review” on the top of the paper. Also, students were asked to put their names and date on the top right corner of the paper and underline all these with a ruler. After making sure all students were ready, Mrs. Kate asked them to take out Canada maps which they had coloured the previous week in order to work on it.

She explained the purpose of the lesson:

Boys and girls, the purpose of this is to let you remember the shapes and the names of the provinces and what happens, a lot of times, is that we do mapping in two or three weeks and then we finish our mapping and then we put it away and then I ask you a few months later and you forget. So we are gonna do a little bit every week. OK? What you are gonna do, you are gonna look at your map, you are gonna look at these things we coloured and try to remember the shape.

She started drawing the map of the province and asked students to follow her with instructions such as “a straight line and then a little slant” and locating a certain number of spots on the map. Meanwhile, she was asking students the name of cities in the province as she proceeded. Students repeated the name of the cities and finally were instructed how to draw their maps and “do a sketch, just a quick sketch. Just that you can put the image in your brain.” She also asked students to write the province name three times because “a lot of people have trouble” with it. Then she told them “have your neighbour check your spelling please.”

In the next session, Mrs. Kate reviewed the Canada map by asking students about the name of each province, the capital city of each province, and the abbreviated form of the name. The students were asked three times to say and spell each question and put their fingers on the designated locations on the map.
The session was switched from geography to mathematics smoothly by asking students “math textbooks notebooks out please.” Next, she said:

Thank you to those who remember to rule off with your ruler and your pen. I need to see how you ruled off, your title and your date. [After one minute pause] OK, title, date, rule off.

Boys and girls, when I was reviewing your work last week, I noticed that many of you forgot all the parts of answering a problem. So if you have a simple problem like: 132 passengers, 113 seats, how many passengers are without a seat? So, what I’d like you to do now, is copy, you can do this with your team or with someone beside you, I want to see the equation, do you remember what equation is? [Students: yeahhhhh] and I want to see the sentence answer, and I will check in 4 minutes. On your own with someone on your team.


We are not on a page yet. We are just doing it together because a lot of people did not do those steps.

[After one minute] Check your neighbour, make sure they have ALL the parts. [After three minutes] OK boys and girls, I think you have had enough time to do this problem. Let’s write the equation here and the sentence answer here. Check your answer on your own or with a partner. I see Erica, Mike, and Steve checking. Some students ask me you can’t minus 132 take away 113 and the reason they think this is because in the question which number comes first? [Students: 132] then when you go to answer this which number are you going to put on top?

[Students: 113] They wrote it here, they do this? What did they do? [One student: Switch them around] They switch them around because at this level right now, you cannot do 132 take away 113; so how did they put their operation? Have you heard that word before? [One student; Yeah] What does operation mean? Is that something done in hospitals? [Students: Yesss]. What kind of operation is THIS? Whisper to your neighbour. [Students talking to each other for a minute] These are things I heard you say when I asked you “what does operation mean?” I heard someone saying “I don’t know.” Good, because you are being honest, if no one ever talks how you are gonna know. I heard someone saying “operation means switching the numbers”, and I heard someone saying “operation means plus, takeaway, times, or divide.” Who thinks the answer is number one? “Operation means I don’t know.” [Students laughing]. Operation means switching the numbers so the bigger number is on top. [One student says no]. Who thinks operation means plus, take away, times, and divide? [Some students raise their hands.] YES. Number three is correct. Write it down: operation is two things

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6 Underlining with ruler.
what you need to apply to get plus, take away, times, and divide. OK? So they have the operation, they lined their numbers, they borrow, they have their answer and there is a sentence answer. Make sure that you have all those parts. When you answer questions from your textbook, make sure that you have all those parts. Now continue to practice. So boys and girls, I will be looking for this when I check your work. Grade 4 you are working on page 69, grade 3 page 127.

Then Mrs. Kate started going from desk to desk, commenting “nice to see who has got started right away; good for you; this is very responsible of you. Excellent personal planning.” Students spent 10 minutes doing the task and Mrs Kate asked them to do the rest as homework.

The next session on mathematics started with Mrs. Kate’s reminder of what they had done in the previous session and what they were supposed to do. Then she wrote the following on the board and asked all students to read it loudly: “We are starting with our subtraction in our green duotang p. 30. We have already completed one row of the sheet. We will work on the 2nd and 3rd row today.” After Mrs. Kate gave students two minutes to work on those problems, she wrote the answers on the board. For each question, students confirmed her question that “everybody agrees?” She also asked students why it was important to work with a partner for solving problems. Usually, when Mrs. Kate asked a question, she listened to one or two students’ answers and then suggested more answers herself by asking question such as “do you think it is important to do such and such?” These affirmation-seeking questions were responded to by “yeah” from the class. Among Mrs. Kate’s suggestions for this question were: learning team work, cooperation, having to talk with a partner on who is going to do what, and giving everybody a chance for writing.

In another session when Mrs. Kate was teaching about subtracting from zeros, she talked about not jumping ahead when borrowing. She reminded students of the house of
one, house of tens, and the house of hundreds, she explained that they could only go to the house next door for borrowing and if there was nothing there, they could continue to the next house. In her explanation, Mrs. Kate brought the example of going to a neighbour and borrowing a cup of sugar. While students were talking, I asked Mrs. Kate if she would go to a neighbour for borrowing a cup of sugar. She said, she would but most people would not. Then, right away she brought the question to the students and asked whose parent would borrow sugar from a neighbour. Only one student raised her hand. She continued by asking how many of them would feel comfortable borrowing sugar from their neighbour. Nobody raised a hand and Mrs Kate asked what they would do if they needed sugar. One student said she would go to the market and buy it. Another student said he would borrow from his neighbour and Mrs. Kate commented: “oh that is good.” The discussion ended there.

Speaking about the nature of the math problems, Mrs Kate said “I do sometimes rote problems. At one point, I cut it all back. But I brought it back and I think it has a place.” In most mathematic sessions, Mrs. Kate had to stop and tell students what the problem meant. For example, there was a question which read “do the first three exercises in each set” and several students asked what it meant. Mrs. Kate had to interrupt students and tell them the meaning of “the first three”, “exercise”, and ‘set.” She told them “‘exercise’ is a fancy word for ‘question’ and ‘set’ is a fancy word for group.” Almost always, she ended her explanations she said “if you still have a problem, come and see me.” Mrs. Kate’s comment on this issue was:

They know it [i.e., math] but they don’t get the language. Even Steven, whose first language is English and gets everything, sometimes does not get the question.
Spelling

Mrs. Kate started a session on spelling by asking students to take out their notebooks and waiting for everyone to get ready with a notice “Clara thank you; thank you David, Thank you everyone at team 4, waiting for two people at team 6.” Then she started the lesson by saying

OK, Grade 3, today you are looking at “IE” words. We have a long i sound. Ready, let’s read together, fingers on the first word. Ready, and waiting for one more person, ready go.

Students read the list of words together loudly and Mrs. Kate explained that lots of students confused “where” with “were” and repeated the pronunciation of these words and their meanings in different sentences. She told them

When I was little, this helped me. “Where” has the word “here” in it. So I used to think “where am I going?” or “where are you going?” and the answer to that would be “over here.” And this is not where, this is? [Students saying; were] were; “were you at the movie last night?”; “were you out for dinner?” were and where.

Then Mrs. Kate turned to grade 4 students and said: “grade 4, ready? You are looking at “AR” words. Fingers at the first word; read together; ready go.” Students read loudly from the list and at the end Mrs. Kate noticed that some students had problem with saying words “said” and “say.” She asked students to repeat after her and reminded them that there was an activity in the book to help them with that problem.

She also mentioned that she gets lots of questions about the word “barrel” which she wrote on the board. Students said it loudly and Mrs. Kate asked who wanted to draw a picture of barrel. After the drawing was done, Mrs. Kate asked students about its meaning and what barrels were for. One student said for beer and Mrs. Kate confirmed his answer. Another student said candy and Mrs. Kate said she had never seen a barrel
full of candy but it could be. She asked if barrels were usually large or small and what they were made from. She complemented students’ answers about barrels being made of wood by saying that there could be metal barrels as well.

Next, the teacher gave students seven minutes to finish their worksheets on spelling. Then students were called to Mrs. Kate’s desk to have their work checked. Students who had not finished by then were told to continue their work and those who had finished were given the option of reading a book of their choice from the bookshelves. Meanwhile, Mrs Kate did not forget to remind students:

Let me see who has the personal planning right now. There are people who are working; there are people who finished their spelling and are reading. There are people who have not finished the spelling and are not working. Make a good choice.

The session ended with the bell ringing for recess. Two days later, Mrs. Kate and students read aloud and reviewed the exercises for this session at the beginning of the session on language arts. In her review she talked about synonyms, antonyms, and prefixes.

Another spelling session started with Mrs. Kate’s announcement about the units to be worked on so students opened their books on those units. Next, she reviewed the concept of base words by asking students and giving examples of how base words could be changed to new words by “adding things, like ‘ing’, or ‘ed’ to it.” She read the changed words from the book and students repeated after her. Then students were asked to find the base word in those changed words. They were also reminded not to forget the date and title. With Grade 4 students, Mrs Kate talked about different ways of writing long Es that is “ee”, “ea”, or “ie.” Again, grade 4 students repeated the words in the unit after Mrs Kate and were asked to distinguish the sound in those words.
As always, individual students who needed help came to Mrs. Kate’s desk for help. When a few students had the same question, Mrs. Kate interrupted the class and explained that question. For example, four grade 3 students asked about a question which wanted base words ending with a vowel and a consonant. Mrs. Kate felt many students had forgotten about vowels and consonants and reviewed it with the class. On the day when Mrs. Kate wanted to test students on spelling, she read three sentences for students and they wrote it. She asked them to write a fourth sentence of their own which had to be a question sentence.

Writing Workshops

Mrs. Kate put a lot of effort into writing and she was happy about her work because it was “something that most students were engaged in.” She used 6 + 1 Traits of Writing by Ruth Culham as her guiding text. When we talked about resources, she said that she did not have much problem in that area:

I think in terms of writing, I am able to extract from the kids their level of ability to write and then to have them to write on a topic or some sort of story that connects to them and I noticed that in every year. I feel that as a personally I am -- not to brag-- but I think that is a strength of mine that I can work for the writing process and do the writing. You know, build their writing skills level and also build the connection for them in the writing. The stories that they wrote this last time shows me that year after year, somehow you can get every student to do that and complete the project over the course of the year we do three or four of those. So, you are able to build the skill and build their interest and cohesiveness of their writing.

On the first day of my arrival at school, Mrs. Kate had one of her writing workshops and students were working on a piece on tops. First, she asked students to have their writing out and asked them about the criteria she had taught them previously. She put numbers on the board and asked students to fill the blanks for those criteria which included:
ruling off with a pen; having pencil, paper, and ruler ready; writing name, title and, date; neatness, having a beginning sentence and an end sentence, indenting; starting sentences with different words; using statements, longer sentences, questions, and variety of words such as ‘however’, ‘finally’, “in fact”, ‘actually’, and ‘because’ which we usually don’t use; paying attention to capitals, punctuation, question marks, and periods; and sticking to the topic.

Next, Mrs. Kate asked students to name all things that people wear below the waist and she wrote them on the board. For each name, Mrs. Kate mentioned different types of that clothing. For example, when students mentioned “skirt”, she added “long, short, mini, layers, and kilt” in front of it or for the word “pants”, she added “boxers, cargos, Capri, shorts, zipper shorts, swim trunks, and snow pants.” The activity was ended by the bell and was resumed the next day. On the second day, Mrs. Kate asked students to brainstorm in groups and remember as many names as they could from the list they had made the other day. Then, she wrote different categories on the board and asked students to put each of the names that they had recalled under a category. She told them that they could add a category to the list if they needed one. For example, under the column for pants, students had: jeans, pyjama pants, track pants, cargo pants, baggy pants, Capri pants, shorts, diapers, boxers, underwear, baby suits, trunks, snow wear, snowsuit, snow pants, and rain pants. Students also had “heavy jacket” on their list and Mrs. Kate reminded them that jacket is not from the waist down. She sounded doubtful about “rain trunks” and asked if anybody knew what it was but nobody could answer it. When it came to “overalls”, Mrs. Kate mentioned different kind of overalls for rain, snow and jean overalls in different shapes and asked students if anyone had seen them. A collective “no” was heard from the class and after that one student said that she had one of every type.
Students were asked to spend a couple of minutes to share their previous day’s writing with someone of their choice and share their ideas. Also, if they liked the idea that they heard, they were encouraged to “copy it, use it” because “we learn from each other.” After a few minutes, she asked students “what does sharing ideas about writing sound like?” Some of students’ answers were: “sounds like you are actually reading to your partner”, and “it means not being mad at each other.” Then Mrs. Kate repeated some of the criteria for writing that she had mentioned the other day and wrote them on the board with students’ help. She said that previously students were asked to use 3-5 words in their sentences in order to make longer sentences and it was time for them to use 5-7 words in a sentence. In the last ten minutes, students were asked to continue and finish their writing on things they wear below their waist. The circle showing the level of the noise went to the red which meant no talking at all. The final recommendations were making sure that the title matched what they were writing, and ended with a good ending sentence. Those who finished earlier were given the option of reading books from their book bags. During the activity, some students came to Mrs. Kate and asked questions. Students who could not finish their work were asked to finish it at home.

Each student had a personal dictionary which was a notebook. During writing/reading activities, when a student asked the meaning of a word from Mrs. Kate, she explained the meaning and asked her/him to bring her/his dictionary and wrote that word under the appropriate letter. There were also posters on the wall with writing tips which, according to Mrs. Kate, “made more connecting bridges on what they should write.” She also mentioned that usually she chose a topic which they knew so she did “not have to teach the content.”
In one of the writing sessions, Mrs. Kate gave students pictures from a book and asked students to start a story based on those pictures either on their own or with a friend. When they finished, they had to share it with a friend. The friend had to tell them three stars, i.e., three good things she/he really liked about the work. Some of the examples that Mrs. Kate mentioned were: “I really liked your questions. I really liked how you used different words.” The friend also had to give one wish, i.e., one thing they wish they would have done. Example of wish was: “I wish you would use more detail next time to make it better.” Next, they had a choice: they could either take those suggestions and fix their stories, or start a new story. The idea was that they did lots of writing and they only submitted their favourite piece.

After these instructions, Mrs. Kate reviewed them with students by asking them what they would do in different stages and what “star”, “wish”, and “sharing” meant. When students were working, Mrs Kate checked who was doing what by asking “how many of you are doing this?” or just by going to individual students and checking their work. When students finished their work, Mrs. Kate called students to her desk in pairs, they read their work for her and she corrected their work. Her corrections included every aspect of writing from spelling, grammar, punctuation, prepositions, and capitalization to removing repetitive words, adding transition words and phrases, breaking long sentences, and breaking into paragraphs. However, for different students with different abilities, she had to address different problems.

Mrs. Kate congratulated the class because everybody in the class could write more than they could write in September of that year. She mentioned that some of them could not write more than two or three sentences but at that time everybody wrote more than
half a page while some students wrote two to three pages. Students were instructed how to produce their final copy with a title page, a page about the author (themselves), and an illustration if there was enough space.

I conclude this section by one of my field notes about writing workshops:

*It seems that in workshop sessions Mrs. Kate handles students’ comments differently. In other sessions, she usually waits 3-4 seconds after each question and then moves on by answering the question herself. Even when they answer the question, she does not discuss those answers or build on students’ answers. In writing workshop, however, she waits for students to elaborate on their answers and incorporates them in her teaching. She spent hours and hours on editing students’ writings in one-to-one conversations and she waited for students to suggest something instead of writing for them.*

**Reading**

Mrs. Kate taught reading with read/write/talk activities. The aim of reading activities in the class, according to her, was “learning about different genres, learning how to compare stories, and what does it mean to connect to a story.” Students were instructed to read smoothly and with expression, to stop and talk about what they were reading and predict what may happen before continuing.

In one session, students were asked to read a story, *The Stolen Sun*, in groups of 3, look for problems, situations, and other information, write the meaning of certain words, and share their answers with the class. Mrs. Kate talked about good listening skills and paying attention to details. She asked students if any of them had watched *The Polar Express*7. A few students raised hands and she asked “parents could not hear the bell, why?” Mrs. Kate also talked about the genre of “*The Stolen Sun*” and reviewed with students what genre meant. As an example, she asked them what the genre of *Snow White* was.

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7 A movie based on a children’s book with the same title by Chris Van Allsburg. It is a story of a young boy on Christmas Eve who is hoping for belief in the true spirit of Christmas
She also paired students to compare their writings and to find out which details their friend had that they had missed in their writing. Mrs. Kate also explained the meaning of comparing by asking questions from students. As an example, she asked to compare two stories that they had read about ravens, i.e., *The Stolen Sun* and *The Raven and the Ball of Light* by focusing on the raven. She asked them to tell how ravens in these stories were the same or different, put those similarities and differences in two columns and then reminded students of Venn diagrams for demonstrating their comparison.

Students were advised to go back to their duotangs for the copies of those stories because it would be difficult to remember all details. As a guideline for writing about the raven in each story, she suggested asking questions about who, what, where, when, why, and how. She told them that these questions should be used like a checklist for all subjects such as reading, writing, science, and social studies. Some of the ideas that students came up with and were written on the board were “both ravens have something shiny; they both hit something; and they are both blue.”

In the next session, Mrs Kate asked students what they had found interesting while comparing the two stories. Also, she asked if there was anything in those stories that they connected to or reminded them of something. Most of the students’ answers to this question was “nothing.” Mrs. Kate elaborated on the question and suggested that they should think more deeply and carefully before saying “nothing.” She said:

For example, in *The Stolen Sun*, they lived in two worlds. How many people feel in their life sometimes they live in two worlds? Maybe a world at school is not just the world at home.

Her other suggestions, coming from the stories, were: “anyone ever had anything changed in their own life? Did anyone ever drop something that broke to pieces? Anyone
ever had a grandpa, grandma, mom, dad, or someone in their family to listen to you more than you want? ” She gave many examples of ‘stretching one’s thought’ and ‘making connections’ to the stories as “what does this remind you of in your life?” and then students shared some stories orally.

Next students were asked to come to the board and write some of their thoughts on three questions: 1) at least three things that they found interesting in the story (e.g., new words that they did not know, or things that were interesting for other students and they had not noticed; 2) what the story reminded them of in their life; and 3) any questions that they had about stories (e.g. what happened if characters in the stories did things differently). Later, Mrs. Kate suggested that students focus on an object in the story for finding connections between the story and themselves and also build a model of that object from clay. Students took their finished models and writings to Mrs Kate and explained the connection. Mrs Kate asked each student to mark their work out of 5, explain why, and suggested that they should do their best the next time.

Students were told that they could share their ideas with a partner or go back to stories if they wished. After this activity, Mrs. Kate talked about different genres (fables, folk tales, fairy tales, legends, mysteries, adventures, and trickster tales) and told students that she had chosen these two stories because they had common themes and she wanted to find out those common themes by comparing them. The second reason, she told them was “because we had talked about different legends, this was one legend.” Finally, she asked students to write if they liked reading the story and what genre they enjoyed most by then. On that day, I wrote in my notebook:

It seems that different genres are very important for Mrs. Kate. She told students that she had called three different librarians and asked them to send her books
from different genres so that students could see it as much as possible. I did not see any other example of looking for resources outside the school.8

Another session on reading focused on finding adjectives and verbs in a series of sport books. First, Mrs. Kate defined adjectives and verbs and gave examples. She also explained clues that sometimes could help students find adjectives and verbs. Then she asked students to read books on different sports and describe the qualities that sports people in those books had to have by finding seven adjectives. They also needed to find seven verbs and five new things that they learned about that sport. She also mentioned that for that activity precise writing and neatness were important and it was not a whole lot of writing. Students could work with a partner or on their own. Books were on baseball, track and field, street skateboarding, swimming, tennis, gymnastics, boxing, wind surfing, football, basketball, curling, and skiing. When Mrs. Kate asked who had done or seen some of these sports only one or two native speakers raised hands. Mrs. Kate also suggested students take books on a sport that they had not heard of so they could learn about it.

When students finished their first book, Mrs. Kate told them they could take a book on another sport or “choose to do information on people. Learning about people is reading a biography.” As an example of biography, she mentioned Terry Fox’s life which students had read in September that year.

During all students’ activities, including reading/writing, Mrs. Kate often had her interjections. In my view, these interjections had a threefold purpose of giving directions, encouraging, and keeping the noise level down. Here is one example:

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8On another occasion, she spent another hour talking about non-fiction genres.
I really like how some groups are working together. I can see you are sharing, you are reading it over, you are comparing, you are reporting, you are writing something, good for you.

**Writing Presentations**

On the second day of my arrival at the school, students were presenting their work on *The Stolen Sun: A Story of Native Alaska*, that they had recently read. The following picture from a poster in the class shows how students had been taught to write a summary from the book that they were reading:

![Poster showing important parts of a summary](image)

*Figure 18. A poster in the class which shows important parts of a summary.*
Before presentations, Mrs. Kate asked students why they thought it was important to present information to the classroom. Students’ answers were: practicing reading skills, practicing talking to lots of people. She also emphasized the importance of rereading the summaries that they had used in order to write their pieces. Next she explained the rules:

The first thing is our back is never to the person who is presenting. Everybody else, our hands are still, eyes on speaker. Ready? We are going to be a good audience. A good audience always looks and listens. Once people are presenting, we don’t laugh unless the person is telling a joke. So there aren’t any jokes right now. We need to really think about bats. It takes all the courage to be talking in front of a group and I know you would want the same respect when you are presenting. OK?

Groups volunteered for presenting their work and students clapped. Sometimes, Mrs. Kate interrupted the presenter to ask for students’ attention. For example, she said “Hands are to yourself. We are not touching other people’s bodies.” At the end of each presentation, Mrs. Kate asked other students if they had any questions. After the first presentation, a native English speaker student asked “Why is [sic] there so many like scribbles there?” The presenter was about to answer by saying “umm” but Mrs. Kate interrupted and said “that is because it is their first draft. I know I have lots of scribbles when I do my first draft. Good job boys, thank you. Next group to go?”

Social Studies

Teaching social studies had a special arrangement that year which Mrs. Kate described as follows:

This year we did a little experiment, so we had four teachers [grade 3 to 7] working with three different socials, these groups with random ability grouping and even number of male/female, we did not take into consideration learning or ability....or level of ability of these children, so it was random that way, but not for male/female. We divided male female equally. And then we took three learning outcomes from their curriculum. Each of us teachers took one learning outcome from the curriculum and did four lessons on that particular learning outcome. And then we switched the kids rotated through those three centers.
These learning outcomes were learning about provincial government, diversity, and media. She did not explain how these learning outcomes were chosen. Mrs. Kate had accepted teaching about the provincial government.

After the initial housekeeping, Mrs. Kate started the social studies session by grouping the students who had remained in her class and started writing on the board. After finishing writing, she asked students to read the text and started to ask questions.

Boys and girls, what province do we live in? [Students said the name of the province] Interesting, because I ask this question every time and every time I hear city A, I hear city B, I hear city C, and I hear Canada. [Some students laughed]. These are all things I hear and I want to make sure we know what province we live in, because, LISTENING, because it is very important to know the name of our province and I always hear all these things. I hear this, I hear this, I hear this, I hear this [while writing those names on the board]. [Some students repeated Canada laughingly].

“Boys and girls, what city do we live in? Tell me.” [Students repeated the name of the city which was written on the board.] Boys and girls, Canada is our? [Students answered: country]. And the all important questions we are here to learn about? [A few students murmured some answered.] We are here to learn about the government of our province because there is the government of Canada, our country, that is federal government. We are not learning about the federal government. There is the government of the city, right? like the mayor. We are learning about the provincial government and our province is? [Students repeated the name of the province.] Say it again [Students said it again.] Spell it [Students spelled the name]. Say it [Students said it]. Clap it [Students clapped the syllables]. How many syllables? [Students could not answer it]. Put your hand on your chin, every time your chin goes down, that is a syllable. [She repeated the syllables and students repeated after her]. How many? [Students answered]. Say it again [Students said it]. Tell me our city? [Students said the name]. Tell me our country [Students said: Canada]. Tell me our province [Students said the name of the province].

Some people when they are little or when they are older, they stop and think: “what do I wanna be when I grow up?” Some people might think: teacher, doctor, lawyer, nurse. Some people stop and think: “I wanna work for the?” [while pointing to the word on the board] [Students answered: government]. Government. They want to be government workers. We are here to learn about what government workers do. How does the government of this province work? When you get your booklet, put your name, put your date, read what all these say and then we are gonna talk about government more. OK?
What are we learning here about boys and girls? [Students answered loudly: government]. Maybe some of you might grow up to work for the government. Then you must know what a government worker does? You might say “I wanna do that job.”

Name, date and I want to see you reading.

After a few minutes, Mrs. Kate checked that students were ready and had written the date and their names on the booklet. The booklet was a collection of facts about the provincial government taken from the Internet by Mrs. Kate. Students started to read loudly from the booklet together. While reading, Mrs. Kate interrupted the class and said “I noticed some people hesitated with this word and it happened this morning too.” She wrote the word “said” and asked everybody to say it. She explained that the job of the government was making the laws, like the law that said everybody should wear a helmet while riding a bicycle. She also gave an example of her 71 year old mom who had been fined by a police officer because she did not know it was the law that she had to wear her helmet. She also asked students to draw a quick sketch, or “a 30-second sketch”, picture about the helmet story. Some students asked what to draw and she told the class what should be in the picture and that it should have background, and ground and it should be related to the caption in the text.

The second box talked about how a few elected people make decisions for everybody and her example was deciding to spend all tax dollars for building a park and taking away trees and building a swimming pool. The third box said that the government decides what to learn at schools. Mrs. Kate showed students the curriculum documents and told them that teachers and the principal had to read those books to see what they should teach in each grade. She said: “I can’t come here and teach whatever I want. I mean, I have some choices but the government gives us all these books and says “this is
what you have to make sure you cover with all your students.” In this example, she asked students how many of them knew about this and how many thought that she could do what she wanted. Three students raised their hands for the first question; all of them were native speakers. In each question, students were asked to draw a sketch picture about that and suggested what could be in that picture. Her suggestions were usually affirmation-seeking such as “can we have X in this picture?” and almost immediately she repeated the answer with a few students. She also asked students how many of them would like to make those decisions. Some students raised hands but she moved from one question to another without giving students a chance to speak.

The last piece was about elections, candidates, voting, and political parties. When Mrs. Kate asked about the meaning of voting, only one student was able to answer that it was choosing somebody. Then she said “when you vote for somebody, you say: I think this person is someone who knows what they are doing; I trust this person. I respect this person. I want this person to make choices for me and my community. She said that the word “party” was different from birthday party and it is a group of people who have the same ideas. Students were asked to repeat that definition which she wrote on the board. She gave examples of parties: the White Party who wanted to take the tax money paid by students’ parents for building new hospitals; the Blue Party who wants to spend all the money for building schools; the Green Party which might say spending the tax money on more parks and playgrounds.

Next, Mrs. Kate arranged a quick election with a ballot box, some students as voters, and some students running for the government from different parties. She told them “this is just for fun. This is a simple way. Usually they don’t have these names. We
will talk about the names another time.” Students were asked to be volunteers for running for different parties. They were also told that if there was no volunteer, Mrs. Kate would pick students herself. Two students volunteered for each party. For each pair of candidates, Mrs. Kate asked students “do they work for the government yet?” and students said no. She asked “do they wanna work for the government?” students said yes. She repeated each time that they were candidates. Students were asked to repeat the word “candidate” together four times. The word “candidate” was written on a sign in front of each volunteer. Other students had a sign which read “voter.” Students were told that candidates usually give speeches and talk about lots of ideas and the ideas discussed in the class were just examples. Mrs. Kate said

Do you think that you should just choose your best friend? [Students: no] Do you think that you should just choose someone because they look nice? [Students (laughingly): no] Do you think you should choose someone because they have good ideas? [Students: no] and you think they may make your community better? [Students: yes]. Would you listen to their speech if we had time to make speeches? [Students: yes]

Students were asked to think what is more important for them: new schools, new hospitals, more parks and playgrounds and then write the name of the candidates on the ballot. They were reminded that they had to be 18 and over in order to vote. After asking students to repeat the word “ballot” a couple of times, Mrs. Kate explained that voters had to put an X on the circle on the ballot and putting a check or filling it would make the ballot a miss-ballot and it would be ripped up. She said that this was a rule of the real election. Voters followed Mrs. Kate in a line to a place to write on their ballot and put it in the ballot box.

Finally, votes were counted and I was asked to record the votes on the board. A girl from the White party was elected as the member of the provincial parliament.
Students were asked to repeat the term “member of the provincial parliament” several times. In a wrap-up statement, Mrs. Kate said the meaning of “candidate”, “ballot”, “voting” and “ballot box” and asked students to say the word associated with those meanings. Next, Mrs. Kate told students to look at the second page of their booklet where the name and the picture of the member of the provincial parliament for the area where Maple Wood School was located. Students were asked to repeat the name of that person a few times. They all read from the text on the parliament, its location, its members, and the time of their election. She also explained that the name of the parties in the classroom election were not real and told them the name of the party to which their member of the parliament belonged. Students were asked to repeat the name of that party a few times and write it down. Mrs. Kate explained where that member went for meetings, how close to the school his office was located, and what he did in his meeting with other members. She asked students to look for his office the next time they went to the area where the office was.

**Dance**

Every Tuesday after the lunch break, students went to the gym for a dance class. The dance teacher was an Asian female. My first day in her class was on November 27\(^{th}\) and she started her class by playing a song for students, asked them to sing with it and added “this is a song you will hear a lot from next week because it is a Christmas song.” I noticed that three students were mostly dozing during the class and I was not sure if the teacher noticed that. The next activity was asking students to make a picture by posing as different elements of the picture. For example, she played music and when she stopped
the music students were supposed to pose as grass, rabbits, trees, cats, and dogs which made a picture.

In another session, the dance teacher played a song from a band called Gobra and asked students to repeat her movement for dance. She told them that the song had been sent to her by a friend who picked it from the Internet. Gobra is a heavy metal band located in Finland. The next song was a hip-hop by Nas, a Nigerian-American rapper and students followed her instructions and mimicked her motions. The third song was Indian music which I could not identify. In the second part of the class, the dance teacher introduced an “emotion game” which, according to her, was intended for teaching body language. She said words such as happy, sad, excited, angry, and confused; students were supposed to show gestures which represent those emotions. On the same day, I wrote in my notebook:

_Overall, students seemed happy and had fun. Simon who could not find a partner for the tasks sat on the floor and the teacher did not pay any attention to him. Another student hurt her feet and was sitting on the floor and came back after a while._

**Science**

Mrs. Kate started the first science session during my stay by saying

For science, we are just going to do some review and we will see how it goes. How many of you have been reviewing? [Some students raise their hands.] Good. I have a video that’s gonna help with our review of science. What are the words that we have been doing in science?

Next, she reviewed those words with students from a poster on the wall: precipitation, evaporation, condensation, water vapor, lake, ocean, river, pond, and stream. She asked them if they knew the meaning of those words and if they knew how to draw a picture of

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http://www.gobra.net/
http://www.nasindependenceday.com/
a water cycle and students said yes. Mrs. Kate used a matching card game to check if they knew the meaning of those words. Students were asked to match the card for each word with its meaning and to share it with a neighbor. Finally, the whole class read words and their meanings together.

Before playing the video, Mrs. Kate told students that she had not seen it before but she believed it was a review of what they had learned. She also told them that if they had a question, did not know the meaning of a word, or found something new and important, they could make a note and ask it at the end. The 15-minute movie was *Weather Watch* (1992) from Look Up Series borrowed from the media services of the School Board. It started with a rock song and then a conversation in which one character says the way for predicting weather is to know “onion's skin very thin, mild winter coming in; onion's skin thick and tough, coming winter cold and rough.” The second character says while “there might be some truths to that imagination”, meteorology is a more reliable way for predicting weather. Then the conversation continues on the benefits of meteorology and how they measure and predict weather in weather stations.

When the movie finished, Mrs. Kate asked students to tell interesting points about the movie and she wrote them on the board. For example, students suggested: “Hurricanes are stronger than tornados. I had never heard the word ‘meteorologist.’” The discussion finished there because the bell rang for the lunch break.

The second and last science session during my stay was on temperature. Mrs. Kate started the lesson by asking students how hot or how cold some places and objects were and students said “yes” or “no” to her affirmation-seeking suggestions such as “too
cold, too hot, or just comfortable.” Then she defined temperature by writing the following on the board:

Energy from the sun heats the Earth. When we measure how hot or cold this energy is, we are measuring the temperature. We measure this with a thermometer.

She showed a thermometer to the class and talked about the red line and “two sets of numbers”, Celsius and Fahrenheit, on its sides (Celsius being used in Canada). She also told them how to read the temperature on the thermometer. Thermometers were given to all groups and students were asked to measure the temperature in the room.

Students played with thermometers for a while and then Mrs. Kate said:

There were a few things I was gonna talk about, but you guys got all the ideas. I heard you say all the things I wanna talk about which is excellent. And I heard the ideas of the things we are going to do. So let’s share our ideas.

Next, she wrote students’ comments on the board: “When it is warmer, it is up. The warmer the liquid, the higher goes up. If we hold it firmly at the bottom, the temperature goes up.” After this last comment, Mrs. Kate asked students what the thermometer measured, the air around it or something else. She asked all students to try the experiment, i.e., hold the thermometer at the very bottom and squeeze it. Some students were blowing at the thermometer as well. Mrs. Kate asked students to write in their notebooks what happened when they did different things with the thermometer. She wrote on the board the following sentences and asked students to fill in the blanks: “when I hold the thermometer tightly, I noticed…When I put my thermometer on my desk without touching it, I noticed …When I blow hot air on it, I noticed…” She added that: “if you have your own way of saying it, you may say it your own way. This is for the people who aren’t sure here.”
After that, Mrs. Kate asked students to think about where and how they could put the thermometer and whether it would be different if they held it or put it on the ground: “are there some parts that are shady outside? Are there some parts where the Sun is shining?” One of the students asked “can we infer what the temperature is before we go outside to see if it is different?” Mrs. Kate said it was a great idea and wrote the question on the board while explaining the meaning of the word “infer.” She asked students about the different places where they could put the thermometer and some of the students’ suggestions were: on the grass, on the cement, on one’s duotang, and on a tree.

Mrs. Kate told students to share their idea of where they wanted to place their thermometer with a friend so they could choose somewhere else so they could compare. Students were also told they could try more than one spot. While writing on the board, she said:

This is a way of organizing your thought. If it works for you, write it down. But your job is, you are going to write the spot where you put your thermometer; what you guessed the temperature would be; and what it actually is. You will have time to try more than one spot. Now if you hold on to it the whole time, do you think that will change your results? If I go and I am holding on to this and I stand outside and I hold it in a shady spot, do you think that will change my results? [Students: No] So if you go outside and hold on to it, do you think if that would be a good way of taking the temperature of the outside air? [Students: No] Why is not that a good way? [On student answers that would measure the temperature of your body].

Then the class went to the playground and students started to measure temperature in different spots. When they came back to the class, Mrs. Kate asked them to report on the board the spot of measurement, their guess, and their measurement.

After students recorded their work, Mrs. Kate said:

It is interesting for me to see; we are not gonna talk about each one individually. But take a moment and look around at people’s guess and their actual. I know for me, I would guess if it was in the sunshine it would be hotter and I would
Then she started to ask questions about students’ guesses on hottest and coldest spot and what they found interesting in their work. Students were told that they could take thermometers with them at lunch time if they would like, and was comfortable that they would not leave it or break it. Finally, Mrs. Kate asked students to complete the picture of a thermometer in their handout, shade it according to temperature, and answer questions about it. She also reviewed with them Celsius degree, normal temperature, temperature of boiling water and freezing water, and the normal temperature of the body.

Students also had a review quiz on weather which was a matching task. Students had to match the words such as precipitation, evaporation, and condensation with their meanings. There was also a picture of the water cycle which students had to label.

I need to mention that science was mentioned in two reading sessions as well. First, when Mrs. Kate told students that they could choose a special set of reading cards with topics mostly on science which were more difficult and students could share them with a partner. The second occasion was during a silent reading when Mrs. Kate saw a student had picked a book on hurricanes. She said that it was interesting and read from the book for about three minutes.

**The Bat Project**

At the beginning of December, Mrs. Kate started a project on bats which went on for several sessions. Students were supposed to create a poster with a diagram of a bat and label that diagram. She wrote the meaning of the terms “diagram” and “label” on the board and asked students how many of them were doing that activity for the first, second or the third time. A handful of students were doing it for the second time, with her I
assumed because she said she did it with grade 3-4 every year. First, Mrs. Kate told
students how to create a frame in their papers with one centimeter margin on each side. This included how to measure with a ruler, putting dots on each side, how to hold the ruler in the middle, how much pressure to put on pencils, and connecting the dots. She went to every single student to check if s/he had done it correctly. She told me that in the previous year this task had taken two periods. Next, students were asked to draw a sketch of a bat and add details and texture to it. Students were told that they could try a new paper if they were not happy with and proud of their work.

In another session, students were given a fact sheet about bats and were asked to look for information about what bats looked like. They were supposed to write keywords about bats’ appearance on sticky notes and put those notes on a chart that they were going to make about bats. Students had to work in groups for that task. In another session students were busy working on the title page, highlighting some words, outlining so that details stand out more. After students found information on bat appearance, Mrs. Kate asked them to write a paragraph on bat appearance on a rough copy, show it to her and write a good copy after her correction. This had to be done by using keywords which labeled the bat diagram. She told them that it was a test to see if they could write a descriptive paragraph on their own:

"Let’s pretend an alien came down from Mars and they have never seen a bat. It is your job is to describe the bat to the alien; or you might describe what a bat looks like to someone who is blind. [A few students laughed at this point.] They can’t see. [A student rather angrily]: That is not funny.] That’s right, it is not funny. So when you read your paragraph to them, they would know; they could imagine what a bat looks like. So you have to use lots of describing words.

While students were reading the article, Mrs. Kate called a student to her desk to help read through the fact sheet. Here is a part of her conversation with that student:
You know the word “observer” means? [Student: No] You observed with a
binocular in our field trip. Put your word on the word “observe.”
Structure, say it again, break it to words. Put all sounds together. Read it again.
“Structure” is a fancy word for how bones are put together. Take the word
“observe” from that sentence and put “look at it.” Now read it again.

These instances of one-to-one teaching/interaction with students’ reading and writing
were not rare in Mrs. Kate’s class. She commented on this issue: “it takes so much time;
but it is the only way that is working.”

The bat project continued till the end of December and students worked on
drawing, writing, coloring, adding details, and working on the title page. Sometimes,
working on the project continued in the library while Ms. Lewis, the librarian-teacher
supervised the students while doing her library work. Writings were edited with Mrs.
Kate’s help. Also, Ms. Lewis spent a couple of sessions in library reading articles about
bats’ life for students. Grade 3 students had to write at least two paragraphs on bats and
grade 4 students at least four paragraphs. A title page, a table of content, and a diagram
were mandatory, but adding a glossary was optional.

**Field Trip**

Other than the trip to the office of the member’s of the provincial parliament and a
trip to a Catholic school for their Christmas concert, during my stay at the school there
was another field trip to a conservation area. A non-profit organization had sponsored the
trip. According to the brochure from the organization, the aim of the trip was to explain
the vital role of the bats in the ecosystems and to promote an appreciation of bats. The
trip was scheduled for a Friday. On the Tuesday before the trip Mrs. Kate talked about
the trip with students. The following is a transcript of the conversation and is
intentionally a long quote to show the nature of “house-keeping” tasks that were to be
dealt with everyday. Mrs. Kate usually had three to four of these tasks everyday and spent similar amount of time and energy on them.

Mrs. Kate: So I am going to talk about the field trip. This is a notice that you need to return by Thursday. I need to have them all back, so tomorrow you can bring it in. Miss Rose will be here she can collect it; you can put them in the “in box”. There are two forms that have to be signed before I can bring you off the school ground. That means I can’t take you on the bus unless your parents sign these. The first one is a note from the school. Me and Mr. Principal typed yesterday, he signed it, I signed it. Your parents have to fill it out, fill in your name, the date, signature. That is for the school. The second notice is for the place that we are going. They have a form that you need to sign as well the top and the bottom. The top says that you are allowed to go there. The bottom says that if they take a picture while you are there, they are allowed to do that. So this has to be filled in [pointing to the paper] and this has to be filled in. Mike?

Mike [in low vice]: …

Mrs. Kate: Pardon me?

Mike [again in low voice]: ...

Mrs. Kate: Pardon me?

Mike: What is a field trip?

Mrs. Kate: You’ve never been on a field trip?

M: …

Mrs. Kate: Oh that is nice. Laura?

Laura: [Students’ voices did not allow the teacher to hear that]

Mrs. Kate: I am sorry Laura. Laura is talking so be sure to respect the person who is talking by looking and listening to them. Laura said are parents allowed to come? On the form I have written “parents are welcome to come along if they wish”. I didn’t put a space where they can let me know, so you can just let me know “yes my mom is coming or yes my dad is coming.” The lady who booked this for us, because it is free, she’s paid for the bus, she is paying for everything; so we are very lucky. We don’t know how many parents are coming and she doesn’t know if there is enough seats in the bus. So if your parents come, tell them that if there is room on the bus, they are welcome to come; if there is no room on the bus, then they have to drive their own car. So tell them that. So if your parents wish to come and there is room on the bus, we will know on Friday. Because sometimes we order a bus, they give us enough seats for the class and two or three extra teachers and sometimes when they ran out of the smaller buses, they send a huge bus. So last year, when my class was on a field trip and there was fifty extra seats; [laughing] it was huge. So that is how it works, if there is room, they can come on the bus; if there isn’t, they can bring their own car and follow us. Leila?

Leila: Can my mom drive me to the lake?

Mrs. Kate: If your parent is coming and you would like to go with your parent in their car, you may go with them; I am not sending other students because that is not the permission form that we made. We made the permission form that you are
going on a chartered bus. But your parent is allowed to take you if you want to go with your parent. Pardon me?

Jena: What if my mom could not follow the bus, so we would be lost?

Mrs. Kate: We can tell her that we are going to Sunshine Lake.

Jena: She does not know the lake.

Mrs. Kate: Then she would have to follow the bus.

Jena: But she would get lost.

Jena: No, she can just stay right behind the bus.

Jena: What if she cannot?

Mrs. Kate: What we do, we would make sure that she would stay with us. OK?

Any other questions? So I am going to give this to you. Now when you get yours, I would like you to put your name where it says name. “I consent my child”, put your name in the spot, the first spot that says name. After the word child, my child, goes your?

Students [in group]: Name.

Teacher: Name. So I will come around and see. Make sure that you put your name in that box. Do it now as soon as you get your form. Bring it back as soon as possible.

Students [while receiving the form]: Thank you.

Mrs. Kate: You are welcome. Your name, your first name.

Student: What is the lake that we are going to?

Mrs. Kate: Sunshine Lake. [She checks what students are doing.] So you have your name where it says name. Location is?

Students [in group]: Sunshine Lake.

Mrs. Kate: And if you read the top part you would see Sunshine Lake. Put your name. OK. STOP. Mike is asking me a question and I am beside him and I can’t hear him. So he is the only person talking right now. Thank you. Yes?

Mike [in low voice]: …

Mrs Kate: Sure. Put your name where it says name please. Here. Anyone else has a question, you just need to raise your hand. No that is not, after the word child. This spot is for your parent. Put your name after the word child.

On the Friday of the field trip, two representatives from the NGO, or more accurately a registered non-profit charity, which had sponsored and arranged the trip, came to Mrs. Kate’s class. They started with a 40-minute PowerPoint presentation about bats, their diet, how they use their senses, echolocation, how they help human beings by eating insects, and different kinds of bats. The presenter, who was also the guide for the trip, interacted with students while presenting by asking questions about different concepts and words such as pollination and echolocation, and nocturnal animals. Students
or at least a few of them knew echolocation and nocturnal animals but not pollination. She also explained what the plan of the trip was and what students would do. Finally, she showed students two dead bats in a closed box and talked about the different parts of a bat’s body. Students watched the bats closely and passed the box to each other. Mrs. Kate reminded students that if they did not follow her directions and those of the guide during the field trips, they would not be allowed on future field trips.

After the presentation, the class headed for a nature walk to a lake which was about a half hour’s drive from the school. Two parents (both Caucasian females), Mrs. Kate, and I were on the bus with the students. Two adult volunteers for the NGO joined us at the lake. When we arrived at the lake, the guide talked briefly about the area and Mrs. Kate gave reminders. Then, students were divided in two groups. One group stayed with two volunteers for making bat boxes and the other went for bird watching and a nature walk. After the lunch, the two groups switched.

The group which stayed for making bat boxes was divided into three teams and each team received a kit containing pre-cut pieces of wood, nails, and a hammer. A volunteer showed how those pieces should be put together and nailed in order to make the box. There was no map for assembling the pieces but volunteers at each team helped students to attach the right pieces. Students also needed help with the hammer and nailing. I helped teams which were waiting for help. The next Monday, Mrs. Kate showed them how to paint and made sure everybody had a chance to paint. Bat boxes were supposed to be returned to the NGO after painting but the school was able to keep one of them.
The members of other groups, which headed for the nature walk, received a few binoculars from the guide and were asked to use it when they were told to do so (which did not happen). During the walk, the guide stopped here and there to talk about different flora (e.g., salmonberry and fern, cedar, and mushroom) and fauna (e.g., wood duck and different insects). She talked about the importance of cedar trees for Aboriginal peoples and how they used different parts of it in their life. Once she asked students to close their eyes for a while and then open them. Then, she talked about different sounds that they had heard and the importance of using senses when walking in nature. The guide also talked about bats, where they live, what they eat, and echolocation. Some other topics that she talked about included: trees that had leaves (evergreens) and those which did not, and trees which had leaves versus those which had needles. At the end she reviewed what she had told students during the walk by asking questions of students. In most cases students were not able to answer the question.

I wrote in my notebook:

Most students had fun watching on their own and did not really listen unless they were asked questions. Often times they were excited by what they saw and called their friends to come and watch it. Several times the guide asked students if they had any question but none were asked.

Birthday

One day when Mrs. Kate wanted to dismiss the class for recess, she said “Just before we go, today is a special day for someone. It is Jane’s birthday. Jane, can you stand up? Ready?” Then the whole class song “Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to Jane”. All students clapped for Jane and Mrs. Kate congratulated Jane personally. During my stay at the school, another student’s birthday was celebrated in the similar way. In the second case, the birthday student had brought
cookies and candies for all students. Mrs. Kate told me that she did the same for all students.

**Extracurricular Activities**

In Maple Wood School, students paid $20 per year for bringing performing groups to the school and usually they had four to five performances per year. Mrs. Kate did not know how groups were picked by the principal, but she thought that the budget was a criterion. One of these performances happened in December during my stay at the school. It was a 50-minute show performed by a percussion group of four musicians. The promotional material mentioned the band as a “hyper-kinetic percussion troupe” which played while jumping, leaping and dancing around the instruments that they had invented from recycled and garbage materials.

Students from all classes sat on the floor in the gym while the band performed. I wrote the following note on that day:

> While older students seemed more amused by the performance, the younger ones did not show much interest. I was watching Mrs. Kate’s students and they mostly reacted to the comic parts. I am not sure how many students could connect with the language used by the band members. Some of the lyrics were way off my head. Maybe it is just me because I am not familiar enough with that world.

**Independent Reading Time**

The last minutes of the day were allocated to independent reading. However, before reading, Mrs. Kate reminded students of the work which was due for the following days and asked students to copy the homework from the board. Here is an example:

I see Jovan is ready. I see Sheryl following directions and Mike and Jena have all their notebooks out and open and they are copying down their homework and they are getting all organized. Good for you. I will answer questions when you have your hand up. That is the classroom rule, we always follow the rules. Number one; read; who is continuing to follow the reading program at home? [Students raising hands] Goooood. If you are not following it, thank you for being
honest and put your hand up. I’d like you to try to remember to follow it. If you lost your chart there is extras here. Boys and girls! Remember the class rule! If you have something to say, you raise your hand, I will see your hand and then I will call your name. There is no point in putting your hand if you are calling up. Number two, math. Pages start here: 128 for grade three, 70 for grade four. Your science test is on Friday. Make sure you are reviewing the water cycle, the words that we learned and how clouds are made. Your spelling is due on Thursday. Your test is Friday. Oh Friday. Oh how come spelling is on Friday? So we have our spelling test Thursday? And number 5 you are writing about the things that you wear from your waist down is due on Thursday.

Next, students were asked to clean their desks so that nothing was on their desk and to tidy up inside of their desks. Students were asked to have their agenda open on the side of their desk and start a silent reading time.

Each student had a bag with a few books, which were chosen by the students from the books in her/his reading bag. Students brought their reading bags from the cloak room and read on their own while Mrs. Kate was marking students’ homework. On the first day of my visit to the school, Mrs. Kate told the students that since they have not exchanged their book bags for a while, they could have their bags put together with books which they had fun reading. They students did so and started reading books on their own. While students were reading, Mrs. Kate told them:

OK. I am very pleased to see more and more people reading independently. In the beginning of the year, many did not use it well and I am noticing that you know how to do it on your own. Good for you. Part of your personal planning, it is part of your organizational skills and part of you making sure you are doing what you are supposed to be doing. So remember, what you are doing at home and then bring it back.

She also told students that she and Ms. Rose had noticed that some students were not actually reading during the reading time. She explained that if they were not reading it could be because the book that they had selected was not interesting for them. She asked
students to make sure the book that they had chosen was interesting to them. I will talk about the books available in the classroom in the next chapter.

During the silent reading time, members of different groups were called to Mrs. Kate’s desk to check and sign their agendas in the last 15 minutes of the class. Sometimes, certain students, who I assume needed more help, were called to Mrs. Kate’s desk to read with her. If time allowed, students played games in the class. Once in a while, Mrs. Kate mentioned how important and helpful the reading time was for them. She told them that they should not “build a wall and chat behind the wall” during the reading time. Sometimes, students who finished their reading early had a chance to play with Logo and build something.

Occasionally, students who finished their work early, went to the table with the tape-recorder, called the listening center, and listened to stories on cassettes. One day in early December, Mrs. Kate told students that she had noticed that some students were at the listening center a lot while others did not go there. Therefore, she put a sheet on that table and asked students to write their names after using the recorder. That meant “listening center and silent reading with your listening tape isn’t a choice for you until everybody had a turn.” Other options for fast finishers were: reading cards, math cards, playing with elastic shapes, and building blocks.

*Classroom Games and Closing the Day*

When there was extra time before dismissing students, Mrs. Kate let students play games in the class. Usually, she suggested some games and students voted for those and one game was picked. For example, in one session, Mrs. Kate suggested “missing
person”, “four corners”, and “7up” and students’ votes for these games came out to be 15, 4, and 1 respectively. Some of these games will be explained in the next chapter.

Leaving the classroom at the end of the day had the same rules as leaving for recess.

Summary

This chapter gave a picture of several activities during the different days when Mrs. Kate was teaching the grade 3-4 class. Mrs. Kate was a very dedicated and caring teacher who spent as much time and energy as possible for her students. She had a very structured class and her weekly pre-planned schedules seldom changed. Every minute in her class was counted and planned for. Rules and routines were very important in her class and she had established many of them. A good part of her time was spent on doing these routines and repeating her directions for maintaining the discipline in the class. She was the only teacher in the school who had chosen to begin her day in the class with O Canada and the flag salute.

Literacy had the lion share of her teaching time. Even in social studies and mathematics, she did not forget to remind students of vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. Mathematics, social studies, and geography were ranked after literacy for their importance. I witnessed little of science teaching. I perceived most of Mrs. Kate’s teaching as teacher-centered and didactic mainly based on repetition and asking affirmation-seeking questions.

I did not witness any connection or reference to students’ home life and culture in Mrs. Kate teaching/learning activities. Many of the curriculum materials used in the class, as well as Mrs. Kate’s examples from real life, reflected a “mainstream” Western culture.
The next chapter will provide an account of the class on Wednesdays when Ms. Rose taught the class.
CHAPTER 8
A COMPOSITE WEDNESDAY

Introduction

As mentioned earlier, on Wednesdays Mrs. Kate went to her daughter’s school to fill her volunteer hours as a parent. Ms. Rose was a substitute teacher hired by the school to teach the grade 3-4 class on Wednesdays. During my stay at the school, Ms. Rose taught five days in the class. This chapter summarizes my observation from these five Wednesdays.

Mrs. Kate wrote the agenda, or “the shape of the day” as she called it, on the board before leaving the class on Tuesday afternoon and Ms. Rose followed that agenda. Sometimes Ms Rose chose to change the order of assigned activities and moved them for example, from mornings to afternoons, but they were all done nonetheless. Wednesdays started like everyday with flag salute and O Canada. However, I did not see Ms. Rose giving notice to students about how they sang the salute and the anthem. My impression was that she did not take it as seriously as Mrs. Kate did.

Language Arts

The language arts lesson was the longest session on Wednesdays which took almost an hour. On one Wednesday, students were given a four-page handout titled “Bat Facts”, which concentrated on nouns. It started with a 10-line text about bats and continued with exercises such as finding nouns in the text, word puzzles, using different words in a sentence, and writing a sentence that describes the picture. Ms. Rose explained the meaning of noun for the students with several examples and gave them 10 minutes to read the text and do the task. Next, she asked the students to switch their handouts with
the person next to them so everybody had a different paper than her/his own. At this moment, I heard a student who was a native English speaker, saying “this is so boring.” I am not sure, if Ms. Rose heard that. Then, Ms. Rose reviewed the exercises with students by asking how the paper in front of them had answered the questions and then confirming or suggesting the right answer.

In one case, Ms. Rose said:

Sandra, are you changing your answer? No, I don’t think so. Sandra, stop. Can you just share them if you want? It doesn’t matter if you got it wrong. This is an extra practice anyway.

For the part on writing sentences, Ms. Rose suggested:

For this part, I want you to read through sentences and check them over, OK? I want you to read their sentence and if it makes sense, give them put a check mark. If you see a spelling error, punctuation, that is if they forgot a period or comma, I want you to circle and ask them to check it over later.

Students did the task while they were talking to each other. Then Ms. Rose asked students to read their answers and commented on them. Handouts were returned so that students who had not finished it could complete the task. Finally students were asked to put the handout in their duotang and return it to the “IN BOX.”

Another Wednesday, the reading activity was focused on “topic sentence”. Mrs. Kate had assigned the first chapter of Welcome to the World of Bats (1998) by Diane Swanson for this activity. Students were asked to read from the article and make the facts in the article into their own by writing a paragraph about different kinds of bats. The importance of the topic sentence in shaping a paragraph was explained by the teacher and students practiced finding topic sentences for those paragraphs.

On the following Wednesday, the focus was on the “main idea” of a paragraph. Students were asked to read a paragraph and find the main idea of it. Ms. Rose asked
students’ ideas about what was the most important idea of a paragraph. Then students were asked to read paragraphs and find the main ideas. Those who finished early had an option to write a paragraph about anything they liked “such as videogames or animals” in the form of a journal. Sometimes students were asked “could you hurry up because we need to go over.” Here is an example of paragraphs discussed in the class:

Eating hot dogs at home is nothing special. But at baseball games, hot dogs are great favorites [sic]. Perhaps hot dogs taste better at baseball stadiums than at any other place. It doesn’t seem to matter whether they are eaten with ketchup, with mustard, or with sauerkraut.

Next, Ms. Rose talked about different elements of a paragraph (such as topic sentence, finishing sentence, punctuation, spelling, indentation) and asked students to write their own paragraphs. While teaching, she wrote on the board “each ¶ has different thoughts or supporting details.” Students asked her about the symbol and she said “haven’t you seen this before?” They students said “NO” and she asked “never ever?” Then she told them that it was a sign for showing a paragraph.

**Mad Minute and Mathematics**

“Mad minute” was a routine of everyday’s lesson plan. However sometime teachers skipped it because there was not enough time to do it. This was a mathematics game used in many elementary schools to help students learn their multiplication table. Students were given three rows of ten basic multiplication problems and were supposed to answer as many as they could in one minute. When they managed to finish them all, they moved on to 4, 5, and 6 rows.

Mrs. Kate had assigned a specific page in advance and Ms. Rose started by her instructions:
Don’t start until I say so. Three, two, one, listening please, listening. Hold on. Don’t begin. Mad minutes are for practice for YOURSELF. You are only competing against yourself. So as many questions as you can do in a minute is great. Try and beat it next time.

After students worked for one minute on their task, Ms. Rose gave students an extra minute to finish their work. Then, she went through each of the multiplications and, with suggestions from students, introduced strategies to get the answer as quickly as possible. Finally, the teacher read the answers and asked students to mark their own sheets.

Sometimes “mad minute” was replaced or complemented by another math activity in the same manner. Ms. Rose handed math worksheets to students and gave them a certain amount of time to work on problems and then reviewed them with the whole class. Usually, she had to explain what the question was about. For example, when the question read “find totals”, she told students “in order to find the total, we need to do what? Yes, we add them up.” Usually, Ms. Rose explained how to solve one or two examples and then gave them time to work on the rest of it. They did so while talking to each other and sometimes coming to her desk and asking questions.

Solving math story problems was another activity which usually taught students how to increase their vocabulary in mathematics. For example, the instruction on one handout read:

The word LEFT in a math story problem tells you to SUBTRACT or TAKE AWAY. SUBTRACT or TAKE AWAY means the same thing.

The names included in this handout were: Joan, Max, Leslie, Mrs. Welch, and Tess. On one occasion, there was one problem that involved American coins and students were asked to ignore that problem. Here is one of my field notes from a math session:
It seemed that Ms. Rose had not gone through problems beforehand. Because one student asked about another question and she said, “oh, that needs conversion from yard to feet, cross it out. You don’t need to do it.

**Reading Aloud or Story Time**

Ms. Rose, asked all students to come to the front of the class and sit on the carpet. She started to read *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume (1972) from where she had finished the last time. In her reading, she tried to imitate the voice and gestures of different characters. Also, she interrupted her reading for reminding students to listen carefully, or put aside what they had in their hands. Once a student interrupted her by asking a question which she answered very quickly to get back to her reading. The reading usually went on for 10-15 minutes and at the end students were asked to stretch their legs if they felt tired. The lesson plan prepared by Mrs. Kate had mentioned the focus of this activity as: connecting, visualizing, questioning, and inferring. There was no discussion or question period after the reading.

The story is about a fourth-grader named Peter Warren Hatcher and his annoying brother Farley Drexel, and Peter's pet turtle. Farley hates the sound of his name, and prefers Fudge. The book is used vastly in many American and Canadian elementary schools and comes with an audio version plus activity books. However, Ms. Rose used only the book and I did not see any of its supplementary materials.

On one Wednesday, Ms Rose told the students that they could continue their work on their unfinished paragraphs, draw something, or just sit back and listen to the story. She read from the book as usual and nobody was really listening. I wrote in my field notes

*Why did she do that unlike other times? Nobody is listening and she saw that, so what was the point?*
**Personal Planning**

Ms. Rose distributed a worksheet with nine questions on friendship and gave them seven minutes to try and answer those questions. The students were asked to skip questions to which they did not know the answer. As usual, students were talking to each other while working and they went to a momentary silence by Ms. Rose’s reminder. The first question was: “In your opinion, what does it mean to be a friend?” Ms. Rose emphasized that: “You are going to write just YOUR opinion. There is no right or wrong answer, I want YOUR opinion.” Another question was “have you ever had anybody try to bribe you?” and one student said: “I do not know what bribe is.” Ms. Rose answered: “if somebody tries to bribe you, means: “I will be your friend if you give me this or if you do something for me.”

After seven minutes, Ms. Rose started to review questions with students. She called on students to read the question first and other students offered their answers which were confirmed or improved by the teacher. Caring, helping, being thoughtful, sharing, and trusting were some of the answers brought up by students in response to the first question on the meaning of friendship. In moderating the discussion, sometimes Ms. Rose reminded students who were talking instead of listening. For example, she said:

Clara! If you would like to share your idea, I just spoke to you about that, PUT UP your hand. While others are talking, you are listening. Thank you.

There was a question which asked: “what would you do if somebody says something mean to you?” One female student answered: “I would ask him to stop.” Ms. Rose asked: “what if they don’t stop?” Another student answered: “I would ask them why?” The teacher confirmed the answer and continued:
You know, I have a theory. If somebody has done something that is not very nice to you, and you have already said to them you don’t like it and ask them to stop but they continue doing that, they are not really being a friend and you should probably go and find somebody else to play with. But if you are constantly going to the teacher, what is the teacher really gonna do? If you walk away from the situation, then that person knows: I am not gonna have any friend with my behaviour. Right? OK. But if it gets really bad obviously, you should tell the teacher.

Another question read: “what is a put-down?” Nobody could answer this question. The teacher explained that “it is actually speaking to someone in a certain way, if you put them down. A put-down is saying something bad about somebody.” Next she asked the students to write down the definition:

A put-down is saying something bad about someone. It’s calling names. It could be in their back, putting them with someone else, it could be putting them down to their face. Have you ever been put down before? How do you feel? I am sure everyone has.

Some of students’ answers were sad, angry, and terrible. Next, Ms. Rose asked

“How do you feel about people who put down others? Say you are in a group of friends, OK, you are a group of friends, one person starts talking about your other friend behind their back. Ok?
So for example, Sandra, Suzan, David, and Andrew are getting together; when people are friends, they are hanging out and they are having a good time, chitchatting to each other; OK and then this is what happens. Sandra has to go because she has something to do. See you Sandra.
[Sandra pretends to go out of the class and everybody says see you Sandra.]
[Ms. Rose playing as Susan]: Now, you know what? I really, I don’t like Sandra because she gets to go to soccer practice all the time and she is a show-off.
[students laughing]. She is a bit of show-off. And David says “yeah, I know.
[students laughing loud]. Yesterday she came over and she talked about how good she was. I can’t stand it.” Andrew doesn’t really wanna join in. He really likes Sandra [class bursts into laughter and “oooh” sounds]. NOT THAT WAY
[students laughing again]. Sandra and Andrew are really good friends and he would never wanna say that. So what should he say? He doesn’t really like to listen to people put down his friend and they are not doing it in front of her either.

A student answered “tell her to stop.” Ms Rose asks “what if they don’t wanna stop? You are gonna punch them? [students laughing loud] No.” Walking away was another
suggestion. Ms. Rose said, “If you walk away from them and say, look! I don’t really like it when you talk about my friend. I don’t like to hang out with you right now. Do you think is that a good way?”

The last question was: “How can you be all right without putting anyone down? Some people think it is cool to talk about people behind their back.” Ms. Rose’s answer was:

Just be yourself, don’t be a bully. It is just as simple as that. If you don’t like people talking about you, so it is best not to talk about them in a negative way. Because, I mean, they are not really friends.

Another Wednesday, the personal planning was focused on a handout titled “the relationship between thought and feelings.” First, Ms. Rose asked students about the difference between thoughts and feelings. Students did not have any idea about it; therefore, she defined each herself and told them that relationship means “how they go together.” Next, she asked a volunteer to read from the handout. However, after the student read two sentences, Ms. Rose continued herself and asked questions while going through the text. For example, she asked what would be a feeling that goes with a thought like “no one wants to play with me!” Students’ answers were feeling bored, lonely, sad, and angry. After moving to other examples and finishing that section, a Caucasian student who usually had problems in finding a partner in games said “sometimes when no one wants to play with me, I feel guilty because I think it’s my fault.” Ms. Rose elaborated on this suggestion as “something really interesting” and continued

11 Ms. Rose did not know the source of the handout. Later, after leaving the site, I found out that it was a chapter from FRIENDS for Children Workbook (2000) published by Australian Academic Press. According to the publisher’s Website, FRIENDS is an Australian program about “preventing childhood anxiety and depression through the building of emotional resilience.” The program is adopted and taught in Australia, Canada, Ireland, Mexico, Netherlands, UK, and USA. http://www.friendsinfo.net/downloads/friendsintro.pdf
If you are in a situation when no one wants to play with you, sometimes you might feel a little guilty. Why do think you may feel guilty if no one wants to play with you? What is your heart doing there? You think it is your fault, you are blaming yourself. But it’s not really true at all. But sometimes you feel like that. Has anyone felt like that before? Like it’s your fault? OK. Let’s go over to the next page.

Solving a “friendship problem” was an activity for another session. Students were asked to read the handout, find out the problem in the scenario, suggest a solution, and present it to the class. They had to choose one person to read from the handout and another one to present their discussed answers to the class. One of the scenarios was a situation in which A told B that she would be B’s friend only if B stopped talking with one of her friends. When students wanted to present, Ms. Rose said “the rest of you are being good listeners. That means nothing should be in your hands and you are looking at whoever is talking.” After reviewing the answers with groups, Ms. Rose asked students to read loudly from a page titled “the good friend rules”:

- Good friends listen to each other.
- Good friends don't put each other down or hurt each other’s feelings.
- Good friends try to understand each other's feelings and moods.
- Good friends help each other solve problems.
- Good friends give each other compliments.
- Good friends can disagree without hurting each other.
- Good friends are dependable.
- Good friends respect each other.
- Good friends are trustworthy.
- Good friends give each other room to change.
- Good friends care about each other.

Next, Ms. Rose read an example of a “friendship pie recipe” as the following:

- Mix two quarts of respect
- Stir in 5 tablespoonfuls of smiles for our classmates
- Add one cup of sharing our toys
- Stir in three gallons of compliments
- Mix one litre of listening to our friends
- Stir in 2 cups of taking turns
• Bake at 325 degrees for 45 min.
• Cut into 25 slices and share with your class

She asked students to make their own list of what is needed for making friends in
groups that would brainstorm for writing a friendship recipe. On the next Wednesday,
Ms. Rose continued the activity on the friendship recipe and focused on measurements
and elements of a recipe. Students always wrote a rough copy first and later took it
individually to Ms. Rose who edited their work and gave them a sheet for the good copy.
In her editing, Ms. Rose corrected students’ writings unlike Mrs. Kate who asked
students questions and made them make corrections themselves.

*Library Time*

After recess, students directly went to the library and sat in groups of four. Ms.
Lewis, the Caucasian librarian-teacher, first asked students who knew the full date of the
day, and after one student told the date, she asked if they knew if anybody was absent.
Next a student asked if he could move to another table and Ms. Lewis asked some
students to move to other tables in order to make the number of students at each table
more even. Then she started her lesson

Remember. OK? One of the most important things is to learn how to treat each
other with kindness so that you will be treated with kindness and even if you
aren’t treated with kindness. So if somebody sticks out their tongue at you or
makes …at you, OK, it’s best not to do anything, not to react; and if it escalates,
tell the teacher. Is that understood?
Students [almost yawning]: yeah
Excuse me? OK. Well, some people take a lot longer to understand than others
and you guys are only in grade, what grade are you in? [Students: four, three] OK,
three and four. So it might take a longer time for some of you to learn which is
OK. It takes adults a long period of time as well. OK. So you are not alone. But
the sooner you find out, the sooner you learn, the better is for you in the long run.
The more polite you are and the better you treat others, the better it is for you in
the long run.
Now, what we have done, we’ve looked at bats and what else, what have we done
with bats? We found three facts about them. Right? So what I’m gonna do is, let’s
see. You guys don’t have any pencils, right? [Students, ohummm]. OK, unfortunately, that is not good because, OK, you need pencils to write. So next time you come to the library bring your pencil. [Some students murmur: how? we were at recess.] I know you were at recess before the class, but you have to get a pencil from the classroom and come back here, alright? So what I’ll do is, I’ll read you a short item and then we can discuss it. Oh, here, oh, wait a minute. This is from the Odyssey magazine, right? Everybody look over here. Stephen! This is from the magazine Odyssey, the science magazine and this one is from May 2007 and it has a section on bats. The whole magazine is about the night life. What do we know about bats and night life? What do we know? Raise your hand. Somebody else? Mark? […] Alright, I am going to read this article and it’s called “batty about bats” by Kathiann M. Kowalski, and see there is a whole bunch of pictures here. Everybody look over here please. Turn your heads and face me.

She continued to read three paragraphs from the article and then paraphrased it in a language which I perceived much more difficult than the language of the text. Then, she asked students:

The writer seems to be getting at a certain point. It doesn’t say it outright. It doesn’t explicitly say it, clearly say it. What do think the writer is arriving at?

A student raised a hand and answered the question, correctly in my view. Without commenting whether the student was right or wrong, Ms. Lewis rephrased the answer and continued reading the next two paragraphs.

Bats are the only true flying mammals. Their scientific name, chiroptera, means "hand-winged." Thin membranes sandwich muscles and blood vessels, and connect a bat's arm, palm, and finger bones to its ankles--forming wings. Because wings are crucial for flying and feeding, bats spend lots of time grooming them. Flying takes lots of energy, so bats eat about half their weight in food each day. Pregnant or nursing mothers eat more up to their full weight. What's on the menu? It depends. "Bats fill every, conceivable feeding niche," says Ken Paige at the University of Illinois at Urbana. A lot of species of bats\textsuperscript{12} eat fruits or flower nectar. Other bat species eat mosquitoes, [like we just discovered] flies, moths, beetles, or termites. Still others feed on frogs, fish\textsuperscript{13}.

\textsuperscript{12} The actual article reads “Over zoo of the 9z5 known species.”

\textsuperscript{13} She chose not to finish that paragraph in the article which continued “lizards, or other animals. Contrary to myth, only three species--the common vampire bat, the white-winged vampire, and the hairy-legged vampire suck blood.”
Next, she took questions and answered them by referring to pictures in the article and said: “you can’t see these pictures, but there is a picture of a bat eating a frog and a picture of […].” Finally she gave students two minutes for checking out books from the library which was too short a time for all students.

Sometimes, she paused and asked students if they knew or had seen something. However, she never waited to discuss any answer and moved on after hearing “yes” or “no” from students. During the students’ 15-minute stay in the library, Ms. Lewis interrupted her teaching by reminding students to listen to her. Here is one of the examples:

Steve and Tony, put those cards away please, NOW. Put that jacket on the top, Tony. Put that jacket on the top, NOW. OK, go to the office. [Tony says no] Excuse me? [Tony says no again]. [Facing one of the students] Can you bring him to the office please? OK, Tony, excuse me? Are you ready to listen? Alright, good, thank you.

At the end of this session, I wrote in my notebook:

\textit{Didn't she really know that the classroom is locked during the recess and nobody is there to open the door for students to get their pencils? She was not sure which grades these students were in.}

Before leaving the school in December, I found out that, for personal reasons, Ms. Lewis did not talk to Mrs. Kate and Ms. Rose about their students and always took her questions and problems to the principal.

Another Wednesday, Ms. Lewis started her lesson like this:

Everybody look here please. I’ve got an article that I printed from the online \textit{World Book Discovery Encyclopaedia} that we have here in the library here. Also, you can access through your Internet at home. OK, when you go into WebCT, there is a tab there that shares databases. One of those databases is \textit{World Book Discovery Encyclopaedia}. This article is on bats. So everybody is going to have one copy. Put your name on the top right hand corner. Put your full name, first name and last name.
Next she asked students if they knew whether the library had the encyclopaedia in a “paper format.” Nobody knew and she answered that there were two sets of the book and showed where the books were in the library. She asked students to quietly read the first paragraph of the article and next read it loudly together. Then she wrote the key words on the board and paraphrased the paragraph. She mentioned the aim of paraphrasing as

It kind of helps us understand the reading better. Right? Because we put the reading in our own words; and so we kind of test ourselves and it shows that we understand it. Right? It is not in the author’s own words. Also, when you get along, you know to later grades and high school, you won’t be able to use author’s own words. You cannot plagiarise. Has Mrs. Kate spoken to you about that? [students answer: NOOO]. OK. You cannot plagiarise. You cannot use the author’s own words. OK? Plagiarism, plagiarism, because otherwise teacher will know that you picked the sentence out of the article or maybe of somebody else’s article or maybe the professor at university will know and who knows you might be even expelled from university for that. So you don’t want that to happen to you and it is not a very good thing. That is why we are doing this.

Later, she read the text sentence by sentence and called on students to give their suggestions for rephrasing the sentence. Several times Ms. Lewis said sentences with words that sounded unfamiliar to students. Seeing students’ puzzled looks, she asked “do you want me to write these words on the board or forget about it?” Students answer was always “forget about it.” Finally, Ms. Lewis read the complete paraphrased paragraph and said

You could also paraphrase that way. We are doing it in another way different from Mrs. Kate’s. But you can also do it this way. There are different ways of paraphrasing and putting things in your own words.

On one occasion, Ms. Lewis was reading a book on bats and was trying, or struggling in my view, to explain words such as hibernation, echolocation, and nocturnal. I was sitting in front of one of the computers and thought maybe I could help her by finding some clips on the Internet. I located a simple video clip on echolocation and told
Ms. Lewis about it. She asked all students to come to the computer and watch it. She was so excited and surprised that the clip made it easy for students to understand.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the librarian’s work had changed a lot during the last decade. She also had the responsibility of teaching LAC and ESL students for which, according to Mrs. Kate, she had no training. Students had another library session with Ms. Lewis on Tuesdays as well.

**Gym**

After the lunch break, students had lined up in front the gym when Ms. Rose came and opened the door for them. In the lesson plan prepared for the gym activity, Mrs. Kate had mentioned three games that could be played: British Bulldog, Beanbag Chase, and Bumper Lift. The third game, “bumper lift” was never played during my stay.

Ms. Rose chose to start with British Bulldog and first explained the rules of the game for students and answered their questions. Then students played a couple of rounds. In this game, one student was the 'bulldog' and stood in the center of the gym. Everyone else lined up at one end of the gym. When the bulldog yelled, 'British Bulldog', all students run to the far end of the gym, avoiding the bulldog. To capture someone, the bulldog should lift him completely off the ground long enough to yell, '1, 2, 3, British Bulldog!' S/he then became a bulldog too. The last player caught was the bulldog for the next round.

Next, Ms. Rose explained the rules for Beanbag Chase and took students’ questions. In this game, students were divided into two groups of Xs and Os. Xs should keep up with Os and Os tried to lose or get away from Xs. Xs got a point if they caught the beanbag tossed over the head of Os on the whistle. Os got a point if Xs did not catch
the beanbag. Then the two groups switched positions and played again. Overall, students spent half an hour playing in the gym.

One Wednesday, when students were playing games, Ms. Rose told me that “we were supposed to do things like volleyball today, but students love to play.” I concluded about the gym time in my field notes

Gym is a place full of participation, engagement, and joy. It seems that even students with all those family problems forget everything here.

Art

In the art class, students were supposed to make a “multicultural mobile.” The mobile, as shown in Figure 19, consisted of two pieces. The upper piece was a three-dimensional maple leaf coloured in red and the lower piece was a rectangle of bristle board. The lower piece contained basic information, such as population, capital city, and flag of students’ country as well as those of three friends’ country. Drawing, and cutting maple leaves, coloring, attaching the pieces, and writing the required information was among students’ tasks. Ms. Rose’s lesson plans sometimes referred to this mobile as the “friendship mobile.”

Many students had come up with China and Hong Kong as friends’ countries. Students found this information in the computer lab by searching in Google during their computer time. These two pieces were connected by a piece of string. Another piece of string hung the mobile to the ceiling of the classroom, mainly on the light fixtures.
During the art class, Ms. Rose first explained how to do a specific task and then walked in the class to monitor how each student was doing her/his work, answered their questions, and sometimes helped them. Students could take their mobile home and work on it. On the last day of working on the mobile, Ms. Rose helped individual students at her desk to fix the problem of their mobile. She gave them a deadline to finish their work and said that they could bring it the week after the deadline but it would be marked as late. She said:

People who have finished it today, they got 4 out of 4. Because remember, I told you from the beginning that the object of the project was to show that you could use your time wisely and follow your plans. If you hand it in next week, you probably will get 3 out of 4.

Later that day, Ms. Rose announced:
If I see that you are doing a really good job on your project and you just need some more time, then I will consider giving you a 4 still even if you hand it in next week But only if you do a neat job.

In one art session, Ms. Rose put a cassette in the cassette player. The cassette was


My overall impression from the art class is reflected in this note:

*This is among the most engaging activities I have observed in this class. All students work while talking to each other. Drawing, coloring, writing, ... kept everybody happy and busy.*

**Computer Time**

One Wednesday, before sending the students for recess, Ms. Rose told students:

After recess, I want to remind you, go straight to the library after recess and I will meet you in the computer room. In the computer room, we are going to research one thing again for your multicultural mobile and that is? And I will bring the sheet [students answering: population] OK.[...] All you need to do is, say your friend is from China, you are going to go to Google, and what to do in Google? [one student answering: population of China?] OK. I think that will probably give you the number that you need and you will write it down. I will bring your research for you. You just need to come into the computer lab, find a computer, either with a friend or on your own and start Googling. When you are done your Googling job and I have collected them back, then you will have your computer time. Understand?

I arrived with the students to the computer room and students started to look for a computer which worked because almost half of the computers did not work. Ms. Rose started the class by saying:

One, two, three. OK. Boys and girls stop what you are doing. STOP WHAT YOU ARE DOING. I shouldn’t have to ask you so many times. There are less computers than normal because these are not working. You are going to have to get into a group of two or three people to a computer and share. Now [One
students talking to his friend.] Tony! OK. You know what? I will talk when you are ready. I am not talking over you, there is no point. [moments of silence] Girls at the back! Please sit around and listen. I am going to call your names and give you a sheet.

About five minutes was spent so that everyone could find a working computer. Doing the task of finding the population of a country was fairly easy for many groups. However, I was asked by Ms. Rose to help a couple of groups. Some of students, with whom I worked, did not know how to start the browser, how to spell words such as flag, Google, and China. One student did not know that she had to put spaces between words she typed for a search. Also, there were students who had been absent from the last computer class and had not done the task on finding the flag of their friend’s countries. Ms. Rose helped these students herself. Finally students were given free computer time during which most of them played games. Usually students spent between 15 to 20 minutes in the computer room.

I was observing students while they were playing games and wrote in my field notes

*I am not sure how many students knew what words such as “browser” or “log in” meant. Couldn’t she use simpler language? One can easily feel which students have computers at home and which do not. It seems to me that those students who lead in each group come from families with a better economic situation. I can see the difference in their clothing, bags, and stationary.*

**LAC and ESL Students’ Journey**

Twice a week 9 LAC (Learning Assistance Center) and ESL students went to Mrs. Taha, the resource teacher and Ms. Lewis, the librarian-teacher. These students went to the resource centre or the library in two groups of 4 and 5. On the first Wednesday

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14 In general, I found Ms. Rose spent much more time on classroom management than Mrs. Kate. Examples of this kind of addressing some of students were common in her teaching. Twice during my stay, she sent students to office for their behaviour.
during my visit, I noticed two different groups of students leave the class to see the 
resource teacher and I asked Ms. Rose about the difference between these two groups. 
She told me that she knew nothing about it and those issues were decided by Mrs. Kate. 
Later, I found out about that distinction between LAC and ESL students and how Mrs. 
Kate had tested students early in the school year to find which students should to go to 
the resource teacher.  
When I asked Ms. Rose how differently she taught in this school from the other 
one that had less ESL students, her response was: 
A lot of vocabulary practice and I find a lot of the time it's giving them the words 
that they sort of have them at the tip of their tongue but they don't know what it 
might be in English or they don't meaning of certain words. So I find that things 
are sort of slowed down a little more, because it’s constantly checking in to see 
“do you know what does that mean? Do you know what I'm asking you to do?” I 
find with this class I constantly have to reiterate what their expectations are and 
what they need to be doing. I don't know whether that is because they were chatty 
or.. I think definitely it was some of them I have noticed they just don't 
understand...what is expected of them. 
I did not observe the resource teacher’s class. However, in response to my 
question on what she does with her students, Mrs. Taha said: 
Usually, I focus the first term on reading comprehension skills, and we focus on 
like the main idea, finding the fact, frequency, predicting, and for anything like 
that, because I know the kids, they don’t have a lot of background knowledge, and 
so we have to build upon that, and then, because they don’t have background 
knowledge, it’s hard to connect with what’s happening in the story to ask 
questions, so that’s why we focus on [comprehension] in the term one. And in 
term two, I work more on the mechanics of writing, grammar, punctuation, things 
like that. 
Comparing Mrs. Kate’s students in grade 3 and 4, Mrs. Taha told me: 
I think grade 4 is very, very receptive compared to the grade 3. Just I think it’s 
because they are older. They have maybe more experience, even in that one year 

15 I wrote in my field notes
It seems that I know about these students more than Ms. Rose does. In my last week in the site, I asked her 
about a number of students' family problems and she said she knew nothing about them.
more of schooling, and they’re more open to learning new things, while the grade 3s, you need to do more, you need to take step by step by step, and explain every detail slowly, very slowly.

Mrs. Taha also commented that some of Mrs. Kate’s students are “very quiet, reserved, sometimes don’t want to do anything.” When I asked for the possible reasons, she said:

I don’t know. I don’t know the kids well enough. I only see them twice a week. So I don’t know what’s happening at home. So I couldn’t give you a real answer. It’s just when I do see them, some of the kids are more receptive.

Specifically, I asked about Simon, about whom I reported in Chapter 6. Mrs. Taha did not know anything about Simon’s background. Mrs. Taha told me:

Very quiet. Even when they sit right next to me, even that is not enough, or it’s not good enough for them. They just, sometimes they just close down. Maybe they don’t want me next to them, helping them. I don’t know.

During my stay at the school, I never witnessed Mrs. Kate and Ms. Rose talk to LAC students about what happened when they were with the resource teacher or the librarian. I did not witness any communication between the resource or library teacher and classroom teachers about LAC students either.

**Ms. Lewis’ Class.** I did not interview Ms. Lewis but I attended one of her sessions with four LAC students. I previously described her teaching style during students’ library time. Students were given a handout on dinosaurs. She asked one student to read aloud and asked students questions such as the meaning of the words written in bold, the number of the paragraphs in the text, and the title of the text. In one example, she asked students “what does mist mean?” One student said dry. Ms. Lewis said

It is kind of related, but it actually means a little bit the opposite of dry. Right? A little bit wet. Right? A little bit wet, kind of not totally dry. Kind of wet.
She also told them how to figure out the meaning of the word “preserved”, which they did not know, “from the context of the sentence or paragraph” if they did not want to use a dictionary. However, she did not explain the meaning of the word context.

In another activity, students were given time to read ten sentences and fill the blank spaces from a collection of words. After everybody finished, they read their sentences and marked their work. Everybody got ten out of ten and there was no explanation from Ms. Lewis about those sentences. Ms. Lewis asked students whether the activity was easy and everybody agreed. Next, she handed another worksheet which asked students to choose the antonym of a given word. My notes show that in more than 20 minutes of this session, students were working individually on their own. In the remaining 10 minutes, students and the teacher reviewed the work.

On several occasions during a half hour session, in response to students’ question, Ms. Lewis told them “try to figure it out yourself.” A characteristic of her class was her own ways of doing routines which often differed from those of Mrs. Kate and Ms. Rose. For example, she asked students to write their names on the top left corner of their handouts. When she saw a student had written his name on the right side, she told him:

I know probably your write it in a different way in the classroom, but when you are here you have to just do what I asked you.

**Closing the Day**

The day usually ended with the teacher’s call to tidy up and clean the room, bringing the extra papers to the recycling box. Sometimes, if there was extra time, students were allowed to play a game and “four corners” was the students’ favourite one played in Mrs. Kate’s class as well. In this game, a student was designated as the “caller” and other students chose a corner of the room to stay. The caller stood in the middle of
the room and closed her/his eyes and counted to ten. After finishing the counting, the caller called out one of the corners and all students at that corner were out of the game. Then, the caller counted again and called a corner. The last person to still be in the game is the winner and becomes the caller for the next round. In order to choose the caller, Ms. Rose went through the class list and asked students if they wanted to be a caller. She told the students “I am going through the list, because I want it to be fair.”

The idea of having a game at the end of the day was a common practice in Mrs. Kate’s class as well. Another favourite game was “heads down, thumbs up” or “seven-up.” In this game, seven students were selected by the teacher and came in front of the class and the teacher said “heads down, thumps up.” The rest of students had their heads down with closed eyes and put up one thumb. The seven students then went around the room gently and pressed down one student’s thumb secretly (or “tagged” the student) and returned to the front. Then students sat back and those students with their thumbs down stood and had one guess at who pressed their thumb down. If her/his guess was correct, she/he would be a walker. The walker would sit down and the game started over.

Summary

This chapter presented a range of activities that took place on Wednesdays when Ms. Rose was teaching the class because Mrs. Kate, the classroom teacher, had a day off. The most important feature of Wednesdays, in my view, was the lack of a coherent connection between this day and other days of the week when Mrs. Kate taught the class. Although Mrs. Kate herself had assigned the tasks to Ms. Rose and they communicated through a notebook, students were under a totally different teaching system. Rules and routines were much looser on Wednesdays and Ms. Rose, who had much less teaching
experience than Mrs. Kate, spent a good part of her time on bringing discipline to the class. Ms. Rose’s teaching was also didactic but much less skillful than Mrs. Kate’s. Ms. Rose was younger than Mrs. Kate and had no children. She was not as successful as Mrs. Kate in emotionally connecting with students. Because Ms. Rose was at school only one day per week, she did not know much about school and her students, let alone students’ culture. Similar to Mrs. Kate’s class, there was little or no evidence of a connection between classroom activities and immigrant students’ cultures.

ESL students had separate sessions with the library teacher and resource teacher. The resource teacher, who used to be a music teacher for 15 years and had been a resource/ESL teacher for the last five years, was exhausted by the lack of resources and did not know enough about her students. She did not spend much time with them and did not have enough time to discuss students’ problems with Mrs. Kate. The library teacher was, in my view, totally disconnected from the school, teaching, and students and had nothing to offer to her students.
CHAPTER 9

CRITICAL VIGNETTES

Introduction

Hughes (1998) defines vignettes as “stories about individuals and situations which make reference to important points in the study of perception, beliefs, and attitudes” (p. 381). The key word in this definition, in my view, is “important”; since one may ask important for whom and for what reasons? In the preceding chapters, I tried to give an account of daily life of students in the grade 3-4 classroom. In addition to or underneath those “happenings”, there were issues that sometimes framed happenings. I perceived these issues as defining poles around which a cluster of events and processes are formed. They are aimed to capture some of the stories about those poles which I felt are culturally significant and help me answer my research question. The term “critical” refers to the pivotal cultural roles of these poles.

The first vignette is about Christmas Holidays which strongly overshadowed all school activities in the school for almost a month. The second vignette focuses on science in the grade 3-4 classroom, an issue which changed the focus of my study. The third vignette illustrates the communication between the school and parents. The fourth vignette narrates multicultural education as perceived by teachers in this particular classroom. The fifth vignette is an account of an experienced curriculum on diversity. Vignette 6 addresses texts and teaching resources.
Critical Vignette 1: Doing Christmas

Starting Tuesday December 4th, the regular schedule for the class changed and the period from 1:45 pm till 2:45 pm was allocated to practice for the Christmas concert. This applied to all days except Wednesdays. The students from Mrs. Kate’s class all went to the grade 5 class which was next to their own class to practice together. I assume that these two classes were assigned to work together by Ms. Taha, the resource teacher who organized the event. These two classes had a few of their practices in the gym in order to get more comfortable with the real stage and with the students in the play in their costumes.

On December 3rd, Mrs. Kate told students that they would be doing a song and a short play in the concert and they would practice it during the rest of the month. The play was Christmas around the World and its script has been reproduced in Appendix E. It was about some children who traveled to different parts of the world like Hawaii and Australia. She asked who had been to Hawaii and Australia and one student said that he had visited both places. She suggested that if students had pictures from Hawaii and Australia and could bring them to the class, “that would be very cool.” Indeed one parent brought pictures that she had taken from Hawaii and Australia and Mrs. Kate put those pictures on the wall and asked students to look at those pictures. Mrs. Kate also explained about different roles and asked who would like to take some of those roles. She told them everybody would be in the singing part. However, since roles in the play were limited, they would have an audition and the people who did the best job at the audition would be picked. First, 17 students signed for practicing but many changed their minds and only 4 students were left for practices.
Ms. Taha told me that the school does the Christmas Concert every year and if, for any reason, they do not do it, they will do a spring concert. However, she thought that it usually takes place at Christmas because “the Christmas Concert is more popular with parents, they like getting together at the school at Christmas time.” However, Mrs. Kate had another view about the history of the concert. She told me that:

Teachers talked to cultural facilitators and a couple of other people. They all said it is very North American. With most of these students being from Asia, it does not relate to them. But they still decided to go with it.

Music was played from a CD player and students practiced two Christmas songs. The first was a Hawaiian song called Mele Kalikimaka, written in 1949 by Robert Alex Anderson, and the lyric read

Mele Kalikimaka is the thing to say on a bright Hawaiian Christmas Day
That's the island greeting that we send to you
from the land where palm trees sway
Here we know that Christmas will be green and bright
The sun will shine by day and all the stars at night
Mele Kalikimaka is Hawaii's way to say Merry Christmas to you

(Take it girls)
Mele Kalikimaka is the thing to say on a bright Hawaiian Christmas Day
That's the island greeting that we send to you
from the land where palm trees sway
Here we know that Christmas will be green and bright
The sun will shine by day and all the stars at night
Mele Kalikimaka is Hawaii's way to say Merry Christmas to you

(Instrumental bridge)

Here we know that Christmas will be green and bright
The sun will shine by day and all the stars at night
Mele Kalikimaka is Hawaii's way to say Merry Christmas to you

Mele Kalikimaka is the thing to say on a bright Hawaiian Christmas Day
That's the island greeting that we send to you
from the land where palm trees sway
Here we know that Christmas will be green and bright
The sun will shine by day and all the stars at night
Mele Kalikimaka is Hawaii's way to say Merry Christmas,
Merry Merry Christmas to you, Merry Merry Christmas to you

It was not explained to students that the title Mele Kalikimaka is taken from the Hawaiian pronunciation of “Merry Christmas”. While practicing this song, the other teacher explained that the first part is for boys only and the second part for girls only. One student said loudly “nooooooo” and another student said “why?” but the teacher just ignored them.

The other song/play was “Six White Boomers” which is an Australian Christmas song. The lyric is about six special kinds of kangaroos, or boomers, that Santa Claus uses to pull his sleigh instead of traditional reindeer. In the story, Santa uses his sleigh to help a kangaroo find his mother. The theme for the concert was “Christmas around the world.” Again, Australia was not discussed. The script for “Six White Boomers” is also included in Appendix E.

Students were encouraged to practice the songs at home so they could perform better at the Christmas party. During these practices, Mrs. Kate often took the lead in instructing students how to sing in a way which was different from reading by hanging to words. Here is an example of her instructions:

Boys and girls! I am noticing that you are singing in much more like a song rather the first time when we sang together, you were reading the words and it didn’t sound like singing, it sounded like reading. Today it sounds like singing. How many people are practicing at home? [A few students raise their hands] I can tell. OK. Now we just need to work on being a little louder with our singing, but not shouting.

She took this task very seriously and very patiently asked students to repeat a line several times until she was happy with the result. In every practice session, almost half of
the class were not participating; i.e., they were not singing, were yawning, or seemed
bored to me. Mrs. Kate intervened on a few occasions. Here is an example:

   Boys and girls! Some of your voices are really loud right now. I heard people
   making moaning and groaning sounds. That is not acceptable. I think you know
   better than that. We are looking and listening.

As the practices went on, more students were participating in singing and from their
smiles one could say that probably they had fun. However the situation was not the same
for students who had problems with their English. Simon was sleeping on his back on the
floor and whispering something. I wrote in my notebook:

   It seems some of them are not here at all. They are not listening or singing. It
   seems they are more ESL than others. To me, it seems that one can distinguish
   them from their outfits. Are they from poorer families? Am I reading too much? I
don't know.

   In all cases, choosing individuals for playing different roles happened by drawing
among volunteers except that Mrs. Kate told students that Santa could not be a girl and
insisted on this point. At the last minute she changed her mind and said Santa could be a
girl. But still a boy was picked to play Santa’s role.

   The activities for the Christmas concert were taken from the Internet, specifically
from DLTK's Crafts for Kids\textsuperscript{16}. The Christmas Play, Christmas around the World,
performed in the school starts with the following background:

   We live in Canada (loads of snow). My daughter came up to me near Christmas
when she was about 4 and told me she felt very sorry for all the people in
Australia and Maui (we'd been to Maui, but I'm not sure how she came up with
Australia).
   I asked her why and she responded, "because they don't get Christmas."
"Sure they do honey!"
"No they can't mommy... they don't have any snow."
I explained that Christmas wasn't about celebrating snow... it was about
celebrating Jesus' birth. In fact, there was no snow where Jesus was born!

\textsuperscript{16} Retrieved November 25, 2007 from \texttt{http://www.dltk-holidays.com/xmas/christmas\_play.htm}
Other Christmas Activities

There were other Christmas-related activities in the grade 3-4 class and, from the works on the walls of the gym on the concert day, I assume in other classes during that December. Indeed, Mrs. Kate had planned her teachings so that all her projects and lessons had finished by December 10th. Most of the hours in the last two weeks were either spent on Christmas activities or planning for the concert or on working with individual students to edit their writings while other students were working on their projects.

With the help of Mrs. Kate, students also made a Christmas tree and decorated it with an Australian flower which they had made themselves (shown in Figure 20). She told students that she had found the flower, golden wattle, on the Internet in her search for a symbol for Australia and asked a teacher at the school who was born in Australia what that flower looked like. Mrs. Kate showed her usual patience in teaching students how to make those flowers. Students also made reindeer hats and produced artwork on a Christmas theme, examples of which are shown in Figure 21. While students were working on their artwork, Christmas songs were played from the cassette-player in the class. On one occasion, instead of the music, Mrs. Kate read part of The Little Reindeer for students.
On December 14th, when the students went to the library, they had a Christmas party instead of their regular class. The librarian had brought some potato chips and asked students to help themselves while listening to the music from the CD-player, i.e., songs from *Christmas Music Bar* (3 CDs).

On December 19th, as part of language art activity, students worked on a “Christmas TRIVIA.” The worksheet contained two sets of questions (each set included 26 items) regarding Christmas with their answers. Mrs. Rose set this as a match between different teams. She read questions and the team who raised hands first had a chance to answer that question and score points. Sample questions from the list are:

Who is the villain in Dr. Seuss’ famous Christmas book?
What happens when you stand under mistletoe?
Who are the Magi?
Who was chosen to guide Santa on Christmas Eve?
Where is America’s national Christmas tree?
What do bad boys and girls get for Christmas?

On December 20th, students spent almost an hour in the kitchen baking candies and marshmallows. They did this in two groups. While one group was in the kitchen the other group was finishing their artwork on Christmas. The class with the resource teacher
was cancelled because students went for baking. Mrs. Kate talked about different Christmas cookies and treats that she had seen in the city and gave students detailed instructions on ingredients, what to do, and safety issues. She also took the opportunity to talk in detail about the stove, oven, microwave, and other kitchenwares. A staff member and a parent volunteer, Ms. Lucy, were with students in the kitchen. These two were doing most of the tasks and from time to time explained what they were doing.

Figure 21. A sample of students' artwork for Christmas.

There was also a Christmas craft activity. Mrs. Kate had bought frames and asked students to paint them. She first asked students if anybody knew what pointillism was and nobody knew. She defined pointillism as

a type of painting where you don’t use the normal side of the brush. You use the other end of the brush, it is sometimes the point of the brush; and you don’t use stroking back and forth, you just go down and up. Sometimes it turns out very nice when you use a Q tip. So we will probably be using Q tips.

Students were instructed to paint a picture with pointillism so they can keep the frame for themselves or give it as a gift to somebody. As for the picture, she said “you
can do a Christmas picture but you don’t have to. It could be a winter picture. It could be a beach scene picture. It can be any picture that you like.” Most students ended up doing a Christmas picture.

As part of the decorations for the Christmas concert, Mrs. Kate asked students to create signs of “happy new year” and “merry Christmas” in 30 different languages. She had found those equivalents in the Internet and students were instructed to copy those words with bubble letters, dots, and lines in a single page. Each page also included the name of the language. She said that “I had picked languages that represent students at our school” and the aim of the activity was explained as having “lots of languages that are representative of the parents who come to school.” Also, she had made a sleigh for Santa and painted it with students’ help. When it came to those words in Chinese, one student said “this is not Chinese” and Mrs Kate answered “there are Mandarin, Cantonese, and Chinese.”

In a reading session in late December, Mrs. Kate chose to read from The Little Reindeer by Michael Foreman (Red Fox, 1999). She asked students to write: a summary of the story, their favourite part or what they didn’t like, what they would they do if they had to write the ending (i.e., did the boy meet the reindeer or not and why), and a little sketch (if they had time). The last thing students did for the concert was making a paper chain in order to put around the bulletin board outside their class. Mrs. Kate told students that another teacher had reminded her that the board looked “kind of yucky” so they had to do something about it.
During most of these activities, Christmas songs were played from the cassette player while students were working. Mrs. Kate was serious about songs as well. On one occasion, she told students:

Do we want to listen to music or not really? [Students: Yes] I don’t hear it. If you want to listen to the music, you can talk quietly. But there is no point in having it on if you don’t want to listen. I don’t mind if you don’t want to listen, I just don’t turn it on.

Mrs. Rose contributed to Christmas activities as well. For example, one day she chose to read a story on Santa, *Lost Santa*, instead of the book that she regularly read for students. In another language activity, she asked students to choose one letter of the alphabet and draw a Christmas tree in the shape of that letter. Another day (December 19th) students were asked to work on a “Holiday Crossword Puzzle.” The worksheet read:

On December 21, 1913, the first crossword puzzle in an American newspaper appeared in the New York Sunday World. In honor of this historical event, solve the holiday crossword puzzle below. Some clues are given to help you.

The “word bank” for the puzzle includes words such as “sleigh, reindeer, stockings, wreath, and carols.” After finishing the crossword, students were told they could right a “crazy Christmas tale” with the words from the “word bank.”

**The Day of the Concert**

The concert was scheduled for the evening of Wednesday December 19th. Mrs Kate and her colleague sent a letter to parents informing them about the concert and asking them

if possible, we would like the children to wear a white top and dark pants/skirt. […]

Please send $3 with your child to cover the cost of Christmas baking, concert props and Christmas craft making.
Mrs. Kate asked students if their parents could not read it, to explain for them. One student asked if there was a Chinese translation for the notice and Mrs. Kate said “no Chinese, you should explain to them.” On the day when students were supposed to bring their $3, only 8 students had done so. Mrs. Kate explained again in detail what the money was for and told students not to forget about it.

The gym was decorated with posters, paintings and Christmas trees produced by different classes (Figure 22). It was packed and many parents had to stand during the concert. On the wall at the entrance, there was a board showing “happy Christmas” written by students in 15 different languages. Different classes came and performed songs and plays. All students in Mrs. Kate’s class were wearing a Hawaiian garland (lei) made by themselves in the class. Among the audience, one could see many people who, from their age, could have been grandparents.

*Figure 22. The school gym decorated for the Christmas concert.*
Christmas Concert or Winter Concert?

While everybody was talking about organizing the Christmas concert, the memo sent by the organizers to the staff about the concert was titled “holiday concert”; but next memos were talking about “Christmas Concert.” Here is how the organizer, Ms. Taha explained this to me

When we first talked about it with the staff, this year, the staff said they want a winter concert and usually we stay away from Christmas because of the religious holidays and things like that. But the new principal said: why are we having a winter concert? He said this to me yesterday. And I said because we don’t wanna mention Christmas. He said: why? This is Christmas time, isn’t it? We sing Christmas carols so why can’t we call it a Christmas concert? And I said, yeah I see your point. He said what do we call Hanukah? What do we call Diwali? Light Festival or Autumn Festival? I said no. He said so why shouldn’t we call this concert Christmas? Because the majority of songs, dances, and things are about Christmas. I said fine, if you still feel that strongly about it, I am fine with Christmas Concert. In the past, we had called it a Christmas Concert but then trying to stay politically correct, we’ve changed it to winter concert. Because he said this to me I thought about it I talked with staff members they didn’t really mind changing it.

The following is Mrs. Kate’s version of the story:

In the past, it has been called a Winter Concert without the term “Christmas” and this year the principal has made it clear that he wanted a Christmas Concert not a Winter Concert. It’s fine to have religious words, songs because it is part of the history. He said that he would like it to be, it doesn’t have to be religious but it can be. Like in the past, people shied away as if it was to offend people. And [now] they are “look at how you saw the Christmas all over the world and you can bring ideas from all over the world.”

Mrs. Kate said that she guessed that the direction for this change had come from the Board because in the past the Board had said no one is allowed to say Christmas Concert and administrators were very clear and outright about this.

Visiting the Catholic School for Christmas Concert

On December 20th, Mrs. Kate told students that they will go to the Catholic school in the neighborhood, where her daughter attended, in order to watch their Christmas
concert. She told me that sometimes they go to that school because they have a big and nice concert which is fun for the students. I was curious to ask whether she had consulted with the principal on this but I did not ask. After a 15-minutes walk, we reached the Catholic school. Students from another class with their teacher and two other staff members from the class accompanied us.

I learnt that the Catholic school was an independent school built eight decades ago with an established tradition of Christmas concerts. Students and parents were packed in the gym and we had to look for a while in order to find seats so that all our students could sit together and we could monitor them. On the stage, students were playing “The First Christmas.” I could not follow the play because I did not have the background knowledge of the play and the cast were using an archaic language. Later, I found out that the play was the story of Christ’s birth according to Matthew’s gospel. The first page on the brochure for the concert, handed to all of us, read “Performed for the greatest honour and glory of God.”

During the concert, I was watching Mrs. Kate’s students. I am not sure if any of them could follow the play. Maybe they were amused by the music, costumes, stage decorations, or songs. However, I could not see or feel that they were having fun. In their faces, I read a sense of bewilderment and wonder. I wrote in my notebook that:

_They do not know these people, they do not know the place, and they do not know what is going on and why they are here. This is the sense of being in a strange place._

After returning to the school, Mrs. Kate asked students about the words which came to their mind when they were thinking of the Christmas Concert at Maple Wood School.
Next, she asked the same question for the Christmas Concert at the Catholic School and wrote them on the board on two different columns.

**Staff Christmas Party**

In Chapter 6, I mentioned the divide among the teachers. That divide showed itself during Christmas too. The staff were supposed to have a Christmas party in late December. However, the teacher who was responsible for organizing the party sent a memo to all staff announcing that “due to the lack of response” to the invitation, their “formal staff party/gift exchange” had been cancelled. In the memo, the organizer announced that she and another teacher will meet for dinner in a restaurant and they would be happy if other people joined them. Mrs. Kate’s reaction to this memo was: “This is typical of our school. It is awful, but it is true. We are civil, but we do not enjoy being together.”

**Critical Vignette 2: What Happened to Science?**

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I did not observe much of science teaching and this issue totally changed the focus of my study. On the timetable that Mrs. Kate had created, four slots were allocated to “Socials/Science.” One of these slots was 30 minutes and the other three were 45 minutes each. Therefore, if we assume the time slot was evenly divided between science and socials, science would get almost 80 minutes per week.

In practice and during my visit, other than two sessions (26 minutes) of teaching science that happened in the classroom, one day students were taken for a field trip to learn about bats, their life, and habitat. They also spent some time in the class on painting bat boxes that were made during the field trip. At the elementary level, this could well be
considered as a science activity and there were many opportunities for teaching and learning science. However, this was an unplanned activity from the school’s point of view. If that NGO had not offered the school the field trip and its cost, the event would not have happened.

I was eager to know why so little of science. However, I did not want to ask any question which would be considered an intervention in Mrs. Kate’s work. Not only had I committed to be unobtrusive, but also I did not want to co-construct my data. Therefore, one day when she was teaching social studies, I asked her how she allocated that amount of time for social studies, mathematics, and other subjects. She told me that she was following the mandates from curriculum documents. Therefore, I looked at curriculum documents for this matter. For primary years, the curriculum leaves the time allotments to teachers’ judgment. For grades 4 to 7, about 7 hours of science per week “is recommended.” The document emphasizes that this is a suggestion in order to meet the prescribed outcomes and gives teachers freedom to adjust the time to meet students’ diverse needs.

Before leaving the school, for the second time, I asked Mrs. Kate about her time allocation to different subjects and her response was:

It’s a period of language-arts a day, so period for writing period for reading, 45 minutes for reading, 45 minutes for writing, and then I include for listening and speaking. And then 45 minutes of math every day, and then science and socials, I usually do, in the past, this year's different because we do this experiment of social studies groups, in the past I’ve always done six weeks of social studies and six weeks of science in one term, so three periods a week for science for six weeks, and then three weeks of socials for six weeks. There is only 12 weeks for sure.
Then she explained that in that year because of the special arrangement for social studies, science and social studies did not go hand in hand and science was shifted to another time. She concluded that she had “about six weeks in total” for science.

On the second and last day of my second visit to the school, I thought I could ask Mrs. Kate about the amount of time spent on science more explicitly. She repeated her answer that because of the project of co-teaching social studies, science was taught at other times when I was not present at school. According to my notes, there were four occasions when science was included in “the shape of the day” on the board, but there was not enough time for doing it. The last time was during my second visit to the school in early June when I saw science on the agenda but no science teaching happened.

In one of my conversations with Ms. Rose, she said that although she had not done much science, “in social studies and science a lot of the things, a lot of the topics that we cover are basically literacy.” In fact, in several language arts sessions during my visit, the topic of students’ worksheets was bats. However, I saw this as a consequence of choosing certain textbooks for language arts. While there were many facts about bats in those worksheets, the lessons were focused on issues such as main idea or topic sentence.

Once when Mrs. Kate was talking about her ability and confidence in teaching writing, I asked how she felt in other areas. Her response for science was:

Science and socials, because its curriculum, its content that sometimes the children don't have a high vocabulary in the content areas, they can’t read the science text a lot of the time, so I do copy sections of it because I like the lay out of it, but a lot of time I spend so much time interpreting the text because its not at their level that sometimes I have to pull from other teacher-friendly curriculum-based activities, like teacher-friendly made books from teacher stores. So, science and socials, a lot of the time I have to gather resources which is time consuming because you can’t do that for every subject.
One of my interviews with Mrs. Kate was about how she saw the situation of students for whom I had the consent of gathering data. She mentioned each student’s strong and weak points in reading, writing, and math and nothing else. Science was mentioned only once about one student in the following quote:

She has a real spark in her eyes and she is curious and she loves science experiments and hands on, her dad felt that we did not do enough of it, which I agree, we did not do enough of that. And I said that is something that I would work more on, including more on in the classroom. And something that you know she could spend more time on, but I also had to get through a curriculum work on balance. I also had to make sure that all the needs of the children are met. So, there is time for that, but there are certain basic things that have to be covered.

Critical Vignette 3: Communication with Parents and Students

This vignette discusses school and teachers’ communication with parents which were in forms of notices, report cards, School Newsletter, and personal meetings. Also, while Chapters 6 and 7 had accounts of teachers’ communication with students, here I present instances when teachers talked to students about their personal life and offered them general rules for life.

Other than “parent nights” when parents and students were scheduled to come and talk with teachers about all their concerns, there were other ways of communication between the School and parents. As explained in Chapter 7, notes were regularly sent to parents to ask their permission for out of school activities, to inform them about events at school, and to ask them for money or food for special occasions. During my stay at the School all these notes were in English. Mrs. Kate told me that translation seldom happens because of the costs involved.

During my stay in Maple Wood School, there were few occasions on which I met parents/guardians coming to school to meet with teachers and staff. Teachers’ talk in the
staff room was not concerned with parents either. Only twice, teachers mentioned “rude attitudes” of some parents (not in Mrs. Kate’s class). Of course, the Christmas concert was an exception and many parents showed up to watch their children’s performance.

The Board had a mandate that all “important” notices sent to parents had to be translated for parents who could not understand English. As Mrs. Kate told me, on few occasions “selected notices” were translated, because too many notices were sent home (notices for field trips, asking for money, for bringing food for an occasion, etc.) and their translation was not affordable. Furthermore, according to the teacher, many of those parents were not able to read in their own home languages either so there was little point in translating those notices. During my visit, no translated notice was sent to parents.

This is how Ms. Rose saw the problem:

I know that once things go home they don't get read because they simply can't be read and the kids are too young to know of its importance. You know, you have noticed with your consent forms and things like that. Because I think a lot of parents who are new to Canada themselves feel shy about coming in to the school and talking to the teacher for whatever reason.

During my visit, there was one occasion when one student told Mrs. Kate that her mom refused to sign the letter of consent for a field trip because “she did not know what it meant. She asked you to sign for her.” Mrs. Kate told me this was not usual because “they usually have a very high respect for teachers.”

I witnessed three occasions when Mrs. Kate or staff members had to call to a student’s home and either the students themselves or students from upper grades acted as the translator during the phone call. When a longer face-to-face conversation was needed with parents who did not know English, the school used the Board “cultural facilitators” who were available with an appointment and acted as translators for different languages.
The role of these cultural facilitators will be elaborated later in this section through an interview with one of them.

Mrs. Kate told me that she was not sure about the level of parents’ English proficiency because most of them never engaged in debates or discussions with her. The following are examples of Mrs. Kate’s comments about some parents when we were discussing sending the English or non-English versions of consent forms for parents:

This mom was a teacher in her home country. She says she understands English but I don’t know the level of understanding because she says yes to everything. So you never know. I think his dad is OK but again I don’t know about the level. But I would say that my guess would be they would be OK. This one and this one, they can speak in a conversation but again they agree and I don’t know how much they really understand.

Even when the language was not an issue and one of the parents could communicate in English, talking with parents over the phone was not always easy because many of them worked long hours at jobs where calling them was not possible. In one case, Mrs. Kate needed to talk to a mom about a student who urgently needed eye glasses. It took two weeks for Mrs. Kate to arrange that call and finally she was able to talk to the student’s 15-year-old brother on one of the days when she had stayed at school late in the afternoon.

*Report Cards*

On the day of handing report cards to students, Mrs. Kate told her students:

All of you did as hard as you could, as best as you could. OK? So, take it home, read it. If you don’t understand some of it, please bring it back and ask me questions about it. Don’t be afraid to ask questions of me or any teacher you have in future. If your parents have questions, tell them to phone me and we can make an appointment and we can talk about their questions.
Two days after handing out report cards, Mrs. Kate asked students to write about what they liked, what they didn’t like, and what their parents thought about their report cards. She also told them to write what they would like to see in their report cards in future.

I think it is important to hear how you feel about your report cards. If you were surprised, you were happy or sad or both, and what your parents felt. So, I would like to hear that.

The report cards, which had the same format for grade 3 and 4, had three areas. It said on that term the student had been working on certain areas, had actively participated in certain activities and was encouraged to do certain things. It included jargon such as reading strategies, decoding, context clues, sight words, and sequencing. Mrs. Kate believed that

For me, when I give my report cards, that is more for the next year teacher; at the school-based team, when the principal and health worker get together to help children who are really struggling. Because to me, those are the children who need to strengthen the most. Right? So, we need to document what we have done with those students to help develop a program that would work for them. It is more written for teachers.

She also had her own view on what a “helpful” report card should look like:

You know what? You can’t write something that is helpful, that parents can really do tomorrow. Like, I believe sometimes you need to be told “you need to get a tutor for your child because extra tutoring helps.” I believe that. There is something that you can’t get advice for. And I can say I help find a tutor and I have done that many times; a place or a home, agencies that offer help, counselling (there is some mental health issues) in Cantonese or in Mandarin. So to me, those are real connections that can really help.

Students with A’s and B’s in all subjects were on the Honour Roll (with minimum of four A’s the teacher could drop the lowest mark). In order to be in the Principal’s List, students needed to have A’s in all subjects but one and nothing lower than B in that subject.
The Newsletter

During my stay, a newsletter, which read #4, was sent by the school to students’ homes. It included a thank-you to parents, staff, and students who had attended a breakfast and had raised about $500 for needy children who would receive “a toy for Christmas.” It also had details of the Christmas Concert and Christmas lunch for students as well as an announcement for a hands-on science program starting in January. Next there was a news item about a senior administrator who was leaving the Board and acknowledging his work. The newsletter ended with a section on “Happy Holidays” which wished “a Merry Christmas” for everybody and announced the returning day.

Cultural Facilitators

The board had 22 cultural facilitators whose role was to connect the staff at schools with students and parents from different backgrounds. Each cultural facilitator was based in a specific school and was assigned a certain number of elementary and secondary schools. According to Ms. Long, a cultural facilitator whom I interviewed, they could support seven or eight languages such as Vietnamese, Chinese, Punjabi, and Hindi. Ms. Long was assigned six secondary schools and twenty elementary schools. When teachers needed these facilitators, they called and set an appointment with one of them who could translate in the language teachers needed. On the time taken for facilitators to respond to teachers, Ms. Long said: “usually, we try to accommodate within two or three days, or in one day.”

The main problem, according to Ms. Long, was finding a time that works for the teacher, parents, and the facilitator.

Their main role was translation but they provided other services as well:
Besides translation, interpretation services, we do like first language assessment, because we just want to see how good the students are in their first language, and then from there we place the students into other programs. I do like counselling. […] We explain to parents about, we do orientation to parents, provide any information about school system in Canada, particularly in this province, in our schools.

On the question of services that they provide to immigrant students, Ms. Long said

But we don’t provide like services in the classroom. Yes, if there’s a need to explain to the students and the family, like about how to, we do parenting group, or refer them to parenting group outside in the community, so, because they are Vietnamese speaking parenting group in the community, we may refer them to outside agencies. […] We provide tutoring club for the students in terms of language difficulties. I can be involved in explaining something to them, but usually for those things we refer to student buddy, like an older student who can also speak that language, and they work together. Or they can be referred to other tutoring services outside in their own language and so.

**Two Cases of Parents’ Presence**

Other than parents, and most often grandparents, who picked up the students from the school, I only met two mothers during my five weeks of stay at the school. One of them was Rena’s mother who came to school at the request of the teacher. Mrs. Kate wanted to explain to the mother that she should not expect too much from her daughter because of her situation. This meeting was attended by a “cultural facilitator” who translated for the mom.

Later, Mrs. Kate told me that Rena had commented that this was only her English school and not Chinese school. According to Mrs. Kate, this was an idea coming from Rena’s mom who expected all A from her daughter while Rena was not even a C+ and had “some disability issues” but had not been diagnosed. Mrs. Kate inferred from Rena’s mom’s facial expressions that “she is very harsh on Rena and like many parents thinks that the school is not strict enough.”
The second instance was Anita’s mother, Ms. Lucy, who regularly attended the school. Ms. Lucy was a Caucasian professional who apparently did not have strict working hours because she was able to volunteer her time whenever she wanted. During my five weeks of stay, she was present on all field trips to accompany students and in all occasions held at the school; e.g., for helping students to cook Christmas cookies at school. One of my field notes about her reads as follows:

*Among all these parents, only Ms. Lucy is present at every single occasion. I assume she is not only watching her daughter and other students, but also subtly watching Mrs. Kate and the school (not really subtly, it is quite explicit). I guess she is the only one who can afford to do this helping/monitoring job.*

Later, Mrs. Kate told me that Anita is from the country that I am coming from, so I can relate, because she comes from, well because her mother and I went to high school together and I know her grandmother. Her grandmother knows my mom.

_The New Cultural Staff_

On my second visit to school, Mrs. Kate told me that another position had been introduced by the board for working with culturally different parents and students.

According to Mrs Kate, the new position goes one step further than the cultural facilitator. So, the cultural facilitator supports children and families with language. So they are here to interpret, they are here to find like language support groups for parents can may be go pick up some ESL language courses so that they can understand some language, themselves, adults. And they also help with, say, they also have to enrol their child into summer school, they will help them enrol. [...]. The new position is language plus culture. So, for example, we talked about Nina’s mom who made a true distinction between English school and Chinese school, and that English was not as important as Chinese school. And she saw that English school kind of as a place for fun and play.. and its not serious, whereas Chinese school...it is more strict...and so the new staff explained to mom how she needs to send the message to Mabel that English school is just as important as Chinese school. They are both important, not one better than the other. [...]Then she met with mom [...] Then she met with mom [...]. Three other times, after she just e-mailed me last night, saying that she explained to mom about cultural support groups, and network support, so kind of like what the
cultural facilitator does, was try to find support network….but also had more intense meeting with mom about integrating into Canadian schools.

**Communicating the Teacher’s Personal Experiences to Students**

Mrs. Kate, like all teachers, brought her real life experiences to her class. During her teachings, she used examples of her real life in order to convey her messages. The following are a few examples of those experiences while I was in her class.

In a session of silent reading, she said:

> I was walking on the street with my kids the other night, I think it was Friday night a Christmas show on and there was a big hail storm in this show. Anyone knows what that show is called? Christmas something, right? And hail stones, do they look real or fake? My husband picked one that was so big it was like Styrofoam and my daughter said “do you think that hail stones can be that big mom?” and I said I think in the Guinness Book of Record they have very big hail stones.

In a session when Mrs. Kate was talking about biography as a genre, she showed students the cover of a book and asked who the person on the cover was. A few (four or five) students said “Steve Nash” and Mrs. Kate asked “who is he?” and students said “basketball player.” She then continued:

> You know he came to my house. [One student: wow; another student: Oh my God] My neighbour is an older man and his son is a physiotherapist; that means he works on people helping them become more susceptible; if they have injuries, he helps them get better. [So his son is now the head physiotherapist for the Olympics 2010.] One of the people he helps get better is Steve Nash. So his dad invited him over for dinner. He phoned me and said “look out your window because someone is coming over for dinner.” And I said “who is that?” I didn’t recognize him. He had long hair and he was kind of shorter than I thought, kind of skinnier than I thought. [One student laughing] I said “Tony, who is that?” He said “that’s Steve Nash.” Oh, wow. So he came to my neighbour’s house. He didn’t come really to my house. He was kind of beside my house. So that is Steve Nash and he is a famous? [Students finished her sentence by saying: basketball player.]

On the day when Mrs. Kate was giving her final advice for the performance in the Christmas Concert, she said
One thing you need to remember is when you are up there, there is an audience of people watching you and that is something you need to practice. You are facing forward; you are smiling; you are there to perform. My daughter sang in the choir this weekend for the first time at our church on Sunday and she was doing this [she played with her hair and clothes and students laughed.] I said to her you realize you are doing that? She didn’t even realize she was doing that because she has never been on the stage before, so she didn’t know.

**Communicating Rules for Life to Students**

Most of the rules that Mrs. Kate promoted and enforced in her class were related or focused on “dos and don’ts” at the classroom or school level; although they could be viewed as cultivating habits for life. However, some of her rules or recommendations addressed more general issues related to the whole life. This section presents a few examples of those rules.

On the day before the social studies exhibition, Mrs. Kate told students to stand beside their posters as grade 2 students came to visit the posters. The following is part of her advice:

They may ask questions or you can tell them “would you like me to tell you what we learned in social studies?” If they don’t say anything, they might be shy. You can say “would you like me to tell you what we have done?” Show them the work you did. This is your time to show off all the work that you did and be proud of it. OK [some students laughed after she said “show off”]. It is “look at the work that I did; look at the picture that I took; look what I wrote; let me read to you what I wrote.” If she doesn’t say anything, then say “did you hear me? I wanna show you what I did. Are you interested?” She might say yes, she might say no. If she says nothing, keep on asking. Don’t be shy, get her attention. OK?

There is going to be 40 grade-2s, so there is going to be enough of grade-2s to have almost one at every center. So make sure that they are not just wandering. Just get some and be a leader, get their attention. Say “come and look at my poster. I wanna show you the work that I did. Maybe you will do this next year when you are in grade 3.” So, you are going to say to them come and look at your work. That is the purpose.

At this point, a student, whom I perceived as very shy, asked “what if you were shy?” and Mrs Kate answered:
You were shy? I am asking you to try and speak up and show your work. Because we did this for a reason: to share; and if you never shared before, this is a good time to try and start; and standing with your poster is a good start. Try and share with at least one other person in grade 2, at least; try.

In a reading session, Mrs. Kate asked students what they would do “as good classroom citizens” if they saw a student did not have a reading buddy. One student said “ask him join our group.” Mrs. Kate responded “how could you make that person feel comfortable to join your group?” Then she talked about how it is difficult for an isolated person to go the group and it was much easier for the group to go to that person. She also told students how as a student she was not very strong at reading and was not comfortable in joining her peers.

In a session on social studies, when she asked a question from a few students and none of them knew the answer, she told the class:

If you can’t remember, that is OK because it’s all about? [Students finish her sentence by saying: learning] learning and sometimes you don’t learn something the first time, or second time or third time. Sometimes it takes forty times, fifty times, or hundred times; that is OK. So don’t panic.

When she was handing reindeer hats to students, she said:

It doesn’t matter of the color because I know some of you worry if you have pink and you are a boy. But in Hawaii, it doesn’t matter. So, it shouldn’t matter for you. We don’t have enough of certain colors, should people want that color. So, please whatever you get, you get and say thank you. [Steven raised hand and said: Every color is actually boys’ and girls’ color.] Excellent. I love to hear that.

Once Mrs. Kate had an appointment on a Tuesday morning and a supply teacher from the Board was supposed to teach for her. On the day before, Mrs Kate told students:

When you go somewhere new and different, is it hard sometime? [Students: yeah] That’s because you don’t know anybody. It is the same for the guest teacher. So they might be coming and they might not know anybody, might be their first time here. So please make them feel welcome. Please listen and follow directions well. I always ask them to leave a note to say who was really helpful and who needs to be reminded about being helpful.
Finally, when students were making their reindeer hats, one student asked “can we go and buy our hats?” Mrs. Kate said “some students can go to a dollar store and buy their hats and some can’t. So it is not fair. We will all make hats in the class.”

**Critical Vignette 4: Multicultural Education for the Grade 3-4 Teachers**

In Chapter 2, Canadian multiculturalism and specifically multicultural education in Canada were discussed as a context that, at least at a theoretical level, shapes/informs educational discourses in Canada. Chapters 6-9 and the previous vignettes illustrated how little, if any, of teaching/learning activities could be considered relevant to multicultural education. However, this vignette aims to probe the issue further and go beyond the five weeks of my stay in the school. In doing so, it draws mostly on interviews with teachers to see what they had done in the past and how they thought about this issue.

**Multicultural Mobile**

As mentioned in Chapter 7, students worked on an art project which was called a multicultural mobile or friendship mobile. Ms. Rose related that she found the idea of making a mobile about Canada on the Internet and that the friendship or multicultural component was her “spin” to it. I asked Ms. Rose about her intention in bringing that project to the class and she said

They were starting to study Canada. A lot of them did not really have any idea that we live in this city and that kind of thing. And then I just started thinking--because I know that they go in groups for social studies and they do a lot of mapping in geography and that kind of thing. I thought that since kids were doing friendships in personal planning to sort of tackle the same issue from a cultural point of view might be interesting. So, it was mostly about setting a goal when the project is gonna be done and completing on time and anything else that they derive from that was great. And I am going to make up a sheet where they have to sort of respond: what did you learn and how did you feel about it?

In response to my question about achievements of the project, Ms. Rose told me:
I think, most of them, from the planning perspective, most of them stayed on target. But, from out of the interest sake, other than maybe it being fun interviewing your friend, I don't know that they quite got that, you know, that Canada is very multicultural. And maybe they did. And that's what I sort of hope to find out.

Finally, I asked her what she meant by “Canada is very multicultural” and her response was:

I mean most Canadians were not born here. [...] That is sort of the point. You know Canada has all these great things to offer because we have all these different communities that, you know, harmonize together, work together. And we are friends with people from other cultures. We need to find out more about that.

That project was the only instance when I heard the term “multicultural” in the school during my stay.

**Diversity in Social Studies**

As part of the social studies curriculum, students had a few sessions on diversity before my arrival at the school. During my stay, Mrs. Kate’s students presented their work on social studies together with another class in an exhibition. As mentioned earlier, four teachers had divided the units in social studies and each had taught one. Diversity was one of the units taught by another teacher and not Mrs. Kate. While chatting with Mrs. Kate on the day of exhibition, I believed that she was not very happy with the way diversity had been taught. Later, I asked her about this and she told me:

[If I wanted to teach diversity], I would look at similarities AND differences. Like we are all different, but really we are all the same. That could be kind of my focus. [...] But I feel as a teacher, because I work with a diverse population, and I did a paper on diversity in my Master’s program. And I really feel strongly that we have to look at how language, and food, and dress are different, but also how it is the same as well. I think that by doing that, you build connections with people in bringing a community closer together. And when you only talk about differences, I think that can be problematic because it doesn’t bring a community on how we are connected. So you can’t talk about diversity without talking about similarities, differences, but in the end, even though, language, and food, and
dress, and celebrations might be different, how are they similar. You can’t do one without the other. […] So, that’s how I would kind of take it. It wouldn’t be able to do diversity and just talk about the difference, and that’s what I talked about with the kids today. I wanted to get a sense about what their understanding was. Maybe she didn’t present it this way at all. Maybe her intention wasn’t, but the perception that I got from them today was that it was a focus on the differences, rather than similarities and differences. Anyway, I could be wrong.

**Multicultural Education Defined**

After talking about diversity, I asked Mrs. Kate how she would define multicultural education. First, she said laughingly that that was a good question. Next, she asked me if I wanted to know her definition in the case of having unlimited resources. I responded that I was interested in her response in Maple Wood School. She said:

To me, you have to talk about what is the same about our multicultural myth, and what’s different about it. You have to do both, and you have to do where the overlaps are. So, to me, multicultural means many cultures living together in unity and respecting the values of everyone, and hearing and celebrating, you know, and having an understanding that our new year, like one child said today, our new year is different than the new year they celebrate here. And we do a Chinese new year celebration where we write posters, and we have shows in the gym, and stuff. So to know that, just because your new year is a different day than our new year, my new year, they are both new year celebrations. […] So it’s a learning, it’s a learning for me of them and it’s a learning of them of me. And I found it for me, it’s always a discovering and trying to change and redirect. But when I first started teaching, I would have just given them my perspective, and not be open to listening and changing. It was just what is written in the book, what I need to give them, just feed it out, with this out, channelling out and the end and be all. Like I am the teacher and this is what you’re doing. Whereas now, it’s more an exchange. So I think part of going back to your original question of the multiculturalism is that exchange, because you still don’t know your kids. And I think the root of it is knowing your kids. Like knowing them emotionally, socially, culturally, yeah.

Mrs. Kate also mentioned that she had learned from her Chinese Students:

I ask them to tell me more about what’s fortunate to them in their life, so they’re informing me. […] In Hong Kong they have those little red envelopes that they give out for the New Year, and it’s called Lai See. So in Chinese New Year, which is in February, when they go to someone’s home, traditionally they give this Lai See and it has a penny and a candy. So I usually go to a Chinese store to
buy a whole bunch of envelopes and fill them. You know, so then it is something familiar to them. When they see it, they’re excited. And it is something that I am taking knowledge from them that I have learned about customs and traditions. So like our traditions too. I might be providing because it’s foreign to them like Thanksgiving and then I bring in pumpkin pie. Many of them never tried pumpkin pie. One year, a student spit it out because it was disgusting. So you know, it’s a new experience, right? And too, they’re providing me with some information, so I can draw from that to spark some interests in reading and writing or something.

**ESL-ness or More?**

As Ms. Carlson, one of the primary teachers, mentioned in Chapter 6, ESL-ness of students was a major feature of Maple Wood School. Ms. Rose felt a huge difference between the other school where she had only one designated ESL student in the class and here where there were “so many kids that are designated or not but should be or could not get on the list or it's too late in the year to put them on the list.” For her, this was not just about language.

Generally the kids who are new to Canada, I found, have more limited experiences. I find that when it comes to writing a lot of them have a difficult time because, I don't know, maybe they are not in extra curricular activities, so they don't. I find a lot of what they might write about and talk about is sort of “I stayed at home, I played on the computer, I watched TV’ or something like that. They don't have a lot of life experience.

Also, she noticed that “a lot of them are unfamiliar with things that I take for granted…and it's never been more apparent to me than this class.” When I asked for examples, she said:

I was talking about one of the local stations and news stations and they had no idea who I was talking about.; and two of the biggest news anchors in the city that have been around for 30 years or so. I would think that most people would know who they are and they had no idea.[…] Most of the classes that I have been to have played things like capture the flag or British bulldog. I could tell that lot of them had never even had experience of the game.[…] I did notice for Halloween barely anybody dressed-up or if they did it was bringing their costume in a bag and then taking it in a bag when they got home. They did not want to be in their costume all the day. When I was growing up that was all that you wanna do. I mean you wanted to be in that costume from the time you woke up to the time you
went to bed. So it could be putting in their time maybe. Everyone else is bringing in a costume and I bring my costume too, but I don't know! It did not seem to me as into it as most kids.

In her view, this is “on top of the language” because “for a lot of them just absorbing the culture is going to be sort of double whammy for them.”

Ms. Rose also told me that she had seen “a few schools” with high numbers of ESL students, which were different. In those schools, she said, families felt involved and as a result they would openly participate in their child's education. The reason, she believed, was that schools and communities were very welcoming and parents interacted quite well with the staff. She also commented:

I don't know what that is, what sets it apart, I suppose administration because, I think, they really set the tone for staff as a whole, that’s what I've noticed. And then it trickles down to how the classes are run.

For Mrs. Kate, the real challenge was having students whose knowledge of English was very different. As mentioned in Chapter 6, she thought students in her class were in a range of reading abilities from grade 1 to grade 7. When students were coming from another country with little knowledge of English, the challenge was even greater. She especially remembered two grade 3 students from past years:

One was, he was a rabble, he was punching kids, he was kicking, he threw chairs, and I was so concerned and worried why, and when I finally got to know him, I realized he was so frustrated because he wanted to communicate but he didn’t have the language, and he has a very passionate kind of personality, very emotional. […] He was frustrated because he wasn’t being included in games. He just wanted to be a kid with every other kid. That’s all he wanted in the end. So he would go to play with someone, and they would not include him because he couldn’t communicate. […] When he first came, he was pointing when he had to go pee, he would go em em, if he was like thirsty. Even we attached a word, because I had a child in the class who spoke Mandarin, so she would translate for me, “water, I need to drink water.” Even he said water, it took him two weeks for him to say “water”, and he would continue to go “mmm” and “mmm” to go to the toilet, right? So finally, eventually, you know, he would say “I need to get and drink water. I need to go to washroom.” By the end of the year, he learned so
much English. He was having conversations with people. It’s beautiful to see in such a short time, and I think part of it, this came up in my coursework is, because he was a risk-taker, because he took risk with language, so he wasn’t afraid to make a mistake, so he would try, right? When he had the language, he eventually tried, you know, he opened up, right? Whereas the other girl, she came from Hong Kong. And she was Cantonese […]. She didn’t say one word. She just sat there, she wouldn’t even take her pencil, shut down, she would just sit there all day. I would draw a picture, because kids communicate because they could speak Cantonese. Most kids could speak Cantonese. There were only two kids who could speak Mandarin. Even if we said to those kids “can you play with so and so in Mandarin?” Jack [the first boy] didn’t want to play with the boy who was Mandarin. The Mandarin kid wanted to play with the English-speaking kids who couldn’t because he wanted to assimilate. And she, Jalin was her name, she just didn’t want to be here. She missed her friends back home. Her dad and brother were back home. Just her mom was here. Her mom said she just cried. She didn’t want to come.

O Canada and Flag Salute

As mentioned in Chapter 7, singing O Canada and the flag salute were part of the everyday routine. Mrs. Kate told me that she was the only teacher in the school who was doing this. Her reasons for doing this, I believe, relates to multicultural education. She said:

When I was taking courses [in my Master’s program], I was struggling with this identity. I think that children have their own identity. But, I also believe that children should be exposed to North American history and culture of what is Canada? So when the Canadian flag came to be and why is there a maple leaf on the flag? And so, there is always this question of what is Canadian and in it always a debate. So, part of I would feel, I need to do as a teacher go back to that question---what it means to be Canadian? So I really think that part of identity is knowing where your roots are as an individual; because some of the immigrants are in the school and myself being an immigrant child. I want them to be in touch with who they are but, also be in touch with the country where they live in. So, I want to bring that back. That’s why I thought it would be a good idea to sing O Canada and do the flag salute at the start of each day, partly because, I like routine. When I think it settles the kids they know what to do come in and they are more ready and focused to work because everyday isn't a new beginning and what are we doing today; they know the routine. But also partly because what I like to do, within the school year that I have these children, is talk about the Canadian flag. What Prime Minister means? What Premier means? What does the song mean and we will look at these over the course of the year. Because I know you cannot do it in a term. So, and
partly because the course I took in ESL said, like a lot of time our children, they come to a country because their parents emigrated from a different country. Parents start to lose their own heritage because some parents don't keep up the culture of their original state from where they came from and partly because they lose that and they don't know about the country where they come into. So, they don't know——they can’t relate to the culture of the country they live in, sometimes, because their parents do not make a connection for them and they don't make them at schools because we don't teach a lot of that at school, anymore. I don't think as much as we used to […].

So, because —what book was it, I cannot remember now the name of the textbook, anyways, it talked about identity. And sometimes children don't establish an identity and I have seen behaviour problems in the classroom from students who, I feel, who don't have an identity. […] So, what I'm trying to do is: talk to them about their first culture and we talk about where you came from and the flag of your country and 'you know, what is the food in your country and what is the language in your country and all of that. And talk about what it is to be? What it means to live in Canada and the heritage of the country and what it is? So, how it is a melting pot of different cultures. But it is also, you know, based on European values, because that's who were here first, for them to understand that history part.

**Critical Vignette 5: Experienced Curriculum on Diversity**

As mentioned in Chapter 7, students in Mrs. Kate’s class had done a unit on diversity as part of their social studies. That unit had been taught by another teacher before I arrived at the school. In order to get a sense of students’ experiences on this topic, or enacted curriculum, I briefly talked with a few students on this subject. This vignette presents a brief description about students as explained by them. In fact, it is a summary of their answers to questions such as “tell me about yourself; what are your favourites? what do you like at school? and what don’t you like at school?” This will help to give an idea of how students saw themselves. Next, I will reproduce the transcript of my short conversations about diversity with them.

Andrew: An eight-year boy who liked to play badminton and hockey, mango was his favourite fruit and yellow was his favourite color. The most exciting thing for him at school was playing with his friends. He liked math best because he was good at it and
also because it was pretty easy to do. He also liked computer and gym. He had a
computer at home and used the Internet and played games such as Papa Louie. He did not
like art, reading cards and homework. His favourite book at home was *Pokemon New
game*. He did not like his Chinese school because his mom saw “some wrong Chinese
words” in his notebook.

Majid: What is diversity?
Andrew: Diversity means different cultures.
Majid: Like what?
Andrew: No more
Majid: Different cultures and what?
Andrew: I forgot.
Majid: Is diversity something good?
Andrew: Yeah
Majid: Why is it good?
Andrew: We talk about what I do, what I learn.

Samuel: A grade 3 student who likes to play Pokemon and Yugioh as well as
running and playing badminton. His favourite colour is blue. School for him was “kind of
fun and kind of boring.” Playing at the playground was fun and doing workshop was
boring. His least favourite subject at school was spelling and most favourite ones were
gym and science. Nobody helps him at home because his parents were “too busy.” He
read Spider books at home. He also went to a Mandarin school outside of Maple Wood
School on Saturdays. He did not like the Mandarin school because “I just sit there, do
homework and I get tired and then I go to sleep.” He didn’t know why he went there, his
mom forced him. The best things he remembered doing at school were “a lot of sport
stuff.” He wanted to be a doctor after growing up because doctors earn a lot of money but
the bad thing about being a doctor, to him, was that “if a doctor screws up that person
will die.” Samuel did not like the diversity part of social studies but he liked the media
part.
Majid: What is diversity?
Samuel: Things are different.
Majid: Is diversity something good?
Samuel: No. It is so boring. Diversity, I don’t like diversity because if we are diversity, right here will be a lot of war because Canadians are battling other countries, dududududu it comes on everywhere.

Angelica: A grade 3 student who liked Barbie and pets. She thought school was fun because she made a lot of friends there and she liked all the teachers there. Her favourite subject was science because she got to do lots of experiments like making clouds and rain. At home she read Chapter books and sometimes her mom helped her with her homework. She learnt Chinese with a friend and “kind of liked it.” Because it was ‘so boring,’’ she did not want to go but her mom and dad forced her. She wanted to be a teacher after growing up because she liked teaching people.

Majid: What does diversity mean?
Angelica: Things are different.
Majid: Is diversity something good?
Angelica: Yeah
Majid: Why is it good?
Angelica: If everybody was the same it was so weird. I don’t know. If everybody was the same, we would not be able to recognize people.

Lena: A grade 4 student whose favourite subject was reading, and sometimes drawing. She liked to write about animals and nature. She skated in her free time and liked it. She did not like math and spelling. Her mom speaks Dutch. Her parents helped her in her school work most of the time.

Majid: What is diversity?
Lena: Diversity is how everyone is different.
Majid: And what else?
Lena: If you go around the world you get different things?
Majid: And this means?
Lena: We are all different.
Majid: Is this good or not?
Lena: Good, good because otherwise you won’t tell which child is which.
Bonnie: A grade 3 student whose favourite subject was reading and drawing. She had many classes (including art, French, Chinese, and English) outside the school over the week. She did not like doing agenda and science at school. She enjoyed French most among her languages. She did not like her Chinese school because “teachers scold you if you get one word wrong and she is very loud so everybody could hear her and Chinese has the most work in all my languages.”

Majid: What is diversity?
Bonnie: It is different cultures.
Majid: What else?
Bonnie: I don’t know, I was China on that time.
Majid: Do you think that diversity is good?
Bonnie: It is good.
Majid: Why?
Bonnie: I don’t know.

Dany: A grade 4 student who liked playing with computers, reading animal books, coloring, drawing. He had been in this school only for one year. His parents were from China. The best things about school for him were his friends, and books. He went to Chinese school and “sort of liked it” because at times, the homework was really hard and he didn’t get it. He went there only because his parents wanted and he wouldn’t go if he had a choice. He read cartoon books at home. He liked to borrow science books from the library but could not find any. He wished they had more field trips and Chapter and non-fiction books at school. He didn’t like spelling because there were so many things that he didn’t get in spelling.

Majid: What do you think about diversity?
Dany: Different things, like things are not the same.
Majid: So diversity means?
Dany: Things are different.
Majid: Like What?
Dany: Different foods, different pencils.
Just by accident, I found another chance to grasp students’ ideas about diversity. On the day that Mrs. Kate was talking to students about presenting their posters in the social science exhibition, she mentioned that they had learned about government, media, and diversity. One student asked “what is diversity?” and Mrs. Kate said that they should know about diversity after having four lessons on it and returned the question to the class.

The following is a transcript of that conversation:

Steven: Diversity means things are different.
Mrs. Kate: Is it JUST things are different?
Kevin: Different cultures.
Mrs. Kate: Different cultures, what do you mean by that?
Kevin: Different new years.
Mrs. Kate: What else did Mrs. Brickhouse\textsuperscript{17} talk about?
Laura: Clothing and food.
Mrs. Kate: And when they eat it?
Anita: Food, language, and celebration are all different.
Mrs. Kate: Did you talk about how they are the same as well or you just talked about differences?
Students: Differences.

\textit{Critical Vignette 6: Texts and Resources for Teaching}

In Chapter 7, I explained how Mrs. Kate used \textit{The Stolen Sun: A Story of Native Alaska} and \textit{The Raven and the Ball of Light} for her reading sessions. In my second visit to the school, I noticed students were working on \textit{Loser} by Jerry Spinelli (2002, HarperCollins).

The pictures for writing activities were taken from \textit{The Mysteries of Harris Burdick} (Portfolio Edition with loose, over-sized sheets) by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin, 1984). When Mrs. Kate noticed that I was writing down the name of the book, she commented “it was good if you could have something from their culture,

\textsuperscript{17} Mrs. Brickhouse was the teacher who had taught the diversity part.
but sometimes you get what you get. Even these are from a friend and they should be returned."

For spelling, Mrs. Kate used *Canadian Spelling Program* (2.1) by Scott & Siamon (Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1996). She commented on it:

Not my first choice in programs. One of the resources that I have, and almost enough for everyone in the class, minus two students, but one thing that I do find in that program is the way I use it is for me is it's about basic kids reading and understanding questions. I don't see it as a very good, like it's not a very good program in terms of deep thinking skills, but I think the purpose it serves for me is it shows me kids who can read a question, who can understand a question and can follow the directions independently. And many kids at the beginning of the year don't know how a text book works because in grade 3, many of them have never used textbooks. It's their first time with a text book. So my role is to introduce them to a text and make them understand that there are words on the page that tell them to do something and they need to know how to read it first, decode the words, understand the directions and follow through with the directions. And in Grade 1 and 2, many kids are given work that's totally explained by the teacher, so all they need to do is what they've been told by the teacher, they are not reading text and having to interpret understand on their own.

Some reading activities were based on *Whistles and Dreams Workbook* (FOCUS Reading for Success Series, Level 6) by Richard L. Allington (1988, Scott, Foresman, and Co.). Some others were taken from *Summer Smart: Taking Your Child to the Next Grade Level* (By Marilyn Kennedy, Popular Book Company, 2003). In the library, Ms. Lewis used *Welcome to the World of Bats* by Diane Swanson (Series, 1998, Gareth Stevens Publishing).

As mentioned in Chapter 8, Mrs. Rose read *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume (1972) for students on Wednesdays. She also used parts of *FRIENDS for Children Workbook* (2000, Australian Academic Press) for her lessons on personal planning.
There were other prescribed textbooks for the class; for example, *Nelson Language Arts* (3&4) and *Math Makes Sense* (Addison Wesley). However, Mrs. Kate said only a few students can read those books (maybe 6 students for the former and 4 students for the latter). For science, she said

> We do have science books in the cupboard I showed you [in the office area] but I don’t find them very good. I use only some bits of *Science Probe* [Nelson] because we cannot agree to buy it and I can only copy part of it from a copy that is donated to the class.

Mrs. Kate also had curriculum documents in her class; the package from the previous year was still unpacked. When I asked her about those documents, she said “I looked at them many years ago.”

**Reading Cards**

During “Silent Reading” period, students chose either from books or reading cards. Reading cards were from an American series *Reading for Comprehension* (Continental Press) which has three books for beginners and 8 books (level A-H) for grade 1 to 8. Each book comes in the form of 46 one-page non-fiction articles followed by five or six questions. The series has special editions for California, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. These state editions are tailored to the state standardized tests. While all teachers used these cards, only one staff member knew their origin. The cards were grouped in three colors (yellow, purple, and blue) and each color corresponded with a certain level of ability. Each student knew from which group s/he should pick the card. A promotional review for the series mentions that “these
consumable work texts are particularly useful for introducing students to the type of reading passages and questions they are likely to encounter on standardized tests.\(^{18}\)

The following shows the topics for a sample of reading cards which I took out of the boxes randomly:

**Purple:** Zoo; Ice cream; Lightning; Animals in winter; Dog town in Prairie; ghost Crab; tree frog; ostrich; birdman of the United States (John Audubon); Can horses dance? flying fox; Who are smoke jumpers? Walking stick; glass fish; how young can a teacher be? Christie McKinney; what is a ding? What is a bee wolf?

**Red:** What is a rainbow? Why do baby teeth fall out? How old is hide and seek? What makes jet air planes go? What does the Sun do for us? What is Arbor Day? What are dandy horses? What does your brain do? How old is painting? Who was Clara Barton? Where do ducks lay their eggs? Who was Grandma Moses? What are evergreen trees? Do you have hammers in your ears? Who is Marian Anderson? How did the teddy bear get its name? How are elephants like cats? What is a cat nap? Who was Sacajawea?


**Testing Instrument**

Mrs. Kate told me that she regularly tested her students’ vocabulary by Dolch List. This is a list of words that according to Edward William Dolch, have to be learned by sight, hence called sight words, and all children should know up to about third grade. She had a passage containing all the words from the list and asked students to read two paragraphs of the passage. Later she tested students with the rest of the passage. Students with special needs, according to Mrs. Kate, were assessed by The Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) which is a cognitive assessment battery, suggested by

\(^{18}\) Retrieved February 12, 2009 from [http://www.cathedyduffyreviews.com/phonics_reading/reading-for-comprehension.htm](http://www.cathedyduffyreviews.com/phonics_reading/reading-for-comprehension.htm)
Reuven Feuerstein, for identifying cognitive deficiencies and strengths. Students’ memory functioning was assessed by a 16-word memory test which I later found out had been adopted from the California Verbal Learning Test (CVLT). According to Mrs. Kate, “in theory”, these assessments were supposed to be used in order to find out the areas where an individual might need help. These results were discussed with teachers on their personal time for knowing their students. In practice, however, long waiting times for these assessments (due to lack of resources) caused many students to be “just sitting there”. Mrs. Kate was not sure, even after the long and tedious procedure of being officially recognized as a special-need student, what was “out there available for them in classrooms with so many ESL kids.”

*Other Reading Materials in the Classroom*

I went through all the bookshelves in Mrs. Kate class and found that there were a total of 387 books in the class, many of which were very old. I identified three books which belonged to different countries or cultures other than North American: two books on Korea and one on Argentina. When I asked Mrs. Kate about the process of acquiring books, she said:

The process is: you come into a room, like I got this room because someone is retired and you get what he has left behind (laughing—–) And then, if you want something, you have to request it from the finance committee and then the finance committee sees that there's some money in the budget and you have to write a proposal. Or you can get resources through ya--mm--m—like literacy, which is a separate kind of sub-committee. Or you can become part of the resource committee. And this year our resource committee—–I don't think they have ever met. This year there's a new administrator and I think there are lots of new things that he has to get a handle on. Because it's a process and everything takes more time. Because that needs extra meetings, a lot of times it's kind of counterproductive. You really have to give a lot of your time to get resources sometimes.

Explaining the history of books in her class, Mrs Kate told me:
When I came here, the teacher before me, he was very cookie-cutter kind of teacher. He didn’t have anything. He had like some old textbooks and he had barely any novels. So, that whole rack, if you notice, has Mrs. T’s name on them, she gave them all to me; because she knew I had nothing. And because she has been teaching for thirty years, she had lots. Because she bought them over time. And also there is Scholastic program, if you know that. Scholastic is a book club. […] You can get books through there. So if kids buy those, my experience is like that usually a lot of the kids don't purchase them unless the teacher really pushes to purchase. But I feel that, it's a marketing thing and I don't want to work for Scholastic. So I have a hard time selling that. But, I do know that like Tina, she gets a lot of books because she really pushes that. She writes letters to the parents; she says please, if you can buy these books for your child. And she gets them to buy the same book and read the same book. So I could approach it that way, but I don't know-if that is ethically right for me. And then some books I purchased myself by my own money. And the first year I was in this class because I did barely have anything, I used my classroom fund to get hundred dollars a year, to spend however you wish with your class. So I spent the hundred dollars on books. So I could build up a library and could have a library at all.

**Summary**

This chapter introduced six critical vignettes which I perceived relatively important and relevant to my research question. Celebrating Christmas Holidays was the most important cultural event of the school in terms of time, energy and engagement and over shadowed all activities in Mrs. Kate class. Students were taught a lot of things about Christmas celebration while we saw nothing related to their cultures in day-to-day activities of the class. Lack of science teaching was the focus of the second vignette through which I tried to find out the reason for it. The third vignette focused on the communication between the school and parents and showed the school system is unable to effectively communicate with the community which it aims to serve. Moreover, teachers in the grade 3-4 class explicitly promoted Western values and beliefs in their communications with students. Canada has for long been proud of and credited for its multiculturalism. The fourth vignette looked at how this multiculturalism was
operationalized in the grade 3-4 class and conceptualized by the teachers. The multicultural mobile, the flag salute and O Canada, teachers’ perception about ESL students and their understanding of multiculturalism and diversity were presented and showed little resemblance to the existing rhetoric or policies. An examination of the experienced curriculum on diversity (in social studies) was the topic of the fifth vignette and we saw that the students whom I interviewed appeared to have learned virtually nothing about diversity. The last vignette briefly looked at the texts and materials used in the grade 3-4 class and showed that they were taken from American resources designed for standardized testing with no connection to students’ life and culture.

The next chapter will present the analysis of the data presented in Chapters 6 to 9.
CHAPTER 10

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the data presented in Chapters 6-9 guided by the research question, i.e., how did Maple Wood School shape the acculturation processes of the grade 3-4 immigrant students? According to John Berry, whose model of acculturation was accepted as the theoretical framework for this study (Chapter 4), the existence of multiculturalism in the host society is a necessary condition for the integration of immigrants. For immigrant elementary students, however, schools as the secondary site of socialization (after home), represent the host society. As Bloom, Puro, and Theodorou (1989) argued,

Classrooms are cultural institutions not only in the sense that students learn a set of cultural values and meanings in classrooms (a future orientation), but also that classrooms define, structure, give meaning to, and place value upon a set of everyday activities (a present orientation). (p. 270)

Hence, it makes sense that in search for that necessary condition in the grade 3-4 class, we look for practices of multicultural education.

In Chapter 2, it was shown that multicultural education is a contested concept and difficult to locate. There, I mentioned that the idea of “culturally responsive teaching” makes more sense to me and I am more comfortable with it than with cultural competence because it is congruent with my definition of culture and focuses on the agency of the teacher rather than that of students. Therefore, I will use this notion, as elaborated by Gay (2000, 2002), as my analytical framework in search of multicultural education. She defines culturally responsive teaching as
using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically
diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the
assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived
experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally
meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and
thoroughly.” (Gay, 2002, p. 106)

The components of culturally responsive teaching, Gay argues, are: developing a
cultural diversity knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating
cultural caring and building a learning community; incorporating cross-cultural
communication and cultural congruity in classroom instruction19. The first part of this
chapter will analyze the data with this analytic framework. The second part will discuss
the themes arising from the data.

**Search for Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Grade 3-4 Class**

**Cultural Diversity Knowledge Base**

From my long conversations with Mrs. Kate about the school and students and
also from my observations, I did not get the impression that she knew much about her
students. Once she commented about languages in China that “there is Chinese,
Mandarin, and Cantonese.” The same applies to Ms. Rose. Mrs. Kate told me that she
talked to her students about their first culture and referred to food and flags. She said

> We talk about […] what it means to live in Canada and the heritage of the country
and what it is? So, how it is a melting pot of different cultures. But it is also, you
know, based on European values, because that's who were here first, for them to
understand that history part.

My account of day to day activities, as presented in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, does
not reflect any trace of teachers’ familiarity with Gay’s (2002) imperatives such as

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19 Teachers’ positions could not be understood by adopting this framework. For such a understanding, we
need to know about school board policies, the kinds of supports that school boards provide to teachers, and
principals’ support, or lack thereof, this approach.
“cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns” (p. 107).

Mrs. Kate did not mention any specific course regarding diversity or multiculturalism in her pre-service education, but she had written a paper on diversity in her Master’s program. As mentioned earlier, she started her teaching by volunteering in a Catholic school, where “you don’t have to be a teacher to teach.” Then she got hired because one of the teachers had a car accident. This experience paved her way to a teacher education program. Before finishing her program, she was hired by a Catholic school board. She taught there for seven years and later moved to a public school board.

I ended up getting a job as ESL teacher but because I didn’t have any ESL courses at that time, I was told by the district that I had to have at least one course and they would hire me as ESL teacher only if I went back to school and took an ESL course. If I was enrolled in the course, they would hire me. So I took an ESL course while I was working at, at that time it was Kingsbridge Elementary School, so there were three of us that went for this course. So we go one a week, it was a course in the university at our city. I took this ESL course while I was doing ESL job.

One should have in mind that this is a school board where ESL students represent the majority and people could be hired as ESL teachers only by showing that they were taking ESL courses. Comparing teachers’ conditions with the findings of the research about the required qualifications of ESL teachers in Chapter 3 (p. 83), one would conclude, requiring these qualifications is asking too much. Mrs. Carlson, out of care for her students, labelled the situation of the students who were “academically behind”, as “ESL-ness.” I read ESL-ness as something similar to illness, or in Ruiz’s (1988) words “language as problem.”

The sad part is that the situation is getting worse. When I asked Mrs. Kate what were the required qualifications for resource teachers being hired now, she said:
None. It said experience with ESL, LAC preferred, is PREFERRED but is not mandatory because they are saying that the district offers so much Pro-D, that there are plenty of opportunities for professional development in this area; which is true though it is lots of Pro-D and there is room for growth; but if you can get someone who is qualified in ESL and LAC, would not you think that experience would override seniority in that case, right? But it doesn’t.

Mrs. Kate’s employment experiences as well as the new policies that the Board had announced for resource teachers, in my view, are examples of partial denial of educational rights of minorities who ironically in this case are the majority of students of the Board. Nicaise (2007) suggested that language policies are among the catalysts of acculturation. When these programs and policies are exclusionary, they encourage assimilation rather than integration.

When I asked Mrs. Kate to give me a brief description of her students’ characteristics, she mainly referred to their family situation, how strong or weak they were in certain areas, and how they were coping with the class pace (see Appendix F). In a few instances, however, she talked about cultural aspects of their life:

So Simon, his father committed suicide probably four years ago. Yeah. And the family did not find out till a police officer came to their door to tell them their father was dead. And then nobody wanted to go...um...because, I just don't know this for sure, but I heard through the counsellor, that culturally if someone commits suicide in an Asian family, that family is seen as evil, so nobody went. No relative wanted to have anything to do with the mom, so it's almost like she is abandoned by everyone.

On another occasion, Mrs. Kate told me that she had “heard through the counsellor, that culturally if someone commits suicide in an Asian family, that family is seen as evil.” My limited research through the Internet and several Chinese colleagues did not confirm such a belief. In talking about Angelica’s mother she said:

She is quite quiet and her mom was interesting to observe at parent-teacher conference. She kept on telling her that she could do better and she kept on
poking her and she kept on saying like "Right, Angelica, right Angelica" and Angelica didn't really want to talk to her mom. And I don't know. It was just funny.

I do not know if she thought or guessed that this mother’s “funny” and “interesting” attitude may have roots in cultural differences. I assume North American parents would not do these “funny” things. David’s father was also “interesting” for Mrs. Kate because he had “really high standards for him and his dad asked me why I don't correct his spelling in his books all the time because he noticed some spelling errors in some work that went home.” However, Mrs. Kate noticed there is also cultural issues I think that he views, and he told me, he views schools in Canada as little bit Mickey Mouse and that schools back home are much more strict and everything has to be perfect and kids have more respect for teachers in China because teachers expect more and I think by him saying expect more, you know their work has to be perfect and neat, his dad wants to see his work neater and his dad wants to see his spelling all perfect. And he asked me if we do grammar because he doesn't think his son knows anything about grammar because he didn't know the word grammar. So I get a sense that there is real tradition there in terms of old school and he wants to see more of that for his son.

Mrs. Kate’s solution for this situation was that “we had a conversation about spelling and you know I don't believe that I need to correct every single spelling error because I don't think that makes you a better speller.”

Mrs. Kate was quite open about her lack of knowledge about First Nations’ people and culture when she said:

In grade 4, like we have to do a First Nations study, but it’s almost like... I don’t know if I can really grasp that, because I don’t know enough about it. So I feel like that I am comfortable with the immigration perspective, because I came from a family of immigrants. [...]In the past with the social studies, I would have done that by now, through my social studies. Because this year we restructured social studies differently, I didn’t really build that. So here I was introducing them to a legend and we didn’t do enough work with legends. I think sometimes you get this on this fast track, and you assign work, and they really don’t get it.
My interview with Ms. Rose took place at the end of December and because she was with students only once in a week and she had started her work late in October, she told me that she knew little about the students and their families.

Geneva Gay viewed culturally responsive teaching as building bridges between home and school. Using her metaphor, I would argue that the most important element for teachers is a will to cross the bridge. If that wish exists, learning about students’ background will not be difficult at least for dedicated teachers like Mrs. Kate who put unlimited time and energy into their students. But do we want to learn about the home of those who are not like us? This is John Berry’s first question about the attitudes of the host society toward immigrants which has a major role in choosing an acculturation path.

**Designing Culturally Relevant Curricula**

Although the curriculum documents from the provincial government and guidelines from the School Board give tremendous space to issues of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, little of those planned curricula was reflected in this grade 3-4 daily practices or the enacted curriculum. Mrs. Kate was not unaware of the importance of cultural relevance. Early in my visit in one of her reading sessions, she told me “it was good if you could have something from their culture, but sometimes you get what you get.” When I asked Mrs. Kate what she thought about the culture promoted by the curriculum in public schools, she said “I think it reflects a North American, European culture.” In her elaboration on multicultural curriculum, Mrs. Kate told me

When we talk about like Thanksgiving, or when we talk about like Halloween, like I never celebrated Thanksgiving or Halloween, so I know some kids don’t celebrate that here. So when we say to kids “ok, today we are going to write about Thanksgiving, and what kinds of foods do you have at Thanksgiving. That was like the topic of our three-day Write for many years. Teacher would say, kids just don’t have anything to write about. No, because they don’t know what that is.
They don’t celebrate it, right? To me, how could you ask them to do that if they don’t know? So you need to provide the background knowledge, if you think it’s really important, or maybe ask them a celebration that they celebrate in their home because they know a lot to write about. Right? So sometimes I think, we ask kids, myself included, to do certain things, because it’s in the book, it may be prescribed in the curriculum, and it’s because of time, we don’t step back and think what, why I am asking them to do that. Really how pertinent is it to them in their life.

So while she seems to be aware of the situation, she does not appear ready to take the necessary action.

Ms. Rose also had noticed that a lot of students were “unfamiliar with things that I take for granted...and it's never been more apparent to me than this class” and here her examples were not knowing about capture the flag and British bulldog, not being eager to have Halloween costumes all the day similar to what she did in her childhood. In Ms. Rose’s view, for “a lot of them just absorbing the culture is going to be sort of double whammy for them. Just a lot more to think about and question.”

These examples show some products or end results of the processes of selection among cultures for teaching in the classroom. Halloween, Thanksgiving, and British Bulldog are part of the cultural capital of “mainstream” Canadians; for the sake of the debate, let us forget about the word “British.” Therefore, it is legitimate not only to reinforce this cultural capital in classroom practices, but also to legitimize it as necessary knowledge. I believe any policy or practice which does not think of or has no solution for that “double-whammy-ness” invites assimilation. At stake here is also the reinforcement of certain kinds of cultural capital and the exclusion of minority students’ cultural capital.

As evident from classroom practices, discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 and from the teaching materials. In Vignette 6 in Chapter 9, there was no single case of taking into account the cultural background of these students. In other words, students never saw
themselves in the curriculum. However, this does not mean that the materials taught were “neutral” or universal. For example, in a spelling session when Mrs. Kate was talking about the different meanings of “float”, she mentioned “a vehicle that carries displays in a parade.” She asked students if they had been to a Santa Claus parade or had seen it on TV. Four students raised hands and then she elaborated on the function of “floats” in a Santa Claus parade. Then she mentioned the next meaning of “float” as “a drink with ice cream.” When she asked if anyone ever had such a drink, only one student raised her hand. There was an exercise which asked students to match pictures with different meanings of “float.” The first picture was a fishing float. When Mrs. Kate asked who had gone fishing, only two students raised hands. She explained what “float” meant in the picture and drew a picture of it. Only two students had seen it before. She added that “every year everybody has trouble with that.” I wonder, if every year everybody has a problem with that, why they do not change it.

We also need to look at symbolic curriculum which is defined by Gay (2002) as “images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrations, and other artefacts that are used to teach students knowledge, skills, morals, and values” (p. 108). From the description and pictures of the physical setting of the grade 3-4 classroom in Chapter 6, one can remember that the artefacts on the walls and tables in the classroom included: letters of the alphabet, curriculum materials (printed or classroom-made posters on science, literacy, etc.), classroom rules, students’ profiles produced by themselves, students’ paintings, several Canada maps, poppies in front of each student on her/his desk space, flag salute, and words of O Canada. Ceremonies during my stay included daily flag salute and O Canada, Christmas Concert, and a music band performance. In a session on social
studies, Mrs. Kate said that they wanted to have a celebration on the day when they
displayed their projects and she asked how many people could bring food. One student
asked “what is celebration?” Mrs. Kate said “you got one with the Canada flag; you
remember how we had a special celebration.” From this conversation, I suppose there had
been a celebration for the Canadian flag before I arrived at the School.

While students’ profiles and paintings are good examples of symbolic curricular
materials relevant to students’ life; the rest disqualify. Mrs. Kate told me that she had
chosen the national anthem and flag salute because

Part of I would feel, I need to do as a teacher go back to that question---what it
means to be a Canadian? So I really think that part of identity is knowing where
your roots are as an individual; because some of the immigrants are in the school
and myself being an immigrant child. I want them to be in touch with who they
are but, also be in touch with the country where they live in. So, I want to bring
that back.

However, for Cook (2006), with “not even a working knowledge of the words to
the anthem” (p. 589), this practice signifies a Canadian style of patriotism which is well
present in our curricula. He also noted that this patriotism is counterpoised by the official
position of educational authorities. As mentioned in Chapter 4, for Forcense and Richer
(1975) this “serve[s] effectively to orient children to political systems” (p. 27). That
political system, whatever it may be, has little to do with the life experiences of
minorities.

The third type of curriculum fundamental to culturally responsive teaching,
according to Gay (2002), is societal curriculum defined as “the knowledge, ideas, and
impressions about ethnic groups that are portrayed in the mass media” (p. 109). As
evident from Chapters 6 and 7, teachers in the grade 3-4 class rarely talked about ethnic
groups at all.
Lack of culturally diverse curricula, as Gay argues, implies universality of learning characteristics. It also implies that either teaching materials are culturally neutral or everybody could/should learn from materials related to the experiences of the dominant group.

**Demonstrating Cultural Caring and Building a Learning Community**

While both teachers, especially Mrs. Kate, cared extremely about their students, their caring was more like the caring of a good mom or a good teacher who likes her students and does her best to help them. However, due to the lack of cultural sensitivity or knowledge, there was no evidence of what Gay calls cultural scaffolding or building learning communities. In addition to her non-stop efforts in the class, Mrs. Kate put lots of her lunch and recess time to help her students. But this was more like helping students at different levels without any reflection on where these students originated. For example, the performance of a mainstream music band at the school, to which few people could culturally connect, would not show cultural care or contribute to building a learning community. I acknowledge this event was out of Mrs. Kate’s control but she did not seem to have a problem with it either. Culturally responsive teaching requires teachers seeing themselves as agents not people who comply with directions.

Reading and writing, which had the lion share of the curriculum, never focused on realities of immigrant life and their experiences as Campano (2007) suggests it should. Mrs. Kate’s habit of asking affirmation-seeking questions seldom invited students to bring different perspectives or knowledge to the classroom. Most often, both teachers started lessons from their own culture rather than drawing on students’ culture and knowledge. Sharing teachers’ stories seldom led to validating students’ stories.
In fact, there were occasions when possibilities existed for bringing in students’ stories, but they were simply brushed off. In one reading session, Mrs. Kate asked students to predict what the story of *The Little Reindeer* was about. The following is the transcript of the conversation in response to the question:

Scott: It’s about a reindeer.
Anita: The reindeer may get lost.
Kevin: The reindeer may not fit in.
Mrs. Kate: What do you mean by not fit in?
Kevin: Maybe they don’t like him.

The conversation ended there without any comment from Mrs. Kate. I was thinking what Kevin might have had in mind when he made that comment. What had Kevin heard or experienced about “not fitting in”? We cannot speculate on this but for me, this was a great moment of listening to students’ stories about “fitting in.”

The following is the transcript of Mrs. Kate’s instruction in a session on the bat project:

Let’s pretend an alien came down from Mars and they have never seen a bat. It is your job is to describe the bat to the alien; or you might describe what a bat looks like to someone who is blind. [A few students laughed at this point.] They can’t see. [A student (rather angrily): That is not funny.] That’s right, it is not funny. So when you read your paragraph to them, they would know; they could imagine what a bat looks like. So you have to use lots of describing words.

I did not have the permission to interview the student who objected to his classmates’ laugh and even if I had the permission, I would assume asking about his reaction would be too intrusive and inappropriate. However, except for her short notice, Mrs. Kate did not pause her teaching to talk about this. Given the fact that she believed many students in her class had learning disabilities, building on this incident might have enriched her teaching.
In the third example, when Mrs. Kate mentioned computer games while teaching, a student commented “I don’t like computer games; they cost a lot of money.” Mrs. Kate said “OK” and continued her teaching. We do not know why Mrs. Kate avoided talking about that comment, maybe she was just too busy, but most probably that student’s stories were never heard.

The last example is from a session when students were presenting their writings. A native English speaker commented that an ESL student’s writing had “so many scribbles.” Mrs. Kate did not choose to tell that English was that student’s second language. Instead, she was nice enough to say that it “is because it is their first draft. I know I have lots of scribbles when I do my first draft.”

It is important to note that my intention, through these stories, is not to criticize the teacher. In many other occasions, Mrs. Kate and the class politely listened to stories of a few non-minority students who talked about their nice experiences on different trips. By no means, could I claim that Mrs. Kate cared more about those non-minority students. Quite to the contrary, she spent much more time and energy on her minority students. Maybe Mrs. Kate only wanted to be nice and avoid “unpleasant” or “bothersome” stories. However, in the end, certain kinds of stories were excluded from being shared as knowledge or information while certain others had a chance to be so. For a whole range of different reasons, the heard and legitimized stories “happened” to be those of the “mainstream” middle class. Perhaps Mrs. Kate’s background as an immigrant influenced what she did in the classroom. However, there is no data to further comment on this.
Cross-Cultural Communications

Cross-cultural communication requires knowledge about other cultures. Gay (2002) maintained that teachers should learn how the communication styles of different ethnic groups reflect cultural values and shape learning behaviors and how to modify classroom interactions to better accommodate them. They include knowledge about the linguistic structures of various ethnic communication styles as well as contextual factors, cultural nuances, discourse features, logic and rhythm, delivery, vocabulary usage, role relationships of speakers and listeners, intonation, gestures, and body movements. (p.111)

As mentioned earlier, the grade 3-4 teachers lacked such knowledge. In Chapter 7, I reported an episode from the session where Mrs. Kate was talking about the field trip and a student was worried that her mom would get lost if she followed the bus in her car. While Mrs. Kate told the student several times that her mom would not get lost, the student was not convinced at the end and Mrs. Kate moved on. I wrote in my field notes:

Mrs. Kate could not understand what the student had in her mind or what made her think about that scenario. She just repeated that the mom would not get lost. Did the destination seem too familiar for Mrs. Kate? I don’t know. I could see the student’s worried face. Mrs. Kate had to move on, she had too much on her plate and the time was short.

As explained in Chapter 9, report cards were not an effective communication tool either. Mrs. Kate herself was not happy with them at all as evident from her comments:

For me, when I give my report cards, that is more for the next year teacher; at the school-based team, when the principal and health worker get together to help children who are really struggling. Because to me, those are the children who need to strengthen the most. Right? So, we need to document what we have done with those students to help develop a program that would work for them. It is more written for teachers.

I will talk about communication more in the second part of this chapter.
Cultural Congruity in Classroom Instruction

By cultural congruity, Gay means “matching instructional techniques to the learning styles of diverse students” (p. 112) and modifying teaching strategies for them. In fact, Mrs. Kate had fixed teaching strategies which she had developed over the years but as already discussed there was little space for minority students’ culture and life experiences in her practices. She acknowledged that the curriculum reflected North American/European cultures and she did not seem to have any problem with it. As shown in Critical Vignette 6, many of the teaching materials used in the class were produced in the US and designed for American standardized tests. This implies a perception of cultural neutrality of curriculum materials or the sameness of cultures in these two countries.

In addition to, or inseparable from, the components identified by Gay, resources are necessary for implementation of those components. The following section brings together pieces from the data that can shape a picture of resources in the grade 3-4 class.

Resources

While the building and physical facilities of Maple Wood School were in a fairly decent condition, the school was in a stringent financial situation. For example, many computers in the computer labs were not working. As mentioned in Chapter 3, two grade 3 students did not have spelling textbooks and in each session Mrs. Kate copied the pages for them. Also, for a presentation on social studies, teachers needed $50 to buy food and decorating materials and the principal had told teachers that he could not pay the money. Mrs. Taha, the resource teacher, was very clear on the issue of resources. In her view, “It all comes down to money and resources. We’re constantly looking for resources, looking
for the money. I need this program to work with this child, with this group, and I feel like
I am begging for the money.”

When I asked Ms. Rose what was her biggest challenge, she told me:

More prep time for sure, because a lot of the time you are using your own time
and if you're too tired or if you have things in your own life that you need to have
done, you're likely to cut corners and I do for myself doing that quite a bit. I’ll do
it just this way because it is gonna be a lot faster easier whatever it may be.

Ms. Rose also said that during her language art sessions, she needed a lot of help despite
the fact that some students went to the resource teacher. In her wish list was having
someone in language art classes “for additional language supports.”

I mentioned in previous chapters that Mrs. Kate was strained under a busy
schedule and put a lot of her own time (early morning, recess, lunch, and after school)
and sometimes her money to help her students. But she still felt this was not enough:

I really feel that my job is to work with those low ability readers more than
anybody. But because of the way the school structured my resource teacher, who
is Mrs. Taha, she has to work with the lowest because she is supposed to be there
as the LAC teacher. So she is doing that. So I have to work with others and I just
think that I don't have enough resources. That's the bottom line. I don't have
enough resources: stories, non-fiction, fiction texts. And then time to make the
activities that go with the stories. [...] I find at this level you are dealing with everything. You are dealing with
grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and at grade 4 you are supposed to be
introducing content, when kids cannot even read the word. It is like they say the
grade 4 to 7 has the least resources and the most demand at one period more than
primary, more than high school, more than university and college.

However, as Mrs. Taha explained, the situation was not always like this. Mrs.
Kate gave a more detailed history of the issue:

About 2000 and 2001 with the budget cuts, they said that we are not gonna have
ESL and LAC teachers because ESL teachers can do LAC and LAC can do ESL;
and they are very different disciplines. But what they did, the school board
lumped under one and they called it resource. So now there is no longer ESL and
LAC positions. It's now 'Resource Position'. So, for example, if you look at the
job postings, you will not find ESL or LAC. It will say, the posting will be posted
under resource and if you look at the job descriptions, it will say responsible for LAC and ESL. So now they are saying that you are jack of all trades. Anyone can do anything.

Books in the grade 3-4 class were pretty old and all inherited from the previous teacher. In Critical Vignette 5, Mrs. Kate explained the lengthy and inefficient process of buying new books for the class through the finance committee of the School which had to maneuver with their limited budget.

Another example was how time and “covering the curriculum” influenced Mrs. Kate’s teaching in numeracy. Drawing on a paper that she had written in her Master’s program on numeration, Mrs. Kate had developed a lesson plan for teaching numeracy. She spent from September to December on numeration and at the end her students had a good handle of the place value. However, they did not get to fractions, decimals, and much of measurement at the end of the year. She explained:

But, I couldn't do that every year because it was due to the time, and the way I was supposed to get through this curriculum, and I did not want the next year teacher saying: why don't you do decimals, fractions, time and measurements, like you can’t not do it. But, I do believe it it's better to do something well than just skim through surface of everything, but it's about balance, too. Right? Like there is a point where you'll have to move on. So, it's something I struggle with all the time.

The situation was not better in the library and was getting even worse. Mrs. Kate explained how the librarian had to work in three capacities: ESL teacher, LAC teacher, and librarian. As of September 2008, teaching grade 7 was added to these duties. Mrs. Kate recalled the history of the problem in the following:

Because Library is also under incremental; that was around the same time around 2000 and they got rid of ESL and LAC. And they got rid of library as a discipline. Like the librarian used to teach study skills and research and she used to teach like how to use technology to research; how to research topics and how to decipher through all the information. But whereas now the librarian does not have time to
do that because part of her time is now incremental which is if there is a little bit of resource left over, she has to do it.

Mrs. Kate noted that cutbacks suggested by a major “reform” program around 2000 took many of resources they used to have. This is not unprecedented in recent years. For example, Gándara (1994) has investigated the impact the education reform of the 1980s in the US, with a focus on standardization, accountability, and efficiency has had on Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. She concludes that the needs of LEP students were largely ignored and “issues of equity and access not only have been omitted from the reform agenda, they have been consciously eschewed at the national level” (p. 63).

**Conclusions from the Analytic Framework**

In summary, viewing the data through Gay’s perspective showed little evidence of culturally responsive teaching. The data presented in the Critical Vignette 4 also showed how multicultural education practices were minimal, if any. As evident from the experienced curriculum on diversity in Critical Vignette 5, students did not learn anything about it. The best student in the class, in Mrs. Kate’s view, commented that “diversity means things are different such as different pencils.”

Mrs. Kate’s conception of multiculturalism, as explained in detail in that vignette, was focused around the idea of similarities and sameness. Her conceptualization and practice confirm James’ (1999) view (cited in Chapter 2) that “the political, social and cultural messages that Canadians receive through multiculturalism contributes to the homogenization of “foreign bodies”; in other words, a construction of “cultural groups” based on “likeness” or “sameness”” (p. 203). It also reflects the new discourse of social cohesion which seems to have replaced the multiculturalism discourse. As Georgiou and Siapera (2006) argue, “commonality and cohesion are discussed as antonyms for
difference and diversity. Integration at all costs seems to be the motto of the ‘death of multiculturalism’ camp” (p. 244).

In one sense, the practices at the grade 3-4 class along with the school’s rhetoric about being proud of its diversity and hosting so many different cultures were faithful to the basic principle of Canadian multicultural policy, i.e. the separation of public sphere from private sphere (see Chapter 2, p.40). While students and their parents were free to practice their cultures at home, their culture had no place at school (except for foods and Chinese New Year).

If teaching/ learning activities in the grade 3-4 class were not related to students’ home cultures, the more important question then, is whose cultural capital did this process reinforce? In Bullivant’s (1993) words, from whose culture did this process choose its materials? This will be addressed in the second section of the chapter.

Themes Arising from the Data

This second part of this chapter discusses themes arising from the data in the process of analysis as discussed in Chapter 5 by following the guidelines provided by LeCompte (2000). These themes include “mainstream” cultural themes/orientation of the curriculum, the lack of communication at every level, the lack of resources, and the fit-for-working-class nature of the classroom practices.

Western/ “Mainstream” Cultural Themes/Orientations of the Curriculum

As seen in the first part of this chapter, the curriculum in the grade 3-4 class had little connection or relevance with immigrant students’ life and culture. But this does not

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20 As previously mentioned, the terms “mainstream culture” and “dominant culture” are contextualized and using them is not problem-free. In Chapter 4, it was discussed that neither minority groups nor the host society has a monolithic culture.
mean that it was culture-less or culturally-neutral (Gay, 2000; Gordon, 1995). The question is then whose culture was reflected in or reinforced by the curriculum.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the backbone cultural themes of Western public schools are individualism and competition (Fitts, Winstead, Weisman, Flores, & Valenciana, 2008). In the grade 3-4 class, students’ release for recess, lunch, and going home was based on a competition for tidying up and showing that they were ready. This practice was a serious part of teaching for Mrs. Kate and she seldom missed any of the three daily occasions of doing it. To me, it seemed like a ritual habit. In almost all sessions when students were working on a task, those who finished early were rewarded by a pleasant activity of their choice, but they were never asked to help other students finish their work. I never witnessed teachers ask an individual student to help a fellow student in any task. Mrs. Kate’s description of a selection of her students, presented in Appendix F, demonstrates her praise for competition.

On many occasions, Mrs. Kate told her students that they can choose to work with someone else or a neighbour, but I did not witness any occasion where she accepted collective work from students. There were only two occasions when students were asked to think about something in their team and present the result as a team. On all other occasions, students raised hands to answer questions. All students’ works on the classroom walls and desks (paintings, writings, and science experiments) were individual. While all students had individual goals written in front of them, there was no collective goal set for the class. This promoted individualism in a class with a majority of Asian students, which was in direct conflict with the Asian value of collectivism (Chen, Bond, Chan, Tang, & Buchtel, 2009)
The overly structured nature of teaching in the grade 3-4 class (as discussed in Chapter 7 under discipline and routines) demonstrates a “bureaucracy orientation”, which according to Boykin, Tyler, and Miller (2005) is among American mainstream cultural ethos. They define bureaucracy orientation as “the preoccupation being placed on the strict adherence to structured rules and regulations with a policy against deviation from sanctioned procedures” (p. 533). Many of those statements made by Mrs. Kate (pp. 177-178) best exemplify impassionate and depersonalized approaches included in Boykin et al.’s bureaucracy orientation.

Critical Vignette 1 showed the amount of time and energy spent on the Christmas activities. Not only were many teaching sessions cancelled in order to practice for the part, but also the themes of many teaching sessions were changed to Christmas. This was despite the fact that, according to Mrs. Kate, in the past Teachers talked to cultural facilitators and a couple of other people. They all said it is very North American. With most of these students being from Asia, it does not relate to them. But they still decided to go with it.

The coordinator of the Christmas Party quoted from the principal about the name of the party (see page 254) that if the majority of songs, dances, and plays were about Christmas, why shouldn’t have they called it Christmas concert? The principal had decided to discontinue what they perceived as “political correctness.” This line of argument of “abandoning the political correctness” and, as Eisgrube and Zeisberg (2006) phrase it, putting “‘Christ’ back into Christmas” (p. 265) has been very common in the editorials around Christmas time in recent years. They mention a case in Manitoba where the premier in 2001 “announced that the decorated spruce tree in the provincial capital
would again be called a “Christmas Tree”—ending a twenty-year period when it was referred to as a “multicultural tree” (p. 265).

There is not enough space here to discuss issues of separation of religion from state, religion in public schools, the hierarchy of religions in society, and the privilege of Christianity in Canada. However, even just in terms of time allocation for a time-strained and tightly-scheduled curriculum, more than half a month spent on an event which according to the principal is all about Christianity, seems too much especially for a school where the majority of students are not Christian.

Celebrating cultural holidays has been considered a characteristic of multiculturalism in Canada (see Chapter 2). The following occasions coincided with my stay at Maple Wood School: November 21: International Hello Day; November 24: Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib & Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib (Sikh Canadians); November 26: Day of the Covenant (the day when Bahá'ís celebrate the appointment of `Abdu'l-Bahá); November 28: Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha; December 4: Hanukkah (Jewish holiday); December 8: Bodhi Day (Buddha's Enlightenment); December 19: Tenth of Tevet (a minor fast day in Judaism); December 19: the start day of Hajj (Annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca); December 20: Eid al-Adha (A Muslim Holiday known as "Festival of Sacrifice"); December 27: Eid al-Ghadeer (the anniversary commemorating the holy Prophet Muhammad's last sermon). None of these was mentioned in the grade 3-4 class. I did not see any sign about these events on the school bulletin boards either.

While those poppies on students’ desk may not be common in many Canadian schools, they reflect a specific view about Canadian values. This view is best elaborated
by Jason Kenney, the current Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

In an interview with Maclean’s, Kenney (2009), when asked about a new citizenship test and whether there is not enough civic literacy on the current test, answers:

> It’s pretty weak. We’re reviewing the materials with a mind to improving the test to ensure that it demonstrates a real knowledge of Canadian institutions, values, and symbols, and history. Right now, if you look at the preparatory booklet for the test, there’re three sentences, I think, on Confederation history, and not one single sentence about Canadian military history. It’s bizarre to think that someone could become a Canadian citizen without ever being told what the poppy represents. It doesn’t even show up in the book.

The issue at stake is Canadian values in general. It seems that the perception of Canada as a peace-keeper nation belongs to the history because in the new document, the following clause from the old document (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005) has been removed: “Canadian values include freedom, respect for cultural differences and a commitment to social justice. We are proud of the fact that we are a peaceful nation. In fact, Canadians act as peacekeepers in many countries around the world” (p. 7). Instead, in the new document (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009), however, the following quote speaks about Canadian values “In Canada, men and women are equal under the law. Canada’s openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, “honour killings,” female genital mutilation or other gender-based violence. Those guilty of these crimes are severely punished under Canada’s criminal laws” (p. 9).

It would be ridiculous to make any political connections between a teacher’s practice and an action or comment which appeared two years after that practice. My point is that teachers’ practices are not isolated incidents. Rather, they have their roots in
strongly held values and beliefs in society; so strong that they can be put into policy and practice at the highest political level.

I am short of space here to review critically the materials taught in the class. However, an example of these materials as agents of cultural transmission will provide some information on the possible paths of culture acquisition (Pitman, Eisikovits, & Dobbert, 1989). As mentioned in Chapter 8, Mrs. Rose used Judy Blume’s *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* in her read aloud sessions, without making any comment or discussion. The following is an excerpt from Siegal’s (1978) critical review of Blume’s works which claims the values promoted by these books “are very much those of mainstream, Middle America” (p. 72):

Blume's choice of first person narrative and her didactic intentions make it imperative that her characters be perceptive and self-conscious and that they continually draw conclusions from their experience. The above passages are once again characteristic: the narrator observes someone else's behavior and then leaps toward a generalization about that behavior. Blume's narrators are always cogitating, earnestly trying to be honest to their own feelings and to discover meaning and truth in the world: one has the sense that they will grow up to be characters in a John Fowles novel.

None of this can be taken very seriously as an accurate description of the mental processes of pre-adolescent children: kids of this age are beginning to become self-aware but this is too formulated, too pat, and thought crystallizes too readily into truism to be convincing. What seems important to note here, however, is that self-consciousness and self-awareness and the awareness of other people's feelings are presented as goals in themselves.

Self-consciousness and self-awareness, however, can turn rapidly into self-absorption. Blume's books are remarkable in the number of narcissistic incidents they portray […]. The pattern of such incidents suggests that they are fundamental to Blume's conception of the pre-adolescent child's nature.

One of the disturbing results of this preoccupation with the self is the loss of tangible intimacy with any concrete thing or object: the texture of lives lived in a specific, particular place is missing. (p. 75)

Moreover, this is another example of indirectly promoting Western values of individualism and competition as discussed earlier.
Mrs. Kate occasionally drew on her life experiences in her teachings. These experiences, as seen in Critical Vignette 3 in the section “Communicating the Teacher’s Personal Experiences to Students”, had, for example, references to church and basketball. But when she was advising students on presentation of their social studies work, she was more than explicit about values.

This is your time to show off all the work that you did and be proud of it. OK [some students laughed after she said “show off”]. It is “look at the work that I did; look at the picture that I took; look what I wrote; let me read to you what I wrote.” If she doesn’t say anything, then say “did you hear me? I wanna show you what I did. Are you interested?” She might say yes, she might say no. If she says nothing, keep on asking. Don’t be shy, get her attention. OK?

This promotion of self-enhancement as a value, which prevails in Western individualistic cultures, according to Chen, Bond, Chan, Tang, and Buchtel (2009), is in sharp contrast with Eastern collectivist cultures characterized by “a modesty bias or an other-enhancement focus” (p. 605). She did not react to students who laughed when she used “show off” and I am not sure whether she did not notice or it was not important for her. I personally felt goose bumps hearing these words because after 10 years of being in Canada, I still feel uncomfortable when talking about myself and my work.

When Ms. Rose was advising students on how to deal with people who say mean things to others, she said:

You know, I have a theory. If somebody has done something that is not very nice to you, and you have already said to them you don’t like it and ask them to stop but they continue doing that, they are not really being a friend and you should probably go and find somebody else to play with. But if you are constantly going to the teacher, what is the teacher really gonna do? If you walk away from the situation, then that person knows: I am not gonna have any friend with my behaviour. Right? OK. But if it gets really bad obviously, you should tell the teacher.
In my view, this “theory” explicitly recommends silence and avoidance as a solution to bullied students (see for example, Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2008). What determines that a situation is “really bad”? To me, this means promoting conformity in order not to be victimized.

Additionally, a sample of collected works of students included in Appendix G, suggests themes such as Halloween and favourite TV shows in students’ works in September and October when I was not present at the school.

**Lack of Communication**

Lack of communication at every level was a huge issue at the school. Starting in the home, some students had difficulty in communicating what was going on at school. For example, a student came to Mrs. Kate and asked her to call her mom and tell her that she needs reading glasses. Teachers had noticed her eyesight problem a few months ago but the student said her mom did not believe her. Since her mom could not speak English, Mrs Kate asked the cultural facilitator to talk to the mom about the student’s eyes.

The account of Ms. Lewis’ teaching showed she had difficulty in communicating with her students. When the students came to her class, she did not know which grade they were in and she was warning grade 3-4 students against plagiarism at university level.

Critical Vignette 3 showed the communication between the teachers and parents, or in fact, the lack thereof. As mentioned there, few parents could understand English and virtually all of the school communications with parents were in English. Translation was costly and the school could not afford it except for “important occasions” which no one could identify. I am not sure that even translation would resolve the issue because Mrs.
Kate commented that “I wonder if they really understood the letter of information and the consent form. Even in their first language they may not be competent.” During my stay only once a mother was asked to come and talk with Mrs. Kate about her daughter’s situation. However, there was one exception, Ms. Lucy, a non-minority parent who was regularly present at school. She and Mrs. Kate had the same country of origin and they used to go to the same high school and their mothers knew each other.

Since I did not interview parents, I have not enough data to comment why other parents were not coming to see Mrs. Kate or other staff of Maple Wood School. However, Kim (2009) has reviewed the literature on minority parents’ lack of participation in their children’s school and suggests that the following preventing factors have been documented in the research: “language barriers […]; less education […]; low self-esteem […]; low socioeconomic status […]; differences in child-rearing practices […]; physically demanding jobs […]; lack of social networks […]; and uncomfortable feelings toward schools based on negative previous school experiences” (p. 81). The data that I presented in previous chapters demonstrate that all the factors mentioned by Kim could potentially hold true at Maple Wood school. Furthermore, Kim (2009) claims that research has too often focused on parents’ barriers with less attention to barriers at schools, which she enumerates as:

(a) teachers’ less-than-positive perceptions toward the efficacy and capacity of minority parents […]; (b) teachers’ beliefs in the effectiveness of parental involvement […]; (c) teachers’ self-efficacy in teaching effectiveness […]; (d) school friendliness and the initiation of positive communication […]; (e) diversity of parental involvement programs […]; and (f) school policies and leaderships. (p. 81)

As for the first factor, Mrs. Kate told me several times that many parents were busy with long-hour jobs and many cannot speak English. Parents were not readily accessible by
phone. The only actively involved parent was Ms. Lucy. I cannot conclude anything about the second and third factors. However, the three last factors were definitely influential in parents’ lack of involvement. Parental involvement programs were not designed to match their free times and translators were not available for them. In James’ (2008) words, there was little space for them. I believe Cummins (2000) has captured the issue of parents’ involvement at Maple Wood School in the following quote:

If ability to speak English and the knowledge of North American cultural conventions are made prerequisites for ‘parental involvement,’ then many of those parents will be defined as apathetic and incompetent and will play out their pre-ordained role of non-involvement. (p. 8)

Students had a “communication folder” which contained all school notices and students’ works marked or corrected by Mrs. Kate. These papers were usually handed out to them on Fridays. Students took it home and, had their parents sign it, returned it to school, and put it in their corresponding duotangs. Given the fact about parents’ knowledge of English, one can conclude that for most of the students this was totally useless.

Communication among different teachers who taught the grade 3-4 students was also minimal. Ms. Rose and Mrs. Kate communicated mainly through a notebook. Ms. Rose wrote what she had done on a particular Wednesday and Mrs. Kate asked for specific things that had to be done on Wednesday. They also had phone conversations but only for “important” situations. Ms. Rose did not know much about her class and the school. In November, she did not know why there were two groups of students who went to the resource teacher. In late December, she commented “I don't know how high our ESL population is in this school, I assume pretty high.” From the description of teachings on regular days and Wednesdays in Chapters 7 and 8, one can see the discontinuity
between these days. In fact, one can see how small administrative decisions such as hiring another teacher for one day of the week could have huge impacts on students.

Mrs. Lewis, the librarian who taught ESL students as well, barely talked to Mrs. Kate and Ms. Rose because of personal problems. Mrs. Taha, the resource teacher, told me she did not know much about the students from Mrs. Kate’s class who worked with her. I assume if she had more communication with Mrs. Kate, she would find out more about her students. During my five-week stay at the school, I did not witness any meeting between the two. However, Mrs. Kate once referred to a communication from Mrs. Taha about one of her students. With Mrs. Kate’s tight schedule which forced her to devote her lunch and recess times, I am not sure she had enough time for those meetings.

The conflict between K-2 and 3-7 teachers prevented collegial collaboration or co-teaching. Mrs. Kate told me that the K-2 teachers were more pro-union and I could feel that this would intensify the conflict because the union was against standardized testing. After the cancellation of the staff Christmas party, Mrs. Kate told me “we are civil, but we do not enjoy being together.”

As evident from my interviews with selected students, none of them liked their Chinese school and most of them said it was boring and difficult. At the same time, none of the staff at Maple Wood School knew what was going on in the Chinese school. The school and teachers could not be blamed for knowing absolutely nothing about the Chinese school, because it was just by accident that these two schools happened to be in the same building, which is not usually the case. However, teachers and school administration, including Mrs. Kate, knew that most of these students attended a second
school under the pressure of their parents and they knew how the students disliked it.
They also knew that most students spoke a language other than English at their homes.

What teachers at Maple Wood School probably were not aware of was the interaction between the learning processes of two different languages and how schools could help or impede students in developing biliteracy (Li, 2006a). Probably they had never thought about asking parents’ help in teaching literacy to ESL students. We can imagine how different it would be if students were allowed to use their native language spoken at home with the assistance of volunteer parents who could afford the required time. Jim Cummins’ research from Canadian contexts has documented the incredible value of drawing on ESL students’ home language (e.g., Cummins, 2000) and was discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Even Ms. Rose, with her limited teaching experience had seen evidence of good communications between schools and the community in the same school Board, mentioned:

I think in some schools um...making those families feel involved and so that they will openly participate in their child's education um has been really sort of set out from the beginning and it works and there is a system in place. […] I've seen a lot of communities where it's very welcoming; schools and communities work very welcoming and parents interact quite well with the staff. […] I think that a lot of schools have the resources to have people in the schools where parents can communicate in their first language and find out more about of what's going on and they are involved. So I don't know what that is, what sets it apart, I suppose administration because I think they really set the tone for staff as a whole, that’s what I've noticed. And then it trickles down to how the classes are run.

Recent research on literacy of immigrant students confirms Ms. Rose’s point. This research underscores the roles of communities and “funds of knowledge” that they can offer to teachers (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Nieto, 1999). More recently, in her
suggestions for an integration policy for schools, Nicaise (2007) mentioned “home-school liaison services, intercultural education, mother tongue education and intercultural teacher training” (p. 3).

Social Class

In the first week of my stay at Wesdale School, Mrs. Kate commented that:

The rule, I think, is that the administrator be changed every 3 years. But I have heard that some schools have been more stable with principals working for 7 years. But our school has been described as an easy-going school. So we either get brand-new administrators or retiring administrators. We have had a new administrator every three years since I have been here. That’s because our parents complain less. If the school was on the other side of the city, that wouldn’t be the case; this is my opinion.

I started to think what was different in this neighbourhood from “the other side of the city.” According to the figures from Statistics Canada, that part of the city had almost the same number of immigrants as this part but the average income was much higher there; so was the education of parents in that area. My research on the differences between these two neighbourhoods brought me to the conclusion that Mrs. Kate had strong reasons for forming such an opinion about the relationship between the school neighbourhood and the way the school is treated by the Board. It was then when the issue of social class struck me right in the face.

My year-long personal and persistent observations of different branches of the same grocery store in different neighbourhoods of Toronto had shown me how different these branches were in terms of cleanliness, tidiness, and quality of produce and services depending on the neighbourhood. But that only makes sense in a for-profit corporate culture. Could it be the same for public institutions? Jean Anyon’s works help us answer this question. Anyon (1980, 1981) studied classroom practices at five different grade-5
classrooms in two working class schools, a middle-class school, an affluent professional school, and executive elite school. She concluded that these schools were different in reproducing work, knowledge, and forms of students’ resistance. She argued that these processes of reproduction contribute to an unequal system of social classes

by emphasizing work skills and capacities in different social classes appropriate to the reproduction of the division between manual and mental labor in American society; by transmitting (as accurate and legitimate) class-based curriculum knowledge and dominant reproductive social ideologies; and by providing an institutional arena in which children may develop indirect (partial and cultural) rather than direct (political and 'politically') responses to resisting oppression and resolving contradictions. (1981, p. 119)

The work patterns of working-class schools, were identified by Anyon (1981) as:

repetitive rote procedures, and copious mechanical activity such as copying teachers' notes from the chalkboard, following posted arithmetic procedures for adding, subtracting, dividing, or multiplying, following grammatical rules for filling in words on language arts dittoes, and answering teachers’ questions; most of these question were rather to ascertain whether children had done the assigned work than to invite reflection or sustained creative thought on a problem or task. An additional characteristic of most of the work was that assignments were rarely tied either to the children’s own conception of a problem or to their conception of a strategy for carrying out a task; nor was most of the work connected to any apparent larger project or concern. Individual activities often seemed fragmented, unconnected to each other, and without inherent meaning – other than that the student was "told" to do them. (pp. 119-120)

While Anyon (1980) suggested while many other factors could determine the character of classroom activities, her concern was the deeper social meanings of the happenings in the classroom rather than the immediate causes of them. She asked:

What potential relationships to the system of ownership of symbolic and physical capital, to authority and control, and to their own productive activity are being developed in children in each school? What economically relevant knowledge, skills, and predispositions are being transmitted in each classroom, and for what future relationship to the system of production are they appropriate? (p.87)

Reading Anyon’s description of work habits in a working-class classroom, I feel as if she was present in Mrs. Kate’s class. In fact, no one could capture the patterns of
Mrs. Kate’s teaching better than Anyon. In Chapter 7, I showed the central role of routines in Mrs. Kate’s class. She believed

Just as a mother and as a teacher for sixteen years, my experience is: if you don't have routine, the kids get mixed-up. So, they need to know what is expected of them and what it looks like when you do it well. And I feel that I have to, part of my job is to make it very clear to them that, this is what you need to do. This is what it looks like and sounds like.

While almost all teaching episodes in Chapter 7 match Anyon’s description, the long passage quoted from the occasion when Mrs. Kate talked about the field trip notice best exemplifies it. Building all lessons on affirmation-seeking questions never allowed any space for students’ voice. Again, she was quite open about this when she said:

A lot of teaching, I find, that I do is my way, this is my way; but there has to be room for what works for you. For me, I think I have my plan, my vision, if sometimes I want them to go through the steps that I haven’t visioned.

She explained about her teaching strategies in interviews:

I have to try and increase all their abilities. So from the decoders all the way to the high reader ability, I have to try and somehow excite them about reading higher or understanding deeper what they are reading. And somehow make those stories connect to something that they are interested in. So, if you say to them pick something that you are interested in, some of them are reading on their own, because they have difficulty finding things that are interesting to them. And then you have to find their ability level. So it's very complicated task. And I don't want to stick to the cookie-cutter program. But I do think sometimes it has a place, especially for those low-level readers. And then just my own philosophy is: I believe that my job is to excite everyone, of course, but you are as strong as your weakest link.

Saying that something “sometimes has a place” was Mrs. Kate’s way of commenting about issues that were controversial or less agreed-upon. She said the same thing about the literacy test and standardized testing where she sat on the fence while discussing them. We also need to remember that “those low-level readers”, whom cookie-cutter approaches mostly fitted, were ESL students.
In the following quote, Mrs. Kate talked about her teaching philosophies. Her emphasis on strict disciplines and how she understood “it was a big deal” matches Anyon’s description of working-class school pedagogies:

I worked here for six years and the teachers and principals (which we have had a new one for the past forever, so I wouldn’t say it’s an administrative problem), but teachers in this school want kids to be outside at recess and lunch. You have been here now, have you noticed the kids out at recess and lunch? No, because the culture of school has not changed. I believe that if everybody get together and monitor all the hallways for a period of time long enough so that it would change the culture of school, which is a long time. The teacher I worked with is retired now, she took a rope and cones and stands there for a period of time by herself; because no one joined her on this at the time. At the time, I didn’t think it is a big deal so I wasn’t in on it, but I realized it is a big deal. She stood there like three weeks. After a while, the kids got it. It is outside; that is the rule: use the washroom and then go out.

There is one supervision aide, Dannie, who has to watch all upstairs, downstairs. It is like a mouse race and the kids hide and it is a big game and one kid got hurt last year.

Anyway, after those three weeks it was great. It was actually working but we stopped doing it and slowly this is it. So I believe that if it is not happening, it is because adults have to do something. We can’t expect kids to do it if you need to do it longer.

I did not observe any K-2 classes. However, Mrs. Kate showed her disagreement with what the K-2 teachers did by describing their teaching as merely “basic skill, creativity, free expression, center time, and free play.” In another occasion she elaborated on this:

I think free play does have a place, but to do free play all afternoon is a bit much. And to do free play while supervision aid is there from 11 to 12, is a bit too much, when the children are just crushing down things, and sure exploration has a place, but where is the teaching? […] So, then we would say no wonder that kids coming grade 3 and they can’t print, they don't know how to spell their name, they don't know what the letter A says, and then what happens to their confidence? What happens to their confidence when they are in grade 3 and they can’t read, who would see they haven't had enough practice.

This shows how she compared the value of creativity and free play vis-à-vis basic skills needed for the future of students. She did not believe that her students should/would
go to working class jobs. Rather, from her experience she had concluded that, in future, they needed to memorize tons of information and facts which were spit out on a test and they were all gone. She thought that none of those facts applied to what she needed as a teacher, but still she had to do it.

In all teaching sessions, when teachers asked students who had seen a specific object, been to a place, or worked with something, the difference in answers was basically based on the socio-economic status of students (as judged by their clothing, stationary, bag, and snacks as well as teacher’s information) rather than being of a minority group. This shows that our assumptions about who has what knowledge should be challenged.

From my teaching experience, I know that school administrators are always worried about parents’ reactions to what is going on in the school. Demanding certain kind of activities for children from the principal or asking for change in certain ways of teaching is not rare for parents in affluent neighbourhoods. They even go to the superintendent if they are not convinced. But this was not the case in Maple Wood School with parents whose demanding jobs or low education levels did not allow any interaction with the school. Few letters, other than formal administrative notices, were sent home by teachers or the principal in order to explain educational issues. Parents were described as “respectful” both by Mrs. Kate and Mrs. Taha. In one case that one parent did not sign the consent form for a field trip, Mrs. Kate said “it is odd because they are usually very respectful.” Mrs. Kate had only Ms. Lucy to watch her teaching, a parent who was kind of a friend of Mrs. Kate and had enough leisure time to volunteer for most events.
Especially instructive is comparing the results of the present study with that of Li (2006b), who has detailed the pedagogical conflicts between mainstream teachers of an elementary school in BC and Chinese immigrant parents. According to Li, the heart of these conflicts is parents’ preference for teacher-centered and skill-focused literacy versus mainstream teachers’ tendency toward student-centered practices. Li argues, correctly in my view, that the solution lies in a respectful communication and negotiation between home and school or in her own words, in “a pedagogy of cultural reciprocity” (p. 207).

Li’s study, however, highlights an important aspect of immigrant students’ life which has not been underlined enough. That is, she has looked at experiences of students from an upper-middle class neighbourhood in a suburban school where parents are generally better off than teachers in the school. In my view, it is this intersection of social class and ethnicity which provides a window for Li’s rich ethnography. Parents in Li’s study are assertive about what they want, are elaborate in communicating their thoughts, frustrations, disappointments with the school, and finally have the power to enforce their demands by sending their children to private tutors. However, I would argue that all possible cultural concerns, demands, and wishes of parents in Maple Wood School might have been suppressed by their socio-economic situation. They seldom got a chance to talk and probably did not know what to say or how to say it (see Bernstein, 1971, chapter 9 and Bernstein & Henderson, 1969).

Reproduction theories, including Anyon’s, have been criticized for suggesting a too deterministic one-to-one correspondence between the social class and school activities, or denying students’ agencies (e.g., Giroux, 1983. Also, for a review of
theories proposed by sociologists of education in order to explain inequality in schools, including reproduction theories, see Mehan, 1992). However, as Luke (2010) suggests, the recent movement of back to basics standardized curricula demonstrates the relevance of Anyon’s reminders about the risks of “an enacted curriculum of basic skills, rule recognition and compliance” (p. 180) for minority students.

The focus of this study is not social class and I do not intend to engage in discussions about reproduction theories or draw conclusions for larger social contexts as Anyon did, there may be other factors that may influence the future of these children, for better or worse, as adolescents and youths. My purpose was to show that the education of immigrant students goes much beyond ethnic cultural differences, whatever it means. At stake is the intertwined nature of poverty and new immigration waves. Using the data from the 1996 census, Kazemipur and Halli (2000) show that Canadian immigrants are overrepresented in neighbourhoods with high rates of poverty. They argue that such an overrepresentation is an invisible barrier for the integration of immigrants. Since a high percentage of new immigrants are visible minorities, Kazemipur and Halli’s conclusions hold true for minorities. More recently, James (2008) mentioned several studies which concluded “children from low income families living in impoverished neighbourhoods are more likely to attend schools with limited resources and opportunities for achievement compared to their wealthier peers in more resourced schools” (p. 108). All these suggest that the children of these immigrants may be getting a different type of education from the children in the middle-class neighbourhoods.

I need to mention that the emergence of this theme does not imply that teachers in the class had classist attitudes. In fact, there was only one case of a classist comment
from Mrs. Taha who, while commenting on the new demographics of the neighbourhood, said “They may come from better families, more wealthy, but I still think learning is the same.” However, institutional practices are not shaped by personal intentions. LeCompte (1978) noted that “teachers are often not aware of the strong normative structure that their management strategies and classroom organization have” (p. 23) and that is why these strategies are called hidden curriculum.

Page (1987) underlined the teachers’ perception of students in making curricular decisions for lower-track high school students. She argued that teachers’ perceptions “furnish a rationale for curricular decisions and thereby provide the conditions for their own re-creation” (p. 77). However, she reminded us that the meaning of curriculum differentiation was produced by “the profoundly complex and interactive nature of the sociocultural variables and processes” and is not “understandable by pointing unilaterally to prejudiced teachers, inept students, structural practices like tracking, or material constraints, like the social characteristics of the community, although each is important” (p. 96).

**The Literacy Test: The Elephant in the Room?**

In Chapter 6, I discussed a major split in Maple Wood School between two groups of teachers who taught K-2 and 3-7. Mrs. Kate called it “two different teaching philosophies” and explained:

The primary teachers, to be brutally honest, believe in exploration, creativity, developing and nurturing the child spirit which I think is very important. However, I feel that there needs to be some basic skills like printing, practice, letter formation, printing on a line at some point between kindergarten and grade 2, so when they come to grade 3, that the grade 3 teachers aren't spending time on how they make an A and what does A say.

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21 I owe this metaphor to Dr. Hills who suggested it in one of my committee meetings.
Mrs Carlson, the kindergarten teacher, also talked about different philosophies which made 3-7 teachers think students coming from K-2 were “academically behind.” When I asked her, what that meant, she said

It is mostly in literacy I have to say. But if you think about ESL, they are never going to be quite caught up in the first few years. Some of the students come to kindergarten without a word of English. None. And so by the time they are getting that oral language, then they are able maybe to start reading a little bit, writing a little bit. So we feel, like I feel, I have been here a long time, most of us feel that we often have to defend what we are doing.

As one can see, the difference in “teaching philosophy” manifests itself in approaches and strategies for teaching literacy. There are two reasons that make literacy a theme in this study, though a hidden one. First, as evident from Chapters 6 and 7, both teachers spent a relatively huge amount of time on teaching literacy. Second, that ongoing internal conflict, and sometimes fight, over literacy between two groups of teachers took lots of time and energy.

One would expect if this was a difference in philosophy of teaching, it should have shown itself in other areas such as science. So, I explicitly asked Mrs. Carlson if they had any differences over teaching science or social studies. She answered:

No. […] It really focuses around literacy and because the students in grade 4 and 7 write those standardized tests, often our school doesn’t score very high in literacy department. So that everybody feels this pressure and feels: oh if you guys doing your job from K-2— this is the message we are getting—[raising her voice as if imitating somebody] by the time they get to grade 4, they would know how to write this kind of a test [laughing] sort of thing.

On the other hand, when I asked Mrs. Kate what had been the reaction of the school’s administrator to this ongoing split, she said:

Administration’s take was to join the literacy, early literacy program. […] When I was the coordinator of that I got resistance, lots of resistance. […] And there was a couple of people who kept it because it was you have to have 80% or more, so we got the 80% but it was almost like they got the people who
were there because they knew that money came with it. So they say OK we'll sign. But then they did not want to do what the early literacy was saying, because they said that if you were going to do this you should teach this way, not that way, this way. And they did not agree with this way or that way-this way, but they wanted the money to buy books.

Interestingly, while from one side the literacy has worsened the problem, from the other side it has been sought as a solution to the problem. From the limited time that I was at the school, I am not able to comment on how the literacy test had influenced Mrs. Kate’s teaching. However, I do believe that her teaching strategies were influenced by her beliefs about the standardized testing. On the literacy test, she commented:

I don't really let it really influence too much because I do believe that there is a purpose for it, but I don't believe that it's the end all and be all. I do feel that children need to learn how to take standardized tests, because that will be part of their life, if they continue school. It's not going to go away, I don't think, I haven't seen it gone away. I think the whole test-taking situation kids need to be exposed to. I think they need to be exposed to the sweaty palms and the nervousness and the heart beating and all that because I don't think colleges and universities are going to change that, because I had it when I was in undergrad, at least in the first three years. After that you don't need to deal with it anymore. Anyways so for now, I think they need to experience that, but at the same sense I don't feel that I need to spend hours and hours of teaching time to prep them for it, so that they do well. I think they should do it and try their best and they should just, they shouldn't go cold, so like we do talk to them about you know what the sheet looks like, because many of them have never filled in a bubble sheet before. And we talk about how to look for key words in questions and we practice some old tests.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Kate and Ms. Rose were teaching a standardized central curriculum. In her conversations with me, Mrs. Kate referred to “grade level” at least a hundred times. In fact, the “grade level” was her criterion for classifying students i.e., at grade level, below grade level, and above grade level. There is nothing wrong per se with this classification. However, she mentioned that:

So we have about four like that here. They cannot read a grade-level text. If I give them a grade-three text, which is considered grade 3 by zillions of people who publish the book or whatever, they will not be able to read those words. So, they have to read grade 1 or grade-2 level texts. Then I have children who can read
maybe slightly below but they are not familiar with the vocabulary because they have not been exposed to the vocabulary of various different areas partly because family, their parents don't have time to take them and expose them to things. They don't go on trips, many of these children; they don't go on field trips at home. They only go on field trips from the school and they are not exposed to a grand vocabulary.

If that is the case, the important question to be asked, of course not from Mrs. Kate, is how that "grade level" has been defined? Whose experiences have shaped the definition of that "average student" who is the basis of defining the level? Whose cultural capital defines literacy? Isn’t this promoting a one-for-all universal literacy? Larson’s (2006) comment is so meaningful here when she argues:

> If schools continue a singular focus on traditional conceptions of literacy as autonomous skills (e.g., viewing language and literacy as “parts” that can be used independent of context, audience, and purpose; [...] ), they will be in danger of becoming irrelevant to the construction of meaningful life pathways. (p. 319)

In my view, Mrs. Kate was so right in implying that even if zillions of people defined grade level in a certain way, it would not work for her. In this conclusion, Mrs. Kate is reflecting Li (2006b) who defines literacy as something much beyond mental functioning and “a mediated action situated in the cultural, historical and institutional settings in which learning occurs” (p. 20).

Discussions about standardization are beyond the scope of this study. However, as Campano (2007) argues, there is a tension between the standardized curriculum and immigrant students’ needs. Similarly, Sleeter (2005) has demonstrated in detail the tension between standardized curricula and multicultural education. At the heart of this tension is limiting teachers’ agency as curriculum developers. Moreover, we cannot forget MacPherson’s (2006) reminder that these standards are “initiatives to propagate modern Western norms as educational outcomes and best practices that have been arrived
at without a reference to alternative cultural practices or epistemologies.” (p. 75). In this sense, standardization, as a strong cultural phenomenon, has the power to overwrite the possible acculturation strategies at schools in favour of Western/mainstream cultures and hence assimilation.

**Contrasting Maple Wood School with Society at Large**

In appendix H, I have included a few examples of news and photos gathered from attention to multiculturalism and acculturation in the media. These messages, reflecting values and attitudes of the society at large, are just a few of many that have caught my eyes during this study. My reading of these messages is that, no matter what Canadian policies may say, assimilation seems to be the preferred choice of acculturation strategy. Especially important is the cover picture of *Canadian Newcomer Magazine* which sends a powerful message to newcomers. The question, then, for me is how, if at all, can education, as one institution among many, act isolated from what is happening in the rest of society?

**Acculturation Expectations**

Berry (2006b) offers a very useful and delicate explanation on the distinctions among different terms used for acculturation strategies. He maintained:

> When examined among non-dominant ethnocultural groups that are in contact with a dominant group, these preferences have become known as acculturation strategies (earlier called relational attitudes […]). When examined among the dominant group, and when the views held are about how nondominant groups should acculturate, they have been called acculturation expectations […]. Finally, when examined among the dominant group, and when the views held are about how they themselves should change to accommodate the other groups now in their society, the strategy is assessed with a concept called multicultural ideology. (pp. 720-721)
The first part of this chapter, which dealt with culturally responsive teaching as an actualization of multiculturalism in the class, could be considered multicultural ideology as practiced in the grade 3-4 class because that was how the school viewed the problem of accommodating children of minority groups. What really mattered in the classroom was Mrs. Kate’s conceptualization of multiculturalism as elaborated by herself in Critical Vignette 4 (pp. 272-273) and none of the policies developed by the federal or provincial governments or the School Board. This exactly reflects Mujawamariya and Mahrouse’s (2004) contention that pedagogical practices are promoted by the way teachers conceptualize multicultural education. The second part, however, delineated what the school or teachers expected students to learn or to do. Those are the acculturation expectations as implied by teachers’ practices. The evidence presented in the data and in this chapter show that the expectations are of assimilation rather than integration, as defined by John Berry.

Summary

This chapter focused on the analysis of the data presented through Chapters 6-9. First by adopting the concept of culturally responsive teaching as an analytical framework, I looked for evidence of this teaching strategy as an actualization of multicultural education which in turn has been considered as a necessary condition leading to integration. The data suggested there was little evidence of culturally responsive teaching in the grade 3-4 classroom of Maple Wood School. Next, the themes arising from the data were discussed. Specifically, a “mainstream” cultural themes/orientation of the curriculum, the lack of communication at every level, the lack of resources, and the fit-for-working-class nature of the classroom practices were
identified as the themes shaping the acculturation process of these students. The next chapter includes final conclusions, implications and further research recommendations.
CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on the findings of the study in the previous chapter, this final chapter recapitulates the discussions so far by answering the research question, discussing the desirability of assimilation, discussing teachers’ role in the process of acculturation, revisiting multiculturalism in Canada, and identifying implications for future research and educators.

Cultural Transmission

In Chapter 4, I discussed the concept of cultural transmission, which was defined by Wolcott (1991) as “calculated or intentional intervention processes” (p. 256). In this sense, schools and teachers, with their curriculum and lesson plans, act as powerful agents of cultural transmission. Spindler (1988) argues that “educational systems are charged with responsibility for bringing about change in the culture. They become, or are intended to become, national agents of modernization. They become intentional agents of cultural discontinuity, a kind of discontinuity that does not reinforce traditional values or recruit youngsters into the existing system” (p. 327).

The main problem for students from minority groups, according to Spindler is “the nonrelatedness of what is taught in the school to what is learned in the home and community” (p. 329). He argues that, since the curriculum is alien to the existing culture, there is no reinforcement in the home, family, and community and hence school is isolated from the cultural system it is aimed to serve. This isolation, on one hand, influences minority students’ learning and outcomes. For example, research on early literacy has documented how the discontinuities between home and school are a
detriment to immigrant students’ literacy acquisition (e.g., Au, 1993; Clancy & Simpson, 2002). On the other hand and more importantly for the present study, this isolation means that one group’s culture is taken as norm and promoted through the school system simply because that group has the power to impose it.

Chapter 10 demonstrated this nonrelatedness in the grade 3-4 class of Maple Wood School. But nonetheless, the curriculum and teaching practices were related to a culture or a cultural group whose values, beliefs, and cultural capital were reinforced in classroom practices. In other words, one culture was reaffirmed and promoted while others were invalidated/silenced by omission (Norquay, 1993). The orientations and themes of teaching/learning activities, as presented in Chapter 10, showed an alignment with Western/mainstream cultures. These were cultural expectations promoted in the class.

**Multiculturalism Ideology**

Berry (2006b) defined multiculturalism ideology as the dominant group’s view about how they should change to accommodate other groups. Bringing this concept to the context of the present study, we may ask: what did teachers of the grade 3-4 class or Maple Wood School do in order to accommodate students from minority groups? To her credit, Mrs. Kate spent a lot of time on her students’ English. But for me, this is what any good teacher would do when she/he has students at different levels. For example, I suspect she would do the same if she had exclusively non-minority students who were at different levels of mathematics mastery.

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22 For the sake of the argument, I would not discuss the hidden layers of the term accommodation, which has a strong assimilative connotation for me.
I believe what teachers and the school did or did not do to accommodate minority students was mostly framed by the prevalent ideology of multiculturalism in the larger society. Moodley’s (1983) analysis of this ideology is useful here. In her view, among the features of this ideology was the separation of language from culture and the acceptance of bilingualism instead of multilingualism, which led to putting “a premium on the shedding of the original language in favour of the quick grasp of English language and culture” (p. 324). This separation, she argued, inevitably makes cultural retention only about ephemeral and artificial culture. The new notion of ethnicity, then, “was based on the feeling of […] having to do all the adapting and yet never enough” (p. 325). The little evidence for culturally responsive teaching, in the first part of Chapter 10, validates Moodley’s notion of the ideology. More than three decades ago, Green (1977) noted that a superficial notion of culture and lack of funding were major hurdles for multicultural education (see p. 40).

As seen in the previous chapter, this ideology at Maple Wood was intensified by educational “reforms” whose major characteristics were standardization and cutbacks. At a higher level, these all coincided with the global retreat of multiculturalism and a shift toward the discourse of social cohesion (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively).

**Answering My Research Question**

My research question was “how did Maple Wood School shape the acculturation processes of the grade 3-4 immigrant students?” According to John Berry’s model, multiculturalism is the necessary condition in the host society to allow integration of immigrants. Canada has officially accepted multiculturalism at its highest level policies. Also, the school Board policies and the provincial government curriculum documents
strongly endorse multicultural education in their documents. Can we conclude from these
that multiculturalism was present in the grade 3-4 class and hence integration was a
possible path of acculturation for minority students?

Culturally responsive teaching as explained by Geneva Gay was adopted as a
framework for actualization of multicultural education in the school. The analysis of the
data in Chapter 10 showed little evidence of culturally responsive teaching, or critical
multiculturalism, in the classroom. In Berry’s (2006) terms, “the multiculturalism
ideology” as practiced in the class, framed in and limited by the multiculturalism policies
of Canada, showed little effort for “accommodating” minority students. Furthermore,
Western/mainstream cultural themes/orientations of the curriculum, lack of
communication at every level, and social class were major themes raised from the data.
Entangled in their low socio-economic situation and ESL-ness, these grade 3-4 students
were receiving an education which is usually typified as the education for working-class
children, were detached from their own culture and connected to themes and orientation
from Western/mainstream culture, and were experiencing a whole series of disconnected
relationships among teachers, parents, and themselves. These findings resonate with
Mehan’s (1998) conclusion that “all students, but especially those from low-income,
ethnic- and linguistic minority families, are forced, under normal circumstances, to learn
the tacit rules of the classroom culture” (p. 249).

A large portion of teaching/learning activities in the grade 3-4 class was devoted
to language arts and literacy. However, virtually all those activities can be considered
examples of language programs which Beynon, LaRocque, Ilieva, and Dagenais (2005)
described as defining “learning in terms of linguistic proficiency alone, unconnected to
learners’ experiences, knowledge and identities as members of diverse socio-cultural linguistic communities” (p. 4) and hence, they argue, manifest the ideology of Anglo-conformity.

One can conclude from the findings in these observations that school practices, and attitudes were reflecting the melting pot-model of host society in Berry’s model rather than a critical multiculturalism. For children who had little choice in their reactions to the host society, this means that the process of institutional acculturation favoured assimilation rather than integration. The data presented in this study and its analysis match Hollins’ (2008) description of the assimilation process in the following:

- school practices are grounded in the host culture, which is viewed as the norm, thereby promoting a universalistic perspective on learning. [...] The instructional practices reflected the universalistic view of learning as detached from culture and are not connected to prior learning outside of school, the social context does not incorporate ways of communicating and interacting found in the students’ home-culture, and the curriculum content reflects only the surface features of culture. (p. 13)

This was despite the School Board’s strong policies on multiculturalism and a strong emphasis on diversity in the provincial curriculum documents. Cross (1998) demonstrated how teachers could think differently about multicultural curriculum despite all the existing formal polices. Additionally, this point confirms my argument in Chapter 4 that the use of the term “multiculturalism” in Berry’s model of acculturation strategies is problematic due to the elusive and vague nature of the term. There, I argued that only a critical multiculturalism corresponds to a strategy of integration.

Assimilative practices showed themselves as an “acculturation expectation” in the process of institutional acculturation of students at school. This resulted in a discontinuity between immigrant students’ home and school and reinforced already-existing
discontinuities. Hobart (1968) believed that in Western societies, similar to simple societies, there is a basic continuity between preschool life and early experiences at school with many obvious points of articulation between what goes on in classrooms and the activities of mature adults. But for some children that continuity does not exist and school life does not relate to their experiences of kin and community. This has led to two types of schooling arrangements: one with a continuity with preschool life and early school life and the other one without such a continuity. How this discontinuity may contribute to students’ learning difficulties or adversely affect their achievement is vastly researched (e.g., Lee, 1994, Nieto, 1999,) but this study is not concerned with that issue.

I need to mention that I did not observe any obvious discrimination from teachers or other staff in the grade 3-4. Teachers were sensitive to students as human beings and cared about them. They also were aware of their students’ socio-economic status and understood their troubles. I did not witness any racial or ethnic tension among students. Non-minority students, who were the minority in the class, were getting along well with “visible minorities” and were integrated with them. Also, minority students from different ethnic backgrounds were mingling together and were not sticking to their own group.

**Assimilation: A Desirable End?**

Can we assume that all immigrants are against assimilation? Could we be overly critical of schools? My personal answer to these questions is definitely a negative one. My personal experiences with many immigrant families show that many immigrants want to assimilate. In fact, part of the reason that parents were against culturally adapted curricula in places like Africa, was that they thought it was going to keep their children in their place and close the available opportunity to move upward (Alexander, 2000). For
example, Klerk (2002) tells the story of parents who are totally against inclusion of their indigenous language in the school program. Also, some of the early Chinese immigrants did not want their children to speak Chinese and wanted them to only speak English. However, this does not seem to be the case anymore (Ogbu, 1995). Such attitudes among immigrant parents may be attributed to an internalized sense of cultural inferiority as a result of the dominance of assimilationist ideologies in the larger society.

Maybe schools such as Maple Wood are doing what they are doing simply because that is what parents, or at least some parents want them to do. The fact that only one student in the grade 3-4 class had a non-English first name may confirm this point. Where parents’ feelings and wishes may come from is another issue and in my view, have their roots in the larger issues such as the inherent tensions between liberal democracy and multiculturalism. Driedger (1978) noticed that

The potential for an ethnic mosaic is evident when minorities wish to assimilate but are not given equal opportunities to do so. Conflict is also evident when other minorities attempt to maintain their distinct identity in a society unable to allow such aspirations. (p. 26)

Lee (2005) calls for a selective acculturation which she defines as “the preservation of aspects of ethnic culture and the concomitant acquisition of aspects of the dominant culture, in the success of immigrant groups” (p. 124). As discussed in Chapter 4, Suárez-Orozco (2000) clarifies these aspects. He argues that immigrant parents encourage their children to acquire instrumental aspects of culture. However, they are more ambivalent about the expressive aspects of the culture in the new country. This selective or segmented acculturation implies a selective assimilation.
How “Typical” Was This Class?

In Chapter 5, I discussed rather in detail the theoretical aspects of generalization in case studies and emphasized that by no means did I intend to tell the story of a typical classroom because I do not believe in such a concept. As mentioned earlier, even in Maple Wood School, Mrs. Kate was the only teacher who had the flag salute and O Canada in her class.

Examples of sharp contrast to this study are Joann Phillion’s stories from a grade 4-5 Canadian classroom in an inner-city school in a low-socioeconomic neighbourhood. Phillion (2002a, 2002b, 2002c) illustrates an exemplary multicultural classroom which could be the ideal dream of every educator. I do not perceive the policies in the Board to which Maple Wood school belonged, less adequate, efficient, or progressive (in terms of addressing the needs of immigrant students) than those of the Board in Phillion’s study. Other than the fact that the present study was conducted 10 years after Phillion’s, I may attribute the differences in these two classrooms to different school climates (culture, resources, and administrator), different teachers, and different political climate.

Teachers’ Role

It would be too easy and too simplistic to finger point at the teacher without looking at the big picture. In fact, the discussion on the multiculturalism ideology demonstrates that Mrs. Kate (and Ms. Rose) had little choice in that area although she had more freedom in the expectations area. Although this study focused on the grade 3-4 class, we cannot separate teachers from complex institutional constraints imposed on them. Teachers who have been short-changed in their education, been under the pressure of reforms that bring standardization/accountability on one hand and cut-backs on the
other, suffered from lack of resources, and are exhausted by the demands of time and energy.

To use Spindler’s (1988) notion, students, teachers, and administrators are “acting out a cultural drama” and it is important to understand this drama as a cultural process and promote an awareness of the process. In my view, the most effective way to influence this drama is working through teacher education programs. Recent research on integrating children into schools in Europe has come to the same conclusion (Eurydice, 2004). I cannot agree more with Weisman and Garza (2002) that teacher candidates need to develop critical understanding of power relationships through courses that require them “to read, discuss, and reflect on their own values and beliefs, the effects of race, ethnicity, and social class on classroom learners, and the need to take action to to ensure equity” (p. 30). How can we not equip our teacher candidates with knowledge, insights, skills, and tools required for a multicultural education, which are assumed to be the prerequisite for integration, and expect them to graduate from the old assimilationist approaches? Howard (1999) captures this so concisely and tersely in the title of her book: “we can’t teach what we don’t know.”

My personal impression from Mrs. Kate and her dedication and extraordinary hard work, as expressed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, confirms Nieto’s (2004) observation that most teachers are “sincerely concerned about their students and want very much to provide them with the best education” (p. xxix). While in her view, the problem lies within teachers’ limited education and experience about the culture of their students, she is quick to mention that simply being from minority cultures does not guarantee effectively teaching diverse students. Ogbu (1995) has briefly reviewed the research on
the cross-cultural misunderstanding, language and communication differences, conceptual knowledge differences, and learning/teaching style differences between Chinese immigrant students and American mainstream students. If we believe that teachers should know their students, then these are examples of what teacher candidates should be taught.

Twenty-five years ago, Mallea and Young (1984) noticed that thousands of Canadian teachers’ lack of skills to help immigrant children resulted in failure and frustration for both teachers and students. They called for teacher education programs addressing those needs. Furthermore, they argued in-service education and graduate studies should be an inseparable piece of these programs. It is unfortunate to know that the recent research literature suggests that teacher education programs in Canada (Davies, 2007; Lund, 1998; Solomon & Allen, 2001) remain far from addressing the basic needs of teacher candidates for teaching in our diverse schools. An important component of our teacher education programs should be helping teacher candidates understand their cultural identity formation, white privilege, and the myth of meritocracy (Solomon, Portellib, Danielec, & Campbella, 2005). For an elaboration on the challenges of teacher education for our diverse schools see for example, Levine-Rasky (1998, 2001) and Solomon (1996).

**Canadian Multiculturalism Revisited**

Drawing on the critiques of Canadian multiculturalism presented in Chapter 2, I ask: How successful has Canada been in actualizing its multicultural policies? Twenty-five years ago, Berry (1984) maintained that “a partial (and somewhat risky)” answer suggested by then-existing evidence was “that the policy is on the right track, moving us
in the right direction” (p. 367). More recently, Kymlicka (2008), in his proposal for “marketing Canadian pluralism in the international arena”, argues that immigrant integration is the single component of Canadian multiculturalism which “has been strongly endorsed by international experts […] and] has been indeed a striking success” (p. 105). For him, new race-neutral immigration policies are adopting “a more ‘multicultural’ conception of integration, one that expects that many immigrants will visibly and proudly express their ethnic identities and that accepts an obligation on the part of public institutions […] to accommodate these ethnic identities” (p.105). From another perspective, others such as Bhikhu Prekh argue that respecting cultural differences can only be achieved by moving beyond the liberal principles of justice.

Politicians and policy makers have a totally different view in dealing with well-theorized philosophies. For example, Sgro (2004), then Liberal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, stated why diversity was important for her:

Studies also indicate that workplace diversity will become increasingly important as economic globalization picks up steam. An understanding of cultural diversities, language nuances, and styles of doing business will likely therefore all be crucial to business success as national economies become increasingly tied to an emerging global economic order. (p. 28)

This is exactly what in 1981, the Minister of State for Multiculturalism called “good business” (Moodley, 1983, p. 330).

Magsino (1999) suggested that “implementation of [Canadian] multiculturalism thus far has been limited, ill-focused, and inadequately funded” (p. 47). As mentioned in Chapter 2, multicultural education has been implemented differently across provinces and school boards and has had ups and downs during decades. However, even if we agree with Magsino, then each situation needs to be investigated to decide whether the problem
was with implementation, i.e., the gaps between policies and practices, or with policies themselves. This study did not focus on cultural clashes at schools which have been underlined in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks, but that clash will continue to creep into our classrooms and intensify the “us-versus-them” debate. In my view, Levine-Rasky (2006) has captured the contradictions in multiculturalism by pointing to discontinuities “between a liberal-humanist desire for multiculturalism and its experience by social actors”. Canada’s multiculturalism, she continues, is not an abstract one “of integration and mutual recognition but one impaired by underemployment, unresponsiveness, and outright racism” (p. 99).

One may argue that with a more critical theory, and hence polices, of multiculturalism, the situation in our schools could be different. Others may disagree by challenging the limits of liberalism. However, the focus of this study is educational practices rather than political philosophy, although in final analysis they are inseparable. The data from this study suggest that, at the final analysis, at the classroom level everything goes back to teachers’ visions, values, beliefs, knowledge, and capabilities. None of the strong polices from the School Board and the provincial government could help the students in this study. The results of this study suggest that Jaenen’s (1973) idea about the coexistence of three models of integration of immigrants in Canada (i.e., Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism) for different groups or different members of a group still holds true. Interestingly, Jaenen noted that public schooling, as an institution for conformity to dominant lifestyle (in contrast to Spindler’s view), played a key role in promoting Anglo-conformity.

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23 This does not mean that macro-level policies of “managing diversity” are not problematic in my view.
Berries Model Revisited

In Chapter 4, while discussing Berry’s model (pp. 97-98), I mentioned the lack of explicitness about power relationships. While the dominant situation of the host culture is the crux of relationships, avoiding the terms such as “minority” or “non-dominant” depoliticizes the issue. Furthermore, the vagueness of the term culture and multiculturalism in his formulation may cause misunderstanding and confusion about the relationship between multiculturalism and integration.

In order to avoid these problems, I suggest the graphic representation shown in Figure 23 for Berry’s model. In this representation, minority groups are surrounded and limited (similar to the brass part of a two-dollar Canadian coin) by the host group whose vital role in constraining the minority groups’ choices which Berry acknowledges. While minority groups may have different attitudes toward the host society, their choices are limited by the flexibility of the host society. Moreover, minority groups or cultures are not monolithic entities and their choices vary vastly across age, race, social class, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, religion, education, ability, and language. The cross-sectionalities of these factors may have huge impact on the acculturation paths of individuals and groups. For example, the results of this study and their contrast with those of Li’s (2008) underline the role of social class in the acculturation of immigrant students. Finally, it is only critical multiculturalism that has the potential for leading to integration. But there is no linear and causal relationship between the two.

24 The same applies to the majority groups or the host society. In order to keep the diagram simple, the variations in the host society have not been shown. Also, the weight of each factor varies on different situations; this fact has not been reflected in the diagram.
Figure 23. Revisiting Berry’s model.
As discussed in Chapter 4, integrating immigrant children is closely related to socio-economic integration of their parents. Chacko and Palmer (1995) examine Canadian social policies in the areas of employment, business, health, justice and legal affairs, education, housing, and social services and demonstrated how these programs fail to serve visible minorities. More recently, Buchard and Taylor’s (2008) recommendation for Quebec hits the nail on the head. In a section titled “time for action”, they note

regardless of the formulas that our society develops to effectively combine cultural differences or to devise a common future, they will be largely doomed to fail unless the prerequisites are established. By prerequisites we mean the fight against underemployment, poverty, inequality, intolerable living conditions and various forms of discrimination. Much emphasis has been placed in the past on the cultural, linguistic, economic, demographic and civic (or legal) dimensions of immigration. Priority must now be given to its social aspect. (p. 238)

This recommendation, with all its significance, is hardly new. In reviewing studies on Canadians’ attitudes toward multiculturalism, Fleras and Elliot (1992) concluded that “multiculturalism as a principle is widely endorsed, but the same cannot be said for efforts to put the principle into practice for the realization of cultural and equality goals” (p. 119).

Palmer (1998) claimed that there are “trends towards increasing intolerance in response to the question about ‘non-white immigration’” (cited in Redford, 2007, p. 50). Even if that is not the case, as discussed in Chapter 4, positive attitudes do not always translate to behaviour. Jedwab (2008), who studied public opinion in Canada on immigration and integration, concludes that openness to immigration does not necessarily imply positive attitudes toward diversity and integration. Rather, his analysis suggests
that “opinions about integration can conflict with opinions about immigration levels” (p. 228).

In Chapter 2, I discussed the universal trend of the retreat of multiculturalism. This problem is closely related to, and perhaps created by, the peculiarity of the present economic situation which is not favourable for immigration and integration policies (Zhou, 1997). I believe that Zhou’s characterization of this era in the US applies to Canada as well; that is: “an emerging “hourglass” economy in which opportunities for social mobility shrink even among native-born Americans and a welfare state that is highly contested by the general public” (p. 67). Therefore, what determines the type of institutional acculturation is the kind of multiculturalism practiced and promoted in an institution.

Furthermore, as Joshee and Winton (2007) noticed, with the retreat of multiculturalism, diversity is mainly viewed in the context of social cohesion. State programs for social cohesion, they argue, focus on economic prosperity. This focus, in turn, calls for focusing “on the individual, economic participation, and compliance rather than on social protest and working toward equality and social justice” (p. 24). They claim that the recent turn to character education in Canada and US is triggered by the need to instil the “core values” of society in students. The already-mentioned change in the document for the citizenship test is evidence of the shift in Canadian values, at least from the official point of view.

In Chapter 4, I discussed in detail that only a critical multiculturalism may allow integration of immigrants. Only that framework can avoid/address problems of the current situation; problems which according to the Department of Canadian Heritage
(2001), were disproportionate poverty, systemic discrimination, under-representation, and victimization as a result of racism and hate-motivated crime (see p. 42 in Chapter 2).

Reitz (2009), who with his colleagues, conducted the latest research on integration and social cohesion in Canada, suggests the following implications about the actualization of multiculturalism in Canada:

These concern (1) the importance of *equality* as a key requirement for integration, (2) the possibilities for *ethnic community development to provide more direct support for integration*, (3) the need for *integration efforts beyond support for diversity*, and (4) the need to *evaluate the multiculturalism program itself*. (p. 168, italics in the original)

Reitz’s suggestions remind us of Burnet’s (1978) prediction of a “radical” possibility for the future of multiculturalism. In her view, that possibility entailed “the alteration of social structures so that they are no longer based or biased towards the British models and no longer afford preference to the English language” (p. 111) because she believed that then existing structures led to assimilation. It is only educators’ intrinsic hope that urges us to be pessimistic enough to work for realization of Reitz’s recommendation in spite of the fact that Burnet’s possibility did not turn into reality after thirty years.

**Implications for Further Research**

In the concluding chapter of a book on immigration and integration in Canada, Biles, Burstein, and Frideres (2008a) note that “Canada still lacks empirical evidence pointing to the success or lack of success of our two-way approach to immigrant integration” (p. 271). They also maintain that “substantial evidence shows that major constituent groups within the overall immigration movement face barriers on every major integration front, such as education, employment, law, health, and civic participation” (p.
In education, therefore, there is an urgent need to pinpoint the educational barriers and find solutions to alleviate them. Buchard and Taylor (2008) state that they cannot overemphasize the role of education and they are very clear on where we should start from: “It is during the first years of elementary school that sensitivity must be instilled to differences, inequality, rights and social relations, what is usually embodied in the notion of citizenship” (p. 237).

This study looked at how a particular school framed acculturation processes of elementary immigrant students. The next question then, would be to examine how students might experience these processes. In other words, what are the relationships and interactions between institutional and individual acculturation? Answering this question needs at least a year-long ethnographic study focusing on students, to investigate how school has influenced their cultural values, beliefs, and practices. In such a study, one can investigate how characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, country of origin, and their interplay may affect acculturation processes.

The second line of recommended research would be longitudinal studies to see how students may retain or change their culture acquisition processes. Transition periods to adolescence and adulthood are especially important in terms of identity formation.

It is also important to look more closely to the contributions of social class and cultural capital to educational inequality. Reay (1998) warns us against limiting the discussion about class to mere economic conditions (lumping it to a variable called socio-economic status). She emphasizes the importance of class as an important component of social identity “despite a range of prevailing discourses which constitute it as irrelevant” (p. 259). Moreover, in the light of demographic changes across Canada and beyond
Canada’s three largest cities (Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal), Radford’s (2007) call for expanding research on immigration and minorities is a timely reminder.

On the other hand, there is a close relationship between acculturation, and hence integration/assimilation, and the evolving issue of Canadian identity (or Canadian-ness). There is little agreement on what constitutes the latter. In discussions about cultural “accommodation” of immigrants, many people talk about “we Canadians” and “our values.” In the ongoing process of negotiation over Canadian identities, the constituent elements of those “values” will be unpacked and those identities will be reconfigured. Therefore, there is no one-answer-for-all-the-time on this issue; further research is therefore needed on Canadian identity in a multicultural context.

**Implications for Educators**

As I already mentioned, the most important intervention in the institutional acculturation processes at schools would only be possible through our teacher education programs. We cannot afford leaving our prospective teachers with “method” courses that avoid thorny issues of race, gender, class, and culture. Secondly, we need to take the issue of literacy for ESL students more seriously. Findings of research on the literacy for English language learners (such as works synthesized by August and Shanahan, 2008) need to be integrated in teacher education programs. Among these findings, as Cummins (2000) points out, are the influence of linking literacy with students’ home and culture. Similarly, Gardner (1979) pointed out that, in the acquisition of a second language, students are not only learning information, but also acquiring symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community, which involves “imposing elements of another culture into one’s own life space” (p.194). He argued that the balance between the
student’s own cultural community and his or her willingness or ability to identify with other cultural communities is important in successfully acquiring the language. General recommendations such as “taking into account students’ cultural background” are not enough. Teacher candidates need to be equipped with critical eyes in order to unpack the cultural elements interwoven into early literacy practices (Iannacci, 2005, 2006).

Closely related to literacy is teaching science or lack thereof in the case of the present study. Appleton (2007) noticed that “an overriding tradition is that elementary schooling’s major priorities are literacy and numeracy, with other subjects taking second place” (p. 495) He documented research on elementary teachers’ trend to avoid science. The reasons for such avoidance include teachers’ lack of confidence and limited science knowledge, lack of time and other resources, and teachers’ perceptions about the importance of science. This last factor, in my view, is intertwined with the perceived importance of literacy as be-all and end-all.

Lee and Luykx (2007) suggest that integrating literacy in inquiry-based science teaching provides meaningful contexts for ESL students’ language and literacy development. This point would have a huge impact for classrooms such as the grade 3-4 in Maple Wood School where lack of science teaching led to change in the topics of this study. This body of research must be translated into policies and teaching practices. Teacher educators are in the forefront of people who need to take action in this regard.

Finally, the findings from this study underline the importance of engaging immigrant communities in the education of their children. Among Seat’s (2000) recommendations for improving the settlement and adaptation of Canadian adolescent
newcomers, are 1) to recognize schools as critical components of the settlement process; 2) to use family and community resources in that process.

I end this dissertation with a wish from deep in my heart. I wish for a change in teacher education programs so that the ideal of a culturally responsive teaching seems more feasible.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A
Letters of Information and Consent

Letter of Consent for Teachers

For Majid Malekan
of the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University
Title: The border crossing of immigrant students in elementary science

I have read and retained a copy of the letter of information concerning The border crossing of immigrant students in elementary science and all questions have been sufficiently answered. I am aware of the purpose and procedures of this study, and I have been informed that the interview will be recorded by audiotape.

I have been notified that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any point during the study and I may request the removal of all or part of my data without any consequences to myself. I have also been told the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality of all information.

I am aware that I can contact Majid Malekan, at (905) 593-8697 or by email at 4mm7@qlink.queensu.ca if I have any questions about this research or his supervisor Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolska at Queen’s University, Faculty of Education at 533-6000 ext. 77410 or by email at kruglye@educ.queensu.ca . I am also aware that for questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, 533-6210, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, email joan.stevensj@queensu.ca.

Participant’s Name: _____________________________________________________________

Signature: _____________________________________________________________________

Date: _________________________________________________________________________

Please write your e-mail or postal address at the bottom of this sheet if you wish to receive a copy of the results of this study.
Letter of Consent for Parents/Guardians and Students

I agree to participate in the study entitled “The border crossing of immigrant students in elementary science”, conducted through the Faculty of Education at Queen's University.

I have read and retained a copy of the Letter of Information and the purpose of the study is explained to my satisfaction.

I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that, upon request, I may have a full description of the results of the study after its completion.

I understand that the researchers intend to publish the findings of the study.

I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without negative consequences.

I am aware that I can contact Majid Malekan, at (905) 593-8697 or by email at 4mm7@qlink.queensu.ca if I have any questions about this research or his supervisor Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolska at Queen’s University, Faculty of Education at 533-6000 ext. 77410 or by email at kruglye@educ.queensu.ca. I am also aware that for questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, I can contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, 533-6210, or the chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, email joan.stevensj@queensu.ca.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Please check the part(s) of the study that you agree to participate:

----- Classroom Observation      ----- Audio taping      ----Interview      ---- Collecting Students’ work and artefacts

Student’s name (Please Print): ________________________________

Signature of Student: ________________________________

Date ________________  Telephone number: __________________

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THIS CONSENT FORM AND I AGREE TO ALLOW MY SON/DAUGHTER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Signature of parent/guardian:______________________________

Date: ________________  Telephone number:____________________
Letter of Information for Parents/Guardians and Students

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your son/daughter is one of a group of Grade 4 students selected as a potential participant for a research study, conducted as part of my PhD research at the Faculty of Education, Queen's University. The study is entitled “The border crossing of immigrant students in elementary science”. The research has the support of the teacher, the school principal and the school board consultants. Moreover, the research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board and approved by the school board.

The aim of this letter is twofold. First, it will describe the purpose and method of the research study. Second, it will request that both you and your son/daughter agree, in writing, to participate in the study.

Research shows that the cultural background of students plays an important role in learning. This role becomes more important in science classrooms where rules and language of science are different from those of everyday life. Immigrant students need to adjust themselves to the new culture of school and science classroom in order to engage in the process of learning. My intention is to understand what may help immigrant students in their adjustments and adaptations in elementary science and what may act as a barrier for them.

The proposed method of the study requires that I observe the classroom for a period of month in spring 2007. I plan to sit unobtrusively in a grade 4 science classroom and observe the class activities for a period of one month, everyday for the full day. Should the teacher require any assistance in any way, I would be pleased to oblige. I will audiotape the classroom and take notes of the incidents that seem important to me as signs of how students’ cultural backgrounds play a role in their learning. I will also interview as many students as agree to be interviewed. The interviews (each half an hour in length and at students’ convenience) will be focused on students’ learning experiences, especially in science, and comparing these experiences with those in their home country. The students will be interviewed in pairs in order for them to feel more comfortable and relaxed because of being with a friend. I have attached to this letter a sample of possible questions in the interview for you. Students will not be obliged to answer any question including any that may be objectionable or uncomfortable for them.

The confidentiality and anonymity will be my priority in dealing with the data. Nobody except me and my thesis committee will have access to the data. I will remove any and all identifying information in my thesis and any publication of the data. The data will be locked and secured in a locking cabinet file in the researcher's home. Electronic files will be held on the researcher's laptop with a password. The data will be destroyed at the end of the process.
Agreement on your part to allow your son/daughter to become a part of the study in no way obligates your son/daughter to remain a part of the study. Participation is voluntary, and your son/daughter, or you on their behalf, may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Further, participation or non-participation will not affect any school mark or report card that your child may receive.

We intend to publish the findings of the study in professional journals and report them at conferences. At no time will the actual identity of the participants be disclosed. Pseudonyms will be used throughout.

Please indicate your decision to participate in the study on one of the attached Letter of Consent and keep the other copy for your own record. Kindly return The Letter of Consent in a sealed envelope via the teacher at your earliest convenience. I have provided a self-addressed envelope for you with this letter.

Should further information be required before either you or your son/daughter can make a decision about participation, please feel free to telephone me, Majid Malekan, at (905) 593-8697 or by email at 4mm7@qlink.queensu.ca or my supervisor Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolska at Queen’s University, Faculty of Education at 533-6000 ext. 77410 or by email at kruglye@educ.queensu.ca. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, (613) 533-6210, or the Chair of the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, email joan.stevensj@queensu.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Majid Malekan
Letter of Information for Teachers

Title: The border crossing of immigrant students in elementary science

I am writing to request your participation in research aimed at investigating the process of transition of immigrant students into the culture of elementary science. I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education, Queen’s University. This research has been cleared by the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, and also by your school board.

The aim of this letter is twofold. First, it will describe the purpose and method of the research study. Second, it will request that you agree, in writing, to participate in the study. Please indicate your decision to participate in the study on the attached Letter of Consent and return it to me at your earliest convenience. The letter should be returned in a sealed envelope. I have provided a self-addressed envelope for you with this letter.

The purpose of the study is to investigate and describe the process of transition of immigrant students into the culture of elementary science. The similarities and differences between and among the cultures of students’ family, peer group and schools play important roles in facilitating or impeding students’ learning. Students’ ability in moving from one culture to another (border crossing) depends on the congruency or lack thereof between these cultures. Science has its own culture (language, values, attitudes, beliefs, code of conducts etc.) and in science classroom students need to move to the culture of science in order to be engaged in the process of learning. My intention is to understand what may facilitate immigrant students’ border crossing in elementary science and what may act as a barrier for this process. Hopefully, the results of this study may lead to insights for greater success in working with immigrant students.

The data in my study will mainly consist of classroom observations which will be audio-recorded. Interviews with a number of students (as many as permission allows) and teachers, students’ writings (journals, letters, etc.) and artefacts, and students’ achievements (as reported by themselves) will be used as the complementary sources of data in order to explain, clarify, check, or elaborate on the transcriptions and observation notes. In my interviews with you as the teacher of the class, I will be mainly looking for clarifications and explanations for the incidents in the classroom that go back to the period when I was not observing in the classroom.

I do not foresee risks in your participation in this research. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to answer any questions you find objectionable, and you are assured that no information collected will be reported to anyone who is in authority over you. You are free to withdraw from the study without reasons at any point, and you may request removal of all or part of your data.

This research may result in publications of various types, including journal articles, professional publications, newsletters, books, and instructional materials for schools. Your name will not be attached to any form of the data that you provide, neither will your name or
the identity of your place of work be known to anyone tabulating or analyzing the data, nor will these appear in any publication created as a result of this research. A pseudonym will replace your name on all data that you provide to protect your identity. If the data are made available to other researchers for secondary analysis, your identity will never be disclosed.

Please indicate your decision to participate in the study on one of the attached Letter of Consent and keep the other copy for your own record. Should further information be required before you can make a decision about participation, please feel free to telephone me, Majid Malekan, at (905) 593-8697 or by email at 4mm7@qlink.queensu.ca or my supervisor Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolska at Queen’s University, Faculty of Education at 533-6000 ext. 77410 or by email at kruglye@educ.queensu.ca. For questions, concerns or complaints about the research ethics of this study, contact the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, (613) 533-6210, or the Chair of the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, email joan.stevensj@queensu.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Majid Malekan
Chinese Translation of The Letter of Information and Consent
父母监护人及学生知情同意书

尊敬的监护人及学生：

我是贵校的一名学生，正在做一项关于小学课堂的观察研究。

在过去的四年中，我对您子女的学习进行了研究。这项研究是基于一个研究项目，其中包括参与者的同意。此项研究得到了学校和教育局的批准。

此研究有两个目的：首先，向您介绍该研究的过程和方法。第二，邀请您和您的子女在相关过程中参与并提供反馈。

研究的主要目的是了解学生在不同教学环境中的表现。

在研究过程中，我需要在您子女的教室中进行一些观察和访谈。

请注意，我将采取匿名的方式收集和处理数据，并不会透露任何可能识别您子女身份的信息。

我保证将您的子女的身份保密，并且所有收集到的数据都将用于研究目的。

同意您的子女参与此研究并不意味着您的子女有作出任何决定或义务。如果您有其他问题或需要更多的信息，请随时与我联系。

请确保您已清楚了解并同意您的子女参与此次研究。如果贵校的其他学生也参与了这项研究，请确认您和您的子女都已经了解并同意。

感谢您的合作和支持。
在决定是否参与此项研究之前，如果您或您的儿子/女儿需要进一步了解一些相关情况，请联系我 - Majid Malekan。我的电话是 (905) 593-8697，电子邮箱是 4mm7@qlink.queensu.ca。

马基德·麦里肯博士，院长、女皇大学教育学院。

同样，您也可以联系 Eva Krugly-Smolska 博士，她的电话是 (613) 533-5748，电子邮箱是 eva.krugly@educ.queensu.ca。

如果关于研究的任何疑问，请联系 Christa-Ann Chilton 博士，她的电话是 (613) 533-6789，电子邮箱是 c.a.chilton@queensu.ca。

您真诚的

Majid Malekan (马基德·麦里肯)
父母同意书

我同意参与通过由女皇大学教师学院举办的课程进行的研究。

我已经阅读并保留了一份说明，对于研究的说明我已经得到了一个满意的解释。

由于没有任何疑问，我已经得到了满意的答复。

我知道，此项研究结束后，如有要求，研究者会给我提供一份详尽的研究结果报告。

我知道研究者打算公开发表此项研究的结果。

我知道我的参与是自愿的，我可以选择在任何时候退出此项研究而不会有任何负面影响。

我知道如果对此次研究有任何问题，我可以联系 Majid Malekan，他的电话是 905) 593-8697，电子邮箱是 MajidMalekan@queensu.ca，或者他的导师，女皇大学教师学院的 Eva Krugly-Smolenska，她的电话是 (613) 533-6000 分机 77410，电子邮箱是 kruglye@educ.queensu.ca。

我知道如果对此研究的道德有任何问题，我可以联系教师学院的 Rosa Bruno-Jofré，她的电话是 (613) 533-6210，或者联系女皇大学研究道德审查委员会。我还可以联系 Joan Stevenson，她的电话是 (613) 533-6081，电子邮箱是 joan.stevensj@queensu.ca。

我已经阅读并理解这份同意书的内容，表示同意参与此项研究。

同意参与此项目的研究部分：

--- 课堂教学观察  --- 录音  --- 采访  --- 收集学生的作业以及手工制作

学生姓名（请使用复印件）：

学生签名：

日期 _____________ 电话号码： ____________

我已经阅读并理解这份同意书的内容，表示同意参与此项研究。

父母签名（请使用复印件）：

日期 _____________ 电话号码： ____________
THƯ BÁO GÓI PHỤ HUYNH/NGƯỜI GIÁM HỐ

Con em quý vị là một trong nhóm học sinh lớp 4 được lựa chọn để tham dự vào chương trình nghiên cứu, thuộc phân Tiến sĩ học tại Phần Khoa Giáo Dục của trường Đại Học Queen’s University. Đề tài của học trình nghiên cứu này là "Sự chuyển tiếp của học sinh đi đến trong môn Khoa Học (Tiểu học)". Học trình này được sử dụng ý của giáo viên, hiệu trưởng, và Cơ văn viên tại Sở Giáo Dục, và cũng được chấp thuận bởi Ban Lưu Lý Đào Dực về các học trình nghiên cứu của trường Đại học Queen’s.

Thư báo này có 2 phần. Phần 1, giải thích về mục đích và phương pháp làm việc. Phần 2 là mong muốn cả phụ huynh và học sinh đồng ý ký tên tham dự vào việc nghiên cứu này.


Sự giúp đỡ và dặn dấn là điều tôi quan trọng khi làm tài liệu này. Không ai ngoài tôi và bạn kiểm tra luan trình Tiến Sĩ của tôi có liên hệ tôi tài liệu này. Tôi sẽ không để cá nhân trong bài luận trình và sẽ giữ kín tài liệu trong tay không cho nhà. Những chi tiết ghi nhận trong m exploded toàn cũng sẽ được giữ kín trong trang mạng có mật mã, và sẽ được huy bỏ vào cuối luận văn.
Sử dụng ý của quý vị cho con em tham dự việc nghiên cứu này không có nghĩa là các em phải làm đến cuối. Đây là việc hoàn toàn tự nguyện, quý vị hay con em quý vị có thể từ chối ngưng lại vào bất cứ lúc nào trong thời gian nghiên cứu. Hơn nữa, việc tham dự hay không đều không có ảnh hưởng gì đến điểm học hay kết quả học của con em quý vị.

Chúng tôi sẽ phổ biến những tài liệu học được từ việc nghiên cứu này trong báo chuyên gia và báo cáo tại buổi họp. Các chi tiết cá nhân sẽ không được tiết lộ và sẽ được thay bằng tên khác.

Xin vui lòng cho biết quyết định tham dự vào Đơn Cho Phép, giữ lại bản sao để làm hồ sơ, và gửi vào bao thơ dẫn lại. Cũng sắm riêng tốt, cho giáo viên.

Nếu quý vị có điều gì khác muốn trong khi quyết định cho phép, xin vui lòng điện thoại cho tôi, Majid Malekan tại số (905) 593-8697 hay điệnthur: 4mm7@gl.ink.queensu.ca, hoặc liên lạc với cấp trên của tôi. Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolka tại Đại Học Queen's, Phần Khoa Giáo Dục số 533-6000 liên sổ 77410, điện thư: krugley@educ.queensu.ca.
Nếu có câu hỏi, quan tâm, hay than phiền về mặt đào tạo của chương trình nghiên cứu, xin liên lạc Khoa Trường Phân Khoa Giáo Dục, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré, số (613) 533-6210, hay với Trường Ban về mặt Luận lý đào tạo, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, điện thư: joan.stevensj@queensu.ca.

Kính thưa,

Majid Malekan
DƠN CHO PHÉP CỦA PHỤ HUYNH/NGƯỜI GIÁM HỘ

Tôi đồng ý tham dự vào chương trình nghiên cứu với: "Sự chuyển tiếp của học sinh đi đản trong môn Khoa Học (Tien Hoc)", được thực hiện qua Phần Khoa Giáo Dục của Đại Học Queen's University.

Tôi đã đọc, và giữ lại bản sao của thư báo giới thiệu về việc nghiên cứu.

Tôi đồng ý với các câu trả lời.

Tôi hiểu là, nếu yêu cầu, tôi sẽ được cho biết đầy đủ kết quả báo cáo.

Tôi hiểu là người thực hiện việc nghiên cứu sẽ cho phó biên những chỉ tiết từng được.

Tôi hiểu là việc tham dự này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện, tôi có thể từ bỏ bất cứ lúc nào mà không bị ảnh hưởng nghiêm trọng.

Tôi biết là tôi có thể liên lạc với Majid Malekan tại số (905) 593-8697 hay dien thư: 4mn7@qlink.queensu.ca, nếu có điều gì thắc mắc, hoặc liên lạc với cấp trên của ông, Dr. Eva Krugly-Smolka tại Đại Học Queen's, Phần Khoa Giáo Dục, số 533-6000 lién số 77410, dien thư: kruglye@educ.queensu.ca. Đồng thời nếu có câu hỏi, quan tâm, hay than phiền về mặt đào tạo của chương trình nghiên cứu này, tôi có thể liên lạc với Khoa Trưởng Phần Khoa Giáo Dục, Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofre, số (613) 533-6210, hay với Trưởng Ban về mặt Luân lý đào tạo, Dr. Joan Stevenson, (613) 533-6081, dien thư: joan.stevenson@queensu.ca.

TÔI ĐÃ ĐỌC, HIỆU ĐƠN CHO PHÉP, VÀ TÔI ĐỒNG Ý THAM DỰ

Xin vui lòng đánh dấu vào phần nào đồng ý tham gia:
----- Quan sát trong lớp ----- Thâu bằng ----- Phỏng vấn ----- Thâu thập những tài liệu cần học sinh

Tên học sinh: ____________________________________________

Chữ ký học sinh: ____________________________________________

Ngày ___________________________ Diên thoại: ______________________________

TÔI ĐÃ ĐỌC, HIỆU ĐƠN CHO PHÉP, VÀ TÔI ĐỒNG Ý CHƠI PHÉP CON EM TÔI
THAM DỰ CHƯƠNG TRÌNH

Chữ ký Phụ Huynh/Giám Hộ: ____________________________________________

Ngày: _____________________________ Diên thoại: ______________________________
Appendix B
Canadian Multiculturalism Act

R.S., 1985, c. 24 (4th Supp.)
[C-18.7]
An Act for the preservation and enhancement of multiculturalism in Canada
[1988, c. 31, assented to 21st July, 1988]
Preamble
WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada provides that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination and that everyone has the freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association and guarantees those rights and freedoms equally to male and female persons;
AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada recognizes the importance of preserving and enhancing the multicultural heritage of Canadians;
AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada recognizes rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada;
AND WHEREAS the Constitution of Canada and the Official Languages Act provide that English and French are the official languages of Canada and neither abrogates nor derogates from any rights or privileges acquired or enjoyed with respect to any other language;
AND WHEREAS the Citizenship Act provides that all Canadians, whether by birth or by choice, enjoy equal status, are entitled to the same rights, powers and privileges and are subject to the same obligations, duties and liabilities;
AND WHEREAS the Canadian Human Rights Act provides that every individual should have an equal opportunity with other individuals to make the life that the individual is able and wishes to have, consistent with the duties and obligations of that individual as a member of society, and, in order to secure that opportunity, establishes the Canadian Human Rights Commission to redress any proscribed discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin or colour;
AND WHEREAS Canada is a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which Convention recognizes that all human beings are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law against any discrimination and against any incitement to discrimination, and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Covenant provides that persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion or to use their own language;
AND WHEREAS the Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada;
NOW, THEREFORE, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

SHORT TITLE
This Act may be cited as the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*.

**INTERPRETATION**

**Definitions**

2. In this Act, 

"federal institution" "institutions fédérales"

"federal institution" means any of the following institutions of the Government of Canada:

(a) a department, board, commission or council, or other body or office, established to perform a governmental function by or pursuant to an Act of Parliament or by or under the authority of the Governor in Council, and

(b) a departmental corporation or Crown corporation as defined in section 2 of the *Financial Administration Act*,

but does not include

(c) any institution of the Council or government of the Northwest Territories or the Yukon Territory, or

(d) any Indian band, band council or other body established to perform a governmental function in relation to an Indian band or other group of aboriginal people;

"Minister" "ministre"

"Minister" means such member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada as is designated by the Governor in Council as the Minister for the purposes of this Act.

**MULTICULTURALISM POLICY OF CANADA**

**Multiculturalism policy**

3. (1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to

(a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;

(b) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future;

(c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation;

(d) recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society, and enhance their development;

(e) ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity;

(f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character;

(g) promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins;

(h) foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures;

(i) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada; and
(j) advance multiculturalism throughout Canada in harmony with the national commitment to the official languages of Canada.

Federal institutions

(2) It is further declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada that all federal institutions shall

(a) ensure that Canadians of all origins have an equal opportunity to obtain employment and advancement in those institutions;
(b) promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the ability of individuals and communities of all origins to contribute to the continuing evolution of Canada;
(c) promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society;
(d) collect statistical data in order to enable the development of policies, programs and practices that are sensitive and responsive to the multicultural reality of Canada;
(e) make use, as appropriate, of the language skills and cultural understanding of individuals of all origins; and
(f) generally, carry on their activities in a manner that is sensitive and responsive to the multicultural reality of Canada.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MULTICULTURALISM POLICY OF CANADA

General responsibility for coordination

4. The Minister, in consultation with other ministers of the Crown, shall encourage and promote a coordinated approach to the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada and may provide advice and assistance in the development and implementation of programs and practices in support of the policy.

Specific mandate

5. (1) The Minister shall take such measures as the Minister considers appropriate to implement the multiculturalism policy of Canada and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, may

(a) encourage and assist individuals, organizations and institutions to project the multicultural reality of Canada in their activities in Canada and abroad;
(b) undertake and assist research relating to Canadian multiculturalism and foster scholarship in the field;
(c) encourage and promote exchanges and cooperation among the diverse communities of Canada;
(d) encourage and assist the business community, labour organizations, voluntary and other private organizations, as well as public institutions, in ensuring full participation in Canadian society, including the social and economic aspects, of individuals of all origins and their communities, and in promoting respect and appreciation for the multicultural reality of Canada;
(e) encourage the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada;
(f) facilitate the acquisition, retention and use of all languages that contribute to the multicultural heritage of Canada;
(g) assist ethno-cultural minority communities to conduct activities with a view to overcoming any discriminatory barrier and, in particular, discrimination based on race or national or ethnic origin;
(h) provide support to individuals, groups or organizations for the purpose of preserving, enhancing and promoting multiculturalism in Canada; and
(i) undertake such other projects or programs in respect of multiculturalism, not by law assigned to any other federal institution, as are designed to promote the multiculturalism policy of Canada.

**Provincial agreements**

(2) The Minister may enter into an agreement or arrangement with any province respecting the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada.

**International agreements**

(3) The Minister may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, enter into an agreement or arrangement with the government of any foreign state in order to foster the multicultural character of Canada.

**Responsibilities of other Ministers**

6. (1) The ministers of the Crown, other than the Minister, shall, in the execution of their respective mandates, take such measures as they consider appropriate to implement the multiculturalism policy of Canada.

**Provincial agreements**

(2) A minister of the Crown, other than the Minister, may enter into an agreement or arrangement with any province respecting the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada.

**Canadian multiculturalism advisory committee**

7. (1) The Minister may establish an advisory committee to advise and assist the Minister on the implementation of this Act and any other matter relating to multiculturalism and, in consultation with such organizations representing multicultural interests as the Minister deems appropriate, may appoint the members and designate the chairman and other officers of the committee.

**Remuneration and expenses**

(2) Each member of the advisory committee shall be paid such remuneration for the member's services as may be fixed by the Minister and is entitled to be paid the reasonable travel and living expenses incurred by the member while absent from the member's ordinary place of residence in connection with the work of the committee.

**Annual report**

(3) The chairman of the advisory committee shall, within four months after the end of each fiscal year, submit to the Minister a report on the activities of the committee for that year and on any other matter relating to the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada that the chairman considers appropriate.

**GENERAL**

**Annual report**

8. The Minister shall cause to be laid before each House of Parliament, not later than the fifth sitting day of that House after January 31 next following the end of each fiscal year, a report on the operation of this Act for that fiscal year.

**Permanent review by a Parliamentary committee**

9. The operation of this Act and any report made pursuant to section 8 shall be reviewed on a permanent basis by such committee of the House, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament as may be designated or established for the purpose.
AMENDMENT
— 1993, c. 28, s. 78 (Sch. III, s. 16):
16. Paragraph (c) of the definition "federal institution" in section 2 is repealed and the following substituted therefor:
(c) any institution of the Council or government of the Northwest Territories or the Yukon Territory or of the Legislative Assembly for, or the government of, Nunavut, or

Appendix C
Sample Interview Questions for Students and Teachers

Sample Interview Questions for Students

Questions that are followed after each question will be used for probing.

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. Tell me about your coming to Canada.

3. Tell me about learning science at home.

4. Tell me about learning science here.

5. I remember that when the teacher was explaining X, you said […]. Can you tell me more about this?

6. The other day the teacher said X, what do you think s/he meant by this?

7. Do you remember that Mary said/did […]? What do you think she meant? What would you say/do if you were her?

8. I notice that you were doing X. Can you tell me more about it?

9. How do you like your science classes? Do you like them more or less than other subjects (say mathematics)? Why?

10. What did you like most in that lesson? What didn’t you like in that lesson?

11. Let’s say, your teacher back home wanted to teach X as you had it yesterday. How different do think it would be? Which one helped you learn better? Why?

12. What differences do you see between learning science here and at home? What similarities?
Sample Interview Questions for Teachers

1. I noticed that while teaching X you used that example/activity, why did you choose that specific one?

2. I have noticed that Lina has been so quiet all these days. Do you know any specific reason for this?

3. The other day Sam was talking about X and everybody laughed. I did not get it. What did he mean?

4. It seems that you have your own jargon in the class. What do words A, B, and C mean?

5. I noticed that students’ participation/questions always happen like X. Is there a rule for that?

6. What are your experiences with having students from different cultures in your classroom?
## Appendix D
### The Grade 3-4 Timetable

**TIME TABLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PER</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9:00 - 9:45</td>
<td>Flag Salute / Daily Routine</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9:45 - 10:30</td>
<td>10 am 10 am Spelling</td>
<td>10 am Grammar / Science</td>
<td>10 am Personal Planner</td>
<td>Vocabulary / Dictionary Skills</td>
<td>10 am Spelling Test Handwriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10:30 - 10:50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10:50 - 11:35</td>
<td>Silent Reading / Reading Group</td>
<td>Done with Mrs. Young / Prep</td>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>Silent Reading / Library Prep</td>
<td>Writing / Group Prep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11:35 - 12:05</td>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>Recorders</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Social Studies / Science</td>
<td>Journal Writing / Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>12:05 - 12:55</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1:00 - 1:45</td>
<td>Reading Groups</td>
<td>Reading Groups</td>
<td>Reading Activity</td>
<td>Reading Groups</td>
<td>Reading Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1:45 - 2:30</td>
<td>Social Studies / Science</td>
<td>Social Studies / Science</td>
<td>Clear Up</td>
<td>Social Studies / Science</td>
<td>Social Studies / Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2:30 - 3:30</td>
<td>Clean Up / Gym</td>
<td>Gym</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recess**

8:55 a.m. Warning Bell
9:00 a.m. Instruction begins
Appendix E

Christmas Plays

Christmas around the World: A Christmas Play25

Child 1 (looking sad), "Mom, we can't have Christmas this year"

Mom (looking puzzled), "Why not dear?"

Child 2, "Because it makes me sad that we get to have Christmas and people in Hawaii don't"

Mom (suppressing a giggle), "Um, why wouldn't people in Hawaii get to have Christmas?"

Both children together (emphatically), "Because they don't have any snow!"

Mom, "You don't need snow to have Christmas!"

Child 2, "oh... well I guess that's ok then..."

Mom, "so we can have Christmas now?"

Two children look at each other and shake their heads slowly

Child 1, "No, I still don't think it's fair..."

Mom, "How come?

Child 1, "...because people in Australia can't have Christmas"

Mom (startled), "Whatever made you think that!"

Child 1, "Well... it's really hot..."

Child 2, "Yeah! 'cause it's summer there right now"

Child 1, "And Santa wears those fur lined boots and all..."

Child 1, "And the reindeer are used to the North Pole..."

Child 2, "It's really cold there you know! The reindeer couldn't stand the heat!"

25 25 This is the script played by students at the school and it has some missing lines from the original script written by Leanne Guenther which can be found at http://www.dltk-holidays.com/xmas/christmas_play.htm
Both children, "You can't have Christmas without Reindeer!"

Mom, "You don't need Reindeer to have Christmas!"

Both children (look at each other with a really happy expression), "Wow!!!"

Child 1, "So people don't need snow, reindeer to celebrate Christmas?"

Mom, "Nope!"

Child 2, "What do they need?"

Mom, "Hmmm, I guess that's a little bit different for every person. But I think people likely just need a bit of love, a bit of faith and a bit of happiness."
Six White Boomers
In Australia, Christmas comes in the middle of a very hot summer. So when Santa Claus delivers his presents, he's not taken around by reindeer because they can't stand the terrible heat. He's taken around by six big, white, old man kangaroos called the six white boomers.

Early on one Christmas Day, a Joey Kangaroo,
Was far from home and lost in a great big zoo.
Mummy, where's my mummy, they've taken her a-way,
We'll help you find your mummy son, hop on the sleigh.

[Verse:]
Up beside the bag of toys, little Joey hopped
But they hadn't gone far when Santa stopped
Un-harnessed all the reindeer and Joey wondered why
Then he heard a far off booming in the sky

[Chorus:]
Six white boomers, snow white boomers,
Racing Santa Claus through the blazing sun,
Six white boomers, snow white boomers,
On his Australian run.

Pretty soon old Santa began to feel the heat,
Took his fur-lined boots off to cool his feet,
Into one popped Joey, feeling quite OK,
While those old man kangaroos kept pulling on the sleigh.

Joey said to Santa, Santa, what about the toys?
Aren't you giving some to these girls and boys?
They've all got their presents, son, we were here last night,
This trip is an extra trip, Joey's special flight.

[Chorus:]
Six white boomers, snow white boomers,
Racing Santa Claus through the blazing sun,
Six white boomers, snow white boomers,
On his Australian run.

Soon the sleigh was flashing past, right over Marble Bar,
‘Slow down there’, cried Santa, ‘it can't be far,
Come up on my lap son, and have a look around’
‘There she is, that's mummy, bounding up and down.’

[Chorus:]
Six white boomers, snow white boomers,
Racing Santa Claus through the blazing sun,
Six white boomers, snow white boomers,
On his Australian run.

Well that's the bestest Christmas treat that Joey ever had,
Cuddled up in mother's pouch all snug and glad.
The last they saw was Santa headed northward from the sun,
The only year the boomers worked a double run.
Appendix F

Students’ Profile in Mrs. Kate’s View

In order to see how Mrs. Kate would characterize her students, I asked her to tell me what she thought about some students in the class. She told me “I really think, one key thing in elementary anyways is to get to know your kids, to know their personalities, their families, their lifestyle, their emotion, what gets them ticking and what doesn't. And so it takes time.” This appendix presents a few examples of what she had to say about some of her students for whom I had permission from parents for interviewing.

Dany: He has two older sisters who are honours and straight-A students. And Dany is the youngest son and is never good enough unless it's straight A's. His dad said that at the parent-teacher's conference that he was upset, he took home a math test and he only got a B on it. So, Dany is always trying to achieve better and he's also a bit of a leader this year. Last year he was quieter, and plus he was in a grade 3/4 split. This year he is in Grade 4 in a 3/4 split so he works on trying to manage the class as you may have noticed.

Laura: Her dad is not happy with her. He said that she is very defiant and she is very loud, and very rebellious at home; which I don't see at all and I told her dad that. She is just like perfect. She is great with her work. She is like top student in Grade 3. She does her activities very well and everything she does. She is reading at grade beyond and she is understanding everything and she reads. So, she just seems like happy go lucky fun kind of all around child. She is very comfortable with life. And her aunt is a teacher, whom I worked with, briefly. And her mom, it's interesting, I've never met her mom. Her dad always comes by. And I saw her mom sitting at the audience yesterday at the Christmas concert, but she has never come by to say hello or anything and I don't really know what's up with that. She didn't come to parent-teacher's conference, never see her here. […]She's just a really all-round, spunky kind of fun girl.

Simon: He has an older brother and he was in my class two years in a row. Maybe I talked about him but I don’t remember, but anyway. Last year his skills, his reading testing came out at the beginning at Grade 2 level and Grade 1 and he was in grade 3. And he had like really low vocabulary. Barely any decoding skills and this year he can read and he can understand what he is reading and almost like a breakthrough and I would say about all the kids I worked with, this year he has improved the most that I have seen. I am going from the last year because I have had him for two years. He has lots of socialization. […]
But, last year his brother had a break down. But it's not because his dad has just committed suicide, it was because—I think, it's just very deep and I see that with Simon too. He is very expressionless. He is just something—he's got the glossy look. Even during the Christmas concert, but not just only Christmas Concert but all the time he does not seem happy, something is missing. I thought that I find for that family in particular there is something culturally lacking, because he tells me he can't communicate with his grandma, because his grandma speaks only Cantonese, doesn't speak any English. Mom speaks broken English and you can communicate with her. But he can't speak Chinese and his mom before, when he was little, couldn't speak English. So for many years, they didn't really communicate supposedly, and this is what I hear through the counsellor, through cultural facilitators.

Nelson is his brother. And so anyways, Nelson is the boy you saw push down, right? So he, his father committed suicide probably four years ago. Yeah. And the family did not find out till a police officer came to their door to tell them their father was dead. And then nobody wanted to go...um...because, I just don't know this for sure, but I heard through the counsellor, that culturally if someone commits suicide in an Asian family, that family is seen as evil, so nobody went. No relative wanted to have anything to do with the mom, so it's almost like she is abandoned by everyone. So this poor mom works 14 hours a day in a factory somewhere, and they are with their grandma all the time with which they don't communicate with, there is no connection there, so the kids are never home or they are on the computer 24 hours. So supposedly Simon is on the computer 12 hours a day and Nelson is never home, he's at a friend’s home. And then last year, he didn't go home for 24 hours and then we had the principal stayed here and phoned every family in school, with the ones she could communicate with and then police and everyone was involved. And then that morning he came home at 8:30 to pick up his school bag, and that's when mom realized he was fine. So they were here and they were crying. It was just a...a huge, huge thing. So Simon has witnessed all this, and I know that's affecting him. And we've tried to get extra counselling for him, we've tried to get help in his, or his mom's, first language. We see that family as a prime gang target. They are gonna join a gang. We think that they are prime children to find belonging somewhere. So, one teacher thinks they are prone for being brought into a gang of some sort in future because they don't have a connection at home with their first culture, they don't really have a connection with anything, they’re still searching for a connection.

Angelica: I haven't really figured her out yet. It is her first year here with me-------. She is quite quiet and her mom was interesting to observe at parent-teacher conference. She kept on telling her that she could do better and she kept on poking her and she kept on saying like "Right, Angelica, right Angelica" and Angelica didn't really want to talk to her mom. And I don't know. It was just funny. I mean skill wise she is average, she just has a few spelling issues, she is making good progress with her writing. She is using different words to start her sentences. Her math is pretty average. She is just kind of an average girl, I guess.
But she likes the social part of school, I know there is certain friends she likes to hang out with all the time and stuff.

Andrew: He is a student which I haven't totally figured out yet. So far what I see from him is that he is a little bit reserved, a little bit shy, very respectful. From what I heard from last year’s teacher is that he didn't have any comprehension when he read something, he was very good at parroting, is what she said, that's the word she used. So he could decode, he could repeat, but when you asked him what was his thinking, what do you understand, he didn't have that comprehension piece. He was good at like copying and repeating but in terms of thinking skills is something we needed to work on. So this is one of my goals for him is to work on his thinking skills. Because I want to know his opinions. I want to know his comprehension, his understanding of things. And from my discussions with his reading teacher, it's getting better and from what I've seen in class. [...] So for me this like an entry level way of teaching them that and Andrew in the beginning couldn't do that. He couldn't read the words, decode some of the words, and then he could not understand what the words were telling him, that he actually had to do something from those directions. So in the beginning it was difficult for him, and then as we practiced, because we do it every week, now he is almost independent with it. So that tells me his comprehension is getting better with simple directions written in English. So that's what I see of him. In math he is very strong, he's capable of doing grade 4 work...but in terms of his emotional and personality, I, because I find him a bit stand-offish, I haven't really figured him out emotionally and socially.

Anita: she is also from a family where mom and dad are not living together anymore, and so I know this is difficult for her because she told me sometimes dad talks bad about mom, and sometimes grandma talks bad about mom, so she is living with that. She is also living with high expectations; she’s told me sometimes her mom takes her work at home and gets her to do it almost 100% of the time if it’s not good enough. So I know that when I get something from home, it is something mom has approved and it is perfect and a lot of times she will do it, and redo it and redo it. At school she is a very good student, she is high with her, you know, math especially and then her language has come a long way, she is starting to use more variety in her words; reads and comprehends almost everything at grade level I would say. And she has had experiences outside of school, where she has traveled and she gets to go on school trips and she belongs to a figure skating club and she does figure skating for a long time now. And she takes piano and she goes for swimming. And, yes so I think she is a student who has really been trying to achieve to a standard that mom sets and she works hard at that.

Bonnie: I haven't figured her out yet really. She just seems to me as kind of an easy going and trying to be a happy child, appears to be. I know she has a little sibling, a younger sibling and she is very strong academically. She is capable of
all her grade 3 work, reading, writing and math. She is just starting to open up a bit with me and coming and talking, and even when I go over and ask her questions she'll look me in the eye and she will talk to me about questions that she has. But it doesn't go beyond school. Like some kids will share about their home life and what they do outside of the school but she really hasn't done that with me yet. And I, in turn, need to reach out to her more and ask her questions about her more.

David: David's family interview was interesting because I sense that his dad has really high standards for him and his dad asked me why I don't correct his spelling in his books all the time because he noticed some spelling errors in some work that went home, so we had a conversation about spelling and you know I don't believe that I need to correct every single spelling error because I don't think that makes you a better speller. But I think that there is also cultural issues I think that he views, and he told me, he views schools in Canada as little bit Mickey mouse and that schools back home are much more strict and everything has to be perfect and kids have more respect for teachers in China because teachers expect more and I think by him saying expect more, you know their work has to be perfect and neat, his dad wants to see his work neater and his dad wants to see his spelling all perfect. And he asked me if we do grammar because he doesn't think his son knows anything about grammar because he didn't know the word grammar. So I get a sense that there is real tradition there in terms of old school and he wants to see more of that for his son.

He is a hard worker and he, his skill level is very high, I mean he came to grade 3, in the beginning of grade 3 he knew how to cursive write everything, like you know and his reading comprehension is probably, you know, just at grade. […] He is not like a serious kind of, like I see Andrew as a more serious and more traditional, and so when I met David's dad, I sensed this real kind of not, his son's not living up to an expectation of seriousness and that school should be…but I think there also must be balance.

Lena: I had her in my class for two years, this year and last year, and so we went through this issue a lot last year, and it is something that was noted in her report card right from kindergarten, she had a focus problem. So I gave her parents, Dr. Mel Levine’s book called A Mind at A Time, and talks about, one of the chapters talks about attention control systems. So I gave it to her parents and her dad read it and said he was just like that too and his mom told him that his head was in the cloud all the time and that's how he felt about his daughter, and he said that in front of his daughter. So one of the things we talked about is that how, number one, she needed to be aware that she does go off focus, so she wasn't aware of that really, and so then A was awareness and B was how she self-control that. So, then every time she found herself getting herself back to focus without a reminder from a friend or a teacher or anything, she just found herself going back to her work, she would just give herself a check on her hand, and at the end of the day if she had 1 or more checkmarks her parents would give her a reward. So this year she is actually able to complete her work and do homework and focus on
completion, because I said to her parents that for her completion is important because everything was incomplete. Oh, and then what I would do is I would scale down her work, so instead of going 10 math questions she would do 4 or 5, enough to show that she understood the basic concept, and it didn't matter if she did 50 of the same kind of questions, just as long as she understood the concept. Same with spelling, and anything that was kind of like a drill and kill activity, like the spelling activities and like the math activities. But anything that was with like art or drawing or reading, that's her, like her dad said that's her passion. He didn't want to step on that creativity and imaginative type of child that she is.

Jena: She has an older sister, Catherine who was in my class last year. And Jena loves her sister that the first thing she wrote about her sister at the first time and she loves her older sister. She has perfect printing. She is an artist. She reverses all her letters. When she spells, she reverses letters. For example, she has spells 'house'. It will be h, u, o, e, s. She does lots of those reverses. So, we are working on those reversals. We work all those combination and what makes sense. And then I talk about some basic rules with her. But, she is---you know, she is reading in grade level and her grammar, verb, and tenses are getting better. She is ESL and she is someone who I can count on to interpret for me when her grandma comes in and she can’t speak to me like this morning. So Jena is someone who is always up for that.
Appendix G
A Sample of Students’ Works

MY FAV TV. SHOW

Today I’m going to talk about my favourite TV show. It is called "Hannah Montana." I’m going to tell you how it starts. Her name is Riley, but she is also a pop star.

She tells her friend that she’s a pop star. But her other friend doesn’t know she’s Hannah Montana.

That’s all I’m going to talk about. Do you have a favourite TV show?
How Clouds Form

1. Clouds are made of tiny drops of water and specks of dust. Some clouds are made of tiny bits of ice. These drops or bits are very tiny! More than 100 million could fit in a teaspoon!

2. The sun shines on the oceans, rivers and lakes. When the water is warmed, it is changed to a gas called water vapor. We say, “It evaporated.”

3. Warm air always rises, so this vapor goes up. The upper air is cooler. Now the water vapor bumps into specks of dust that are cold.

4. It becomes liquid again. We say, “It condenses.” Billions of these drops come together to form a cloud.

Write the answers to the questions.

1. What are clouds made of? **Clouds are made of tiny drops of water and specks of dust.**

2. What sentence shows you how tiny they are? **More than 100 million could fit in a teaspoon.**

3. When liquid water became vapor, it **evaporates.**

4. Where does warm air always go? **Warm air always goes up.**
Social Studies Groups
Friday, October 26/07

I went to the group that learned about media. I liked it because I learned something like new words I did not know before. I also learned about how to take pictures. They taught us how to turn on the cameras and delete the pictures. We went to take pictures to? I took four pictures. I was Denise's partner. We had to write about why we took this picture. It was fun.
I also learned what media means. Media means pictures, computers, TV, newspaper, and books.

Any other words? (3/10)
Fill-in-story: A Scary Halloween

[RECTIONS: Fill in the blanks below with your own words and phrases. Then complete the story.]

It was a dark and scary Halloween night. Patrick and his best friend, Zach, were out trick-or-treating. Patrick was wearing a skeleton costume. Zach was dressed as a zombie. They had already gone to ten houses. They had collected lots of candy for their holloween bags. They came to the scary house at the ghost end of Adams Street.

“I don’t want to go to that spooky house,” said Zach. “It’s too freaky.” “C’mon,” insisted Patrick. “Don’t be such a scaredy cat!” Patrick walked up the stairs. Zach followed behind. They came to the big door. It was red and freaky. On the door was hanging a doorbell. Above the doorbell was a sign that read, “Do not enter.”

“Let’s go,” said Zach in a small voice. But Patrick rang the loud bell. A screech sound filled the air.

“Let’s go,” begged Zach. “This place is too cold.” At that moment, the door opened with a small sound. A freaky old woman appeared. Her hair was red and yellow. Her eyes were like green. Her nose was shaped like a circle. She was wearing a long hat. On her head was a stick. “What do you want?” she asked in a loud voice.

Zach was too shy to talk. Patrick managed to say, “I’m trick or treating!” The woman’s small eyes were like creepy rats. “I’ll give you nice.”

As a fine candy bar, she said in a voice like a nice sound. She held out one of her creepy hands. In it was chocolate. (In the blanks below, finish the story in your own words. Use the back of this paper if you need more room.)
Appendix H

Contrasting Maple Wood School with Society at Large

During this research project, I was not solely engaged with the “data” from Maple Wood School. Rather, I was interacting with a multitudes of events happening around me which definitely have in/formed my feeling and perceptions about integration or assimilation processes. Parts of the influences of events in Canadian society at large have been reflected in the ways I have chosen to tell the story of the grade 3-4 class and to analyze it. In this appendix, I would like to provide a few explicit examples of these incidents through pictures and pieces of news. While these “factual” evidences could qualify as “data”, I would rather frame them as messages coming from the society.

Message 1. The following is part of an article from *Globe & Mail* on April 3, 2008:

Gathered around a kitchen stove at the Dasmesh Punjabi School in Abbotsford, B.C., Gurbir Brar, 14, and his friends are arguing about whether the onions for their vegetarian lasagna are properly cooked. The pasta is boiling away on a second burner.

Gurbir said he enjoys cooking just as much he loves to mimic his favourite wrestling stars. The same goes for the other boys, he said, who make up about half of the home-economics class.

"It's fun. You get to try new things," the Grade 9 student said.

That's what gets Sulochana Chand, principal of the 500-student Sikh independent school, to smile. "If we were in India, boys would be running away from the kitchen. Here, New census figures released Wednesday by Statistics Canada show that mixed unions are forming at unprecedented rates.

The scene at the Abbotsford school is being played out across urban Canada, as a clearer image of Canada's ever-diverse face emerged with newly released census data. [...] The numbers tell a new, dual-identity story of Canada, one that shows visible minorities integrating more easily into the mainstream while also maintaining strong ties to their own culture and language.

Visible-minority parents are especially eager to emphasize cultural tradition to their children, who make up a much larger swath of the overall population. [...]
"We're living in a very diverse city, a very cosmopolitan and multicultural city, where we embrace our multiculturalism," said Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell. […]

Nav Bhatia, a prominent Sikh businessman in Mississauga, hopes to see more of the same across the country. […]

But in a delicate counterbalance to that very diversity, the census data also revealed a decrease in the number of individuals who self-identified as "Canadian."

An explanation as to why is a little more nuanced than simply attributing the downward trend to segregated communities or a lack of patriotism, said an analyst at Statistics Canada.

I perceive this as a typical understanding of Canadian multiculturalism as promoted by mainstream media.

**Message 2.** *Canadian Newcomer Magazine* is a monthly magazine funded and distributed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. An analysis of the underpinning values and beliefs in this magazine, which I assume to be that of (or supported and promoted by) the Government of Canada, is beyond the limits of this space. The following picture is taken from the cover of the issue 22 of *Canadian Newcomer Magazine*26 (July-August 2008).

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This picture, instantly reminded me of Porter’s (1967) comment, previously quoted in Chapter 4, that “It would seem that in Canada, as in the United States, public education was to be the main road to assimilation” (p. 150). He quotes W. L. Morton who wrote in 1957 “it was taken for granted that they would be and should be assimilated.” (p. 152).

**Message 3.** The following advertisement was on billboards in Toronto in summer 2008 by a project called (Hire an Immigrant) initiated by Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC). It shows the license of a cab driver with a PhD degree and the text in the add reads “if Canada is the land of opportunity, why is a professor driving a cab?”
Figure 25. A PhD Cab Driver.

By reading the information on the Website\textsuperscript{27} of this project about employment barriers for immigrants, one could see how closely immigrant children’s acculturation is tied with the social and economic integration of their parents.

\textsuperscript{27} \url{http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/index.php}
**Message 4.** On October 29, 2008, I read the following piece of news on the CBC Website:\(^{28}\):

Quebec has introduced a mandatory declaration for immigrants requiring them to sign their commitment to respect the province's common values. The immigrant declaration follows on recommendations issued by the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, a provincial public inquiry on the issue of so-called reasonable accommodation of cultural and religious beliefs. The Bouchard-Taylor report concluded that more needed to be done to help integrate newcomers to Quebec.

The Liberal government has already committed to improving available means to help immigrants find work and learn to speak French. The new declaration will ask immigrants if they agree with Quebec's common values, including French as an official language, gender equality and the separation of church and state.

Signing the declaration is absolutely necessary for people interested in resettling in Quebec, said Immigration Minister Yolande James. "If the person does not want to sign, and does not want to commit to respecting those values, they will not be able to come to Quebec," she said Wednesday. "That is plain and simple."

The Liberal government has been criticized by opposition parties for not doing enough to protect the French language in Quebec, especially in Montreal.

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**Message 5.** On January 29, 2009 it was on the news that the principal of a small elementary school in New Brunswick to end the daily ritual of singing O Canada because some parents had complained about it. Two days later, the decision was reversed and the following is an account of what happened from the CBC Website:\(^{29}\)

New Brunswick Education Minister Kelly Lamrock says departmental policy clearly calls for the playing of the national anthem in schools, but he is open to changes that would erase any confusion. Lamrock's comments come after Zoë Watson, the superintendent of School District 6, reinstated the daily anthem following the Belleisle Elementary School principal's decision to relegate O Canada to monthly ceremonies. Lamrock said he clearly communicated to all districts last Friday that the anthem should be played. "If people need the clarity of a better policy than previous governments have left, I'd certainly be willing to do that," he said.

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Erik Millett, the school's principal, said he made the decision to cancel the playing of the anthem about a year ago with the blessing of parents who didn't want their children taking part, for reasons he said he couldn't discuss because of privacy issues.

He said the change was part of a package of reforms designed to make the school feel more inclusive and allow the school to run more smoothly.

The anthem fight rose to national prominence as New Brunswick Conservative MPs blasted Millett's decision in the House of Commons as "political correctness run wild."

The province's education minister said he disagreed with the argument that the anthem isn't inclusive and should be avoided in public schools, similar to a daily prayer.

"In every way I do not see an equivalency between the anthem and say a prayer issue, a prayer is denominational," Lamrock said. "But a country belongs to everybody. … I think it is also possible for somebody to say, 'Look, I choose to absent myself.'"

Susan Boyd, the mother of a student at Belleisle Elementary School who led the fight against Millett's O Canada ban, said she was pleased to hear that the anthem will return to the classroom. Nevertheless, Boyd said she would continue her lobbying on the issue.

"Our job isn't finished yet. We have to have it written in stone so this decision cannot be overturned," Boyd said.

"Otherwise, it could be overturned and we could be facing the same dilemma maybe a few months from now."

The district superintendent said she directed the principal to bring back O Canada after receiving more than 100 emails a day criticizing the principal's decision to stop playing the anthem.

She told the principal the national anthem must be reinstated today or the school district would take action.

"I certainly provided the principal an opportunity to voluntarily reverse the decision or to come to some type of compromise but in the end the decision was mine," Watson said.

Watson said as a general rule, district policy allows for schools to decide whether to start the day by singing the anthem.

I do not have any comment to add to this story.