

**STORIED VOICES:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING**

by

Ada Glustein
B. Ed. University of British Columbia, 1982

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APPROVAL

NAME Ada Glustein
DEGREE Master of Arts
TITLE **Storyed Voices: A Phenomenological Study of Identity and Belonging**

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Chair Dr. Ann Chinnery

Celeste Snowber, Associate Professor
Senior Supervisor

Meguido Zola, Associate Professor
Member

Stephen Smith, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education,
SFU
Examiner

Date November 21, 2006



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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the themes of identity and belonging through an examination of personal stories. From childhood in a Jewish immigrant family to professional life teaching in culturally diverse inner city classrooms, I focus on the living nature of my memories and how my research is affected by the experiences of telling and writing my stories.

I make connections to the oral tradition of my home culture, to research in the fields of narrative inquiry and phenomenology, and to socio-cultural theory.

The sense of “difference” I experienced as a child serves as a “drop sheet” to the dispositions I have developed as a teacher, creating a research method that is messy, colourful, complex and uncertain.

I invite the reader to remember who s/he is, to tell his/her own stories, and through the shifting experiences of construction and reflection, to hear the voices which reveal both personal and pedagogical meaning.

Keywords: diversity; identity; narrative inquiry; phenomenology; voice

DEDICATION

**This thesis
is dedicated
to the loving memory of**

Rebecca (Rifka) Perlman z”l

(1910 – 1999)

and

Israel Glustein z”l

(1906 – 1988)

***My parents,
the first voices***

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Thank you to the many children who have taught me so much over the course of my teaching career. It is in those places where your stories have intersected with mine that I have been challenged to interrogate the multi-meanings of teaching and learning, the many ways of being and belonging, and our co-creation of an inclusive environment for learning together.

To my own children, Heather and Jamie, you have both been such a strong source of encouragement and inspiration in my going back to school. You were there to share with me the granting of my Bachelor's degree, and now, at this stage of my life, you are here as I delve deeply into the experiences which have shaped my life as a teacher. You have both played such a huge part in this lifetime of learning.

To my grandchildren, Lauren and Owen, come in, and join this circle of learning. Hold hands with me and with all who have listened and told stories here before. Keep the circle open for those who are yet to come.

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INTRODUCTORY VOICES

Stories move in circles, they don't move in straight lines.

So it helps if you listen in circles
because there are stories inside stories
and stories between stories,
and finding your way through them
is as easy and as hard
as finding your way home.

And part of the finding is the getting lost,
because when you're lost,
you have to look around and listen.

From a Traveling Jewish Theatre,
Coming from a Great Distance,
In Zeitlin (1997, p. 85)

My glorious year in Kindergarten. The year I witness Ronny Smythe breaking Billy Johnson's arm on the way to school. The year I am sent to the cloakroom for running to the door and back to my seat while Miss Swanson is out of the room. The year I am picked to play the drums in the Kindergarten rhythm band. And the year that I find out I am different.

It is late fall, the time when each class begins its preparations for the school's December concert. Our rhythm band rehearses diligently. Each day, as Miss Swanson's piano peals out the traditional songs of the Season's joy, our little bells jingle, our triangles chime, and little drummer girl -- that's me-- beats out the rhythm to keep us all in synch.

We rehearse a wonderful drama as well, everyone taking turns playing all the parts – a mother, a father, a new baby, some selfish innkeepers, a loud cow and a choir of angels. In my Kindergarten world I feel so joyful and so lucky, having opportunities galore for acting, making music, singing – I love to perform.

The night of the concert. We are on stage, excited, beaming, waiting for Miss Swanson's cue. The auditorium is filled with proud parents, their faces lit up in the glow of their children's light. Our band is on first, managing the dual feat of singing while steadily keeping the beat with instruments. After a few rousing choruses, the curtain drops and rises again on the serenity of the manger scene. Miss Swanson has assigned the roles for tonight's performance. Drummer girl, the luckiest of the lucky, gets to be the mother. She walks to centre stage and picks up the baby doll in her arms. As she rocks that baby, she sings her first and last solo of "Silent Night."

As the crowd of parents roars, so does my father; they, in tumultuous applause; he, in a red-faced fury. Why, he wants to know, is his Jewish daughter chosen to be Mary in the Nativity scene? He drags me home that night. I am not sure of my crime but I know that it is something terrible. He gives the school a real "earful" the next day. I understand that my playing Mary,

something that has been such a great honour to me, is something insulting to my parents.

The word about me gets out quickly. Everyone knows I am Jewish.

All of my life, I have told stories. I come from a family and a cultural tradition that tells stories. We love to laugh at ourselves and we love to shed tears together. We pass on our history and we pass on our values through our stories. I have never been conscious about storytelling; it has seemed a natural way for me to be in the world.

When you ask me about myself, my background, or my teaching experience, it is likely that I'll tell you a story. I am not special in that regard. In fact, it seems a universally human phenomenon to make meaning of our lives by sifting back and forth through memories, reliving our experiences, even "constructing" ourselves in the telling. Barbara Myerhoff (1978) characterizes our species as "Homo narrans, humankind as story-teller" (p. 272). In a world that is ever-changing, a world that seeks and takes on new technologies at a faster and faster pace, Myerhoff sees storytelling as one "human constant" (ibid.). When we listen attentively or read accounts of others' lives, we make connections to those stories through their very humanity. The lived experience of one human storyteller touches and talks to the lived experience of others.

My sisters and I forever tell stories when we get together. We reminisce about our childhoods, recall incidents experienced together and with our parents. We laugh and cry, and, of course, we always correct each others' versions of the

stories! We are so like our parents. I am filled with memories of my father and his brothers, sitting together over their glasses of tea in our dining room, or walking through the Gatineau woods, telling stories of their own father and how they feared him or how he couldn't speak or understand the nuances of English when they first came from "the old country." They, too, laughed with each other until the tears poured down their faces. Even my mother told stories. She used to sit up very late at night when my aunt, her sister, came to visit, and in hushed tones, stories of their husbands and their brothers joined them forever in their world of shared secrets.

Throughout my long career as a public school teacher, my way to regale my colleagues at recess was to tell hilarious or sad tales about my students. I told those stories at home and to my friends. Everyone said I should write a book. When I came to work with pre-service teachers at Simon Fraser University, one of their topics for inquiry and discussion was the broad diversity of children they would be teaching in the schools. To build on their understanding of the experience of "difference," a panel discussion was set up during a weekend conference. I was asked to share some stories of feeling different as a child. It struck me at the time that my being asked to speak was an indication that I was still seen as different, but perhaps it was I who had identified myself that way. I had already shared many stories of my childhood and my teaching experiences with my colleagues. Up to that point I had not consciously extracted and articulated the specific themes that my stories held. Like I was as a child in Kindergarten, I just liked performing; telling stories, for me, was an easy

avenue. That my difference was of interest and seen as useful in educating others was a shock to me.

As I consciously began to collect stories from memory which purposely addressed the theme of diversity for the conference, I realized for the first time that these stories held strong meanings, meanings that might connect to others beyond the surface level of my off-the-cuff tellings. The response of the student teachers was overwhelming for me. The conversations triggered made me realize that such personal stories not only could make a point of human connection but could also encourage dialogue, discussion, and a mutual interrogation of each others' experiences. The backgrounds of the student teachers were as diverse as those of the panel members. There was so much to learn from their tellings of who they were and their own experiences of difference. How was it that this one was able to grow past the racist comments that plagued her childhood? How was it that that one still worried about being accepted into any new group of people? Any one of the students in the audience could have been a speaker on the panel, I thought. I made a mental note of my need to invite and to include the student teachers' stories in my future work with them.

Following the conference, I experimented with telling teaching stories and inviting student stories when working with my own group of student teachers. Very often my own stories went way back to my first experiences as a teacher. Most of the stories involved children in my Kindergarten classes. And most were stories situated in large inner city schools. As I focused on the particular children whose faces came to mind, I began to see repeating and overlapping themes

evoked by those stories. My stories centred on children who were identified as different, by themselves or others, children who lived in the margins, children who wanted desperately to belong and whom I so strongly wished to include. Some, like me, were culturally different, though by all outward appearances seemed to fit in. Others were easily read as different, coming from visible minority groups, or acting out at school, or even being the only child in class having to wear glasses. Some had been identified as “slow learners,” officially or not, and came to my classroom already feeling marginalized for their “deficits” in ability. And some had home lives, parents, previously-held expectations, or assumptions which interfered or were at odds with what were seen as currently appropriate practices of “doing school.”

I told stories about children considered to have *poor* language skills just because they lived in the inner city, but whom I found to have *different* rather than *deficient* language skills. I told stories of refugee children who burst into tears when I innocently showed a picture of a helicopter during my unit on air transportation. My stories were of children who took a long time to find a place of comfort in the classroom and of children who, in my absence, “jumped” the substitute teacher, broke into the school fridge, and stole the supply of milk.

I was encouraged to write the stories, and in so doing, I began a reflective journey, a study that travels back and forth in time and place. The journey itself is a story, but not one that takes a linear shape. I circle around and inside my own childhood, growing up in an immigrant Jewish family, then spring to the present years of working with student teachers at the university. My present

work then releases a flood of classroom teaching memories, and I am transported to my time with those youngsters who left their indelible imprint on me so many years ago. As I live in their stories, I begin to relive my own classroom experiences as a child, and those memories drift again into the stories and voices of home. The years, the ages and the times follow each other, yet not in an order which would be recognized as chronological or sequential. My memories become experienced time-travellers. Past, present and future overlap. Boundaries blur.

Kahlil Gibran (1969) speaks of linear "Time" in *The Prophet*:

You would measure time the measureless and the immeasurable.
You would adjust your conduct and even direct the course of your spirit according to hours and seasons.
Of time you would make a stream upon whose bank you would sit and watch its flowing.

Yet the timeless in you is aware of life's timelessness,
And knows that yesterday is but today's memory
and tomorrow is today's dream.
And that that which sings and contemplates in you is still dwelling within the bounds of that first moment which scattered the stars into space...

But if in your thought you must measure time into seasons,
let each season encircle all the other seasons
And let today embrace the past with remembrance
and the future with longing.

(p. 62 -63)

My stories *sing* and *contemplate* within me. My thesis is the contemplative song I share with you. Coming to it begins with storying my own childhood experiences and storying my experiences with children I have taught. In entering the Master's program at SFU, shortly after beginning my work with student teachers, I found myself drawn to the course work in the Diversity and Inclusion cohort. My readings and class work involved both broad and focused work on diverse philosophies of education, examining current educational practices in light of what has mattered in different time periods and from different perspectives. I examined socio-cultural, multicultural and anti-racist perspectives on culture and identity as related to school, coming to understand power relations as a strong determinant of who belongs and who doesn't. Studies on embodied ways of being and learning gave me new insights into the bodily performance of our daily lived experiences, of our identities, and of our storied lives.

The academic research and classroom activities in each course provoked in me an ongoing inner dialogue. I had to carefully examine my own beliefs and to contest many of my previously-held notions. In discussion and argument with others, I learned to substantiate my views and my voice while still hearing and building on the voices of others. Such learning created, for me, inspired moments of deep transformation. In each course, I found that the readings illuminated the storied voices of my own lived experience, and, at the same time, the storied voices illuminated my readings. I began to see storying as an interactive method of finding personal voice, inviting student voice, and creating opportunities for deeper human understanding among our many differences.

The writing of my stories has directed the twists and turns of my reflective path. Though I have worked at the computer for just the past few years, I have conducted my research, in a real sense, over the entire span of my lifetime. It is through storying that I have arrived at the themes I explore. By writing the stories in the present tense, I consciously re-place myself into the often paradoxical situations which shaped my life and which gave me, particularly as a child, a cacophonous sense of identity and belonging. My stories allow me to physically and thoughtfully explore and research how I experienced my own difference, my “otherness,” and my struggle to understand just who I was and where I belonged. My stories allow me to weave my way through the tangible dualities I experienced as a child and to come to realize that perhaps we all live in multiple realities, with multiple stories and multiple identities.

As I now examine my stories with new eyes, I see that telling them has really been my way of performing who I am and how I have seen myself at different times in my life. Writing and reflecting upon them give me a sense of my own voice. It is sometimes loud and sometimes hushed. It is sometimes a clear voice, deep, resonant and sure. It is sometimes more tentative, quivering and questioning. At times my voice hums many parts, not always in harmony with each other. I need to listen. I need to experiment. I need to be. I hear and respond to many melodies, different timbres. My stories give me an opportunity to voice the many “me’s” of my lifetime, and the many influences on those me’s. As I write, I hear old familiar voices, others that I have kept hidden or silent until now, and some that I did not recognize until now.

My personal voice does not sing solo. It sounds in reciprocal resonance with my pedagogical voice. My stories, research and reflections teach me about the children I have taught and the lessons they have let me learn from them. My stories not only give me a second look at how I experienced being with those children, but also make me wonder about their voices, how those children saw themselves, what identities they assigned to themselves, what identities were assigned to them, how they experienced feelings of belonging or marginalization, and what part, I, as a teacher, played in their journeys. Telling and retelling my stories over time, and now writing them down, I revisit the teacher I was and wanted to be. The experiences and memories of being with those children, often very long ago, have illuminated my teaching journey and shaped the teacher I have become.

Duke (pseudonym) was one of those children. I have carried him with me some forty years. I still see him, standing out, different, alone in my classroom. I still reflect on how I might have made a bigger difference in his life back then, and how the learnings I have gleaned since can make a difference in some other child's life. Duke's family came from a reserve in Ontario. Living in a large metropolitan city was a far cry from the life they were familiar with. They moved often, always searching for a sense of home. When I spoke with Duke's mother three years ago, she told me that they had never found that home. She told me that Duke died an accidental death when he was sixteen years old.

Duke comes to school each morning – late, always late. He has developed a ritual for himself, a way of leaving behind his home environment and entering the other world of school. At the age of five, Duke dramatically yanks open the classroom door, slams it shut and leans back on it. He reminds me of movies I have seen, where the old man, suffering long years, can do little other than sigh and rest for a moment before returning to the reality of life's hardships. I watch and wonder why a five-year-old sighs. What is his suffering? Why is he late? Why is this place, deep in the inner city, such a seeming relief; a refuge?

Duke's face is stained. I can see the clear path, now dried, where tears have flowed. I realize that he doesn't wash regularly. How does he get ready for school each day? What happens to him at home? What happens on the way to school? After a few moments of leaning on the door, Duke moves. Every day in the same way, he takes a few steps to the reading table, pulls up a chair, and picks up a book to leaf through the pages. He doesn't stop to look at the pictures; he doesn't actually focus on the book. It is his way of easing into school, flipping those pages audibly, over and over, page after page, book after book, day after day.

I watch him move from the reading table to the paints set out along a huge sheet of red oilcloth I've stretched on the floor. Although there are two easels in my room, I need to provide additional space for painters, spaces where kids can stand, sit or lie down to paint. Duke sprawls out on the floor. He picks up the black brush and forcefully pushes it all over his page. His strokes are thick and dramatic. Nothing concrete is apparent to me – I know he is still in the "scribble stage."

When he finishes his painting, Duke begins to notice other students and other activities going on in the Kindergarten. He makes efforts to join in on occasion, usually kicking or pushing other people when they get too close to him. He has what seems like a permanent scowl on his face and he grunts his

responses when other kids speak to him or when I try to engage him in conversation.

After observing Duke's ritual for a few weeks, I decide to approach him. It is a huge risk for me. I have no idea how to reach him. All I know is that he carries a huge burden to school with him each day and that to make this connection with him is important for me. I am filled with questions. I wait until he paints his picture – again in black today. I remember my teacher training – "Never ask a young child, 'What's in your picture?'" The child will be hurt by the adult's non-recognition. Merely say, "Tell me about your picture," and the full explanation will flow. I go over to Duke, kneel down, and naively ask him to tell me about the painting. He answers curtly, "It's a man." There is no "flow." Without the promised elaboration, I ask him what the man is doing. He says, "He's beatin' up the mom and he's beatin' up the kids, and they didn't do nothin'." I hesitate, but only briefly. "Is that man your father?" I ask a question that I know my instructors at Teachers' College would not approve. "Let the child reveal the content. Don't make a child think that 'scribbles' must represent some actual object." Duke turns sharply to me and growls, "I told you – it's just a man." I don't pursue it further. From that moment on, Duke doesn't let me out of his sight. He studies me intently, watching my every move. I raise my eyes; his gaze catches mine. He knows that I know.

A few days later, mid-morning, I stop at my desk to fill out a form for the office. As soon as I sit down, Duke approaches me, crawls up on my lap and holds me. He doesn't say a word; he doesn't shed a tear. I hold him fast in my arms. Other children come up to me – "Look at what I made! Come and see my building!" They need my attention, too. But I say, "I need to stay here with Duke right now," and they seem to understand.

Over time, Duke starts to lighten up a little at school. He still looks as tough as nails and never reveals anything further about his home life. I notice that he is better able to participate in a variety of activities and that he is starting

to think twice about how he treats others. He and I continue our undeclared relationship. We grant each other sideways grinning glances. I tousle his hair, give him a friendly body nudge now and then, and always honour what I read as his unspoken wish to keep the "mush" out of it.

After many months, I am finally comfortable enough to take my class on a local field trip. It has taken a long while for us to come together as a community, a long while for me to feel I can safely handle supervising a real outing. Most of the children can follow my instructions now, and for the most part can stay together on short walks, respecting the few lawns, the sidewalks and the people we pass in the neighbourhood.

The outing is to a puppet show at a large department store downtown. We all survive the seemingly endless walk, for the most part in a partnered line, and arrive at the main entrance to the store. As we push our way through the revolving doors, the children continue delightedly in the revolution; round and round, round and round, in and out, in and out, they go. Like ecstatic physicists making a new discovery, they replicate their results over and over, scarcely believing that a doorway can actually turn.

The escalator to the second floor takes us even longer to negotiate. "Look, teacher!" they shout at me. "The stairs is movin'!" These children live within ten blocks of this shopping area and have never been here before. We go up and down several times, risk being late for the show, while shoppers tsk-tsk at the spectacle we make. I marvel at my students and fill up on the utter joy they experience.

Our second field trip is to the botanical gardens. I hold Duke's hand as we walk; he still seems to have difficulty being asked to partner with another student. As we enter the huge glassy structure, the abundant greenery and colourful foliage have a profound effect. The children ooh and ahh, as if seeing the beauties of nature for the first time, awed as they were with the revolving door and escalator. But Duke – he is mesmerized. His eyes, hard and piercing

so much of the time, soften warmly. He speaks to me gently and with such passion, "Mista Bluestee, (he can barely pronounce my name) I just wanna jump right in!" We are standing in front of a leafy, low-lying bed of shrubs that lushly blankets perhaps a four-by-four-foot area. Pink variegations highlight the velvety green leaves. The bed, indeed, looks inviting. I see that Duke is truly at home here. He trusts his belonging in this world of nature. He is a part of it as it is a part of him.

Some time later, our class is in the gym. As they warm up, running a few laps around the perimeter, Duke suddenly reverts to his aggressive behaviour, something he hasn't done for a long while. As each child runs past, Duke sticks out his foot, trips them, and laughs. I react quickly and with shock, "Duke!" I shout, "Off the gym floor!" No matter how I feel about him, I just can't allow this dangerous behaviour. He immediately goes to the bench where I point and bursts into tears. It is the only time I see him cry. As the children go on to their next activity, I come to sit beside Duke. "What are the tears about?" I ask. "You ... don't... love me any more," he splutters. My heart is taken aback, but my reply is prompt. "What I don't love," I say, "is seeing people get hurt. But you, I love." I see how fragile he is, how one sharp reprimand can so quickly shatter his trust. I give him a hug. "Come and be with us when you're ready to join in with no hurting." I wonder how much respect Duke has witnessed or experienced in his life. He takes a moment, looks at me again, and notices the smile that has returned to my face. Something important seems to take place; in that moment, in that glance, something is confirmed, settled once and for all. This situation has been the test. Duke knows that I care, and that I still do even if he makes a mistake.

On the last day of Kindergarten, after all the pep talks about how great Grade One will be and how fabulous the next teacher will be, I walk my class down the hall to say my goodbyes, wrapping my arms around each child as s/he leaves the school. As soon as Duke sees what's happening, he frowns and

moves himself to the end of the line. When his turn for a hug comes, he bursts past me through the door. He doesn't say goodbye. He slows to a snail's pace once he's outside, and I stand in the doorway to watch him saunter across the school yard, shuffling his feet in the dirt. When he gets to the fence on the other side, he cautiously and courageously turns around. I am still watching. I wave to Duke; he stares back at me. I never see him again.

Without many words, Duke told me his story. His body, his face, his tears, his anger – all of them spoke to me. His black painting spoke to me. I could so easily have been one of those unseeing grown-ups described by *The Little Prince* (de St. Exupéry, 1943), the ones unable to see the wild beast being eaten by the boa constrictor (p. 1) or the sheep inside the crate on the page (p. 5-6). In Duke's case, the splash of black paint that was his dad hid Duke's anguish from the grown-ups. That splash of black paint could so easily have hidden his voice. But, as a young teacher, I wanted to see; I wanted to hear beneath the paint. I heard the voice of a child, living on the outside at home and at school, struggling to find a place of belonging on the inside. I heard the voice of a child, fighting a battle inside, struggling to get out. Duke's story is not my story, and yet it is. His difference was visible, mine not. He held no privileged place in society, and I did. He suffered physical and emotional pain that I did not. And yet, I heard his voice as my own. I hear it still.

I want my stories and my voice to invite the voices of others, to create a safe place of hospitality and opportunity for others to pay attention to their own voices and to make themselves heard. I want teachers to invite the voices of the

children in their classrooms, the voices of their colleagues and the voices of parents and community. I want them to use their own voices to enter into more inclusive, ongoing dialogues of diverse experience to help build deeper and richer understandings that benefit all. It is my hope that the stories and themes developed in this thesis evoke a thoughtful and culturally-sensitive pedagogy.

To come to this thesis in my sixties is both a gift and a struggle. In the words of Rabbi Harold Kushner (2002):

I think of life as a good book.
The further you get into it,
the more it begins to make sense.
(p. 172)

Being further into my book gives me the time and opportunity for much reflection on previous chapters of my life, the gift of experience from which to gather and glean. But the *sense* that I begin to make at this stage has a great deal to do with what *doesn't* make sense – with coming to accept the unfinished, the ambiguous, and the uncertain. It is a time of recognizing that things aren't all one way *or* the other. They are *all* ways. In order to write this thesis, I have had to make difficult choices about what to include and what to leave out. My decision-making process has been very different, I imagine, from what it would have been had I done this in my twenties or thirties.

What is important when one reflects on more than sixty years? It seems to me that *everything* matters. The big ideas matter. But so do the details of the

everyday. How do I choose one theme over another, one story over the next, this question over that one? When I force myself to choose, I am aware of dangers. Neither do I wish to reduce, condense, summarize or essentialize my life and learnings, wrapping things up in a neat little package to engrave on my tombstone, nor to exclude incidents which are, indeed, necessary parts of the whole. Nevertheless, I must make choices. It is the stories that direct me. I know that the stories of this thesis matter to me as a person and a teacher. What I write is my draft of current and conflicting understandings with particular regard to identity and belonging. I hope that several of life's chapters are yet to come and that my work will always be a work in progress.

As I reflect on my experiences, make my choices and develop the themes of my thesis, I think on the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel (1951), words which give me some insight into not only the vastness of my task and the difficulties I experience, but its importance at this stage of my life. He speaks on the meaning of the Sabbath: "Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time ..." (p. 10). His words make me think of the Sabbath, not necessarily as a special day at the end of a week, but rather as a metaphor for the later years of our lives.

Our first six decades or so are filled with "wrestling with the world" (p. 13), but as we move on into the final decades, we are getting to a time when "we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul" (p. 13), when "the real and the spiritual are one, like body and soul ..." (p. 17). Perhaps, this thesis and

this time of my life mark the morning of that seventh day. I have entered a period of sanctified reflection, a time to come to deeper understandings, a long moment of quiet synthesis.

And yet, the moment is not always quiet. The themes and meanings I explore in this thesis are not simple and straightforward, tightly fitting into an organized and neatly-labelled box. My research and reflections are complex. My childhood search to find one constant and sure identity, “the real me,” has led me to an inquiry that tells me identities are, as Hall (1996) indicates, not fixed. While our self-identification may be rooted in family and culture, new shoots and branches continue to appear. My thesis grapples with this ambiguity, contesting the dualities of either/or thinking, and interrogating the powerful influences of school, peer group and authoritative discourses in constructing identities (Bakhtin, 1981; Cixous, 1991). My thesis explores and examines the phenomenon of belonging, its connection and disconnections from a sense of place in the world (Gruenewald, 2003a, 2003b; Haymes, in Gruenewald, 2003a).

In Chapter Two, I begin my narrative by recounting my call to story as form, method and data for this inquiry. Many voices speak. I cite works pertaining to my own oral and written storytelling traditions (Abram, 1996; Schram, 1996), to story as exploration of phenomenological themes involved in researching lived experience, the body as locus of stories, and story as source of meaning (van Manen, 1997, 2002), to research on narrative inquiry, (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Coles, 1989; and others), and to story as voice.

In Chapter Three, I listen to the themes that arise from my stories, the voices of identity, culture, belonging and difference. I explore my early experiences of growing up in an immigrant Jewish household and how those experiences shaped my earliest sense of identity and belonging and at the same time raised my earliest questions about who I was and where I fit in. I call upon works of Yon (2000) and Stuart Hall (1996), who tell us of the elusive nature of identity, particularly in relation to issues of culture. I listen to the voices of Jewish authors, making connections to particular aspects of Jewish culture as told through story (Myerhoff, 1978; Zeitlin, 1997). I invite Maxine Greene (1993, 1995, 2001); bell hooks (1994); Lave & Wenger (1991), and others, to reveal socio-cultural perspectives on the power relations and situatedness of identity and belonging, especially in school situations. Throughout, I flash back to the stories of my young students, who for one reason or another are identified as “different.” Whether those differences are of culture, ability, behaviour, appearance, or even of the inevitable human “otherness” that separates all individuals, I pose and live with important questions for me as a teacher, inquiring into those children’s voices and the voices they may have heard, suppressed or taken on as their own.

In Chapter Four, I heed the call for voices of agency and resistance through story (Bellous, 2001; Eisenhart, in Toohey, 2000; Toohey, 2000). I explore how construction of self identity can be shaped through story (Dunne, 1996; Greene, 1995; van Manen, 1991), and point out the need for our students to participate in democratic communities of difference (Greene, 1995; hooks,

1994; Shields, 2004). The voices of our personal stories can help us explore and reflect on our experiences with issues of difference.

In Chapter Five, I demonstrate ways of building student participation and inclusion by using narrative inquiry in teacher education settings to unpack issues of diversity and to encourage a dialogic and critical pedagogy (Cochran-Smith, 1991, 1995, 1995b; Delpit, 1995; Sleeter, 1993; Wyatt-Beynon, 1985). I pay particular attention to the work of Cochran-Smith and to Bakhtin's (1981) perspectives on discourse. I further explore classroom practices where the voices of students, parents, and teachers are invited, and pedagogical connections are created between story-telling and issues of difference (Auerbach, 2002; Wigginton in Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1990; Wolk, 1998).

Throughout this thesis, my stories prompt my inquiry:

- How is it that children, because of their diversity, may experience exclusion from the classroom community?
- How is it that difference is often seen as something negative?
- How do my own experiences of feeling different impact my sensibilities and conduct as a teacher?
- How do I create a classroom environment that is safe, welcoming and inclusive, where difference is viewed positively?
- How do I build a classroom community where we all learn from each other by virtue of those differences?

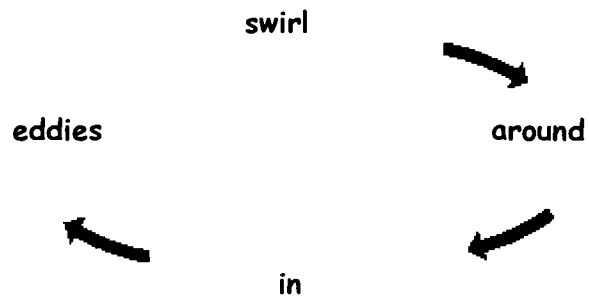
My understandings shift and grow,
at times building to enthusiastic swells
that swoosh onto my beach mind -
Aha! So this is it!

But soon,

t e r
n r
i o
g
a
t
e
d

further,

those understandings



losing their

s
u
r
e
n
e
s s.

Their unbreakable direction →

s k a e r B

(Brakes).

Understandings begin to ebb and flow,

taking on the rhythm of the tides,

listening,

reflecting,

asking,

reflecting,

responding,

reflecting,

picking up driftwood notions,

leaving behind pebbles of insight,

living

and being lived

by the power of what comes

and goes.

And when those understandings seem at times

but a quiet

r
i
c
k
l
e

of wonder traced in the sand,

they are waiting,

attending,

opening

to the next wave rolling in

with new surges of possibility and learning

VOICES OF STORY AS INQUIRY

A bird does not sing
because it has an answer

It sings
because it has a song

Joan Walsh Anglund

Story as Form

My introductory chapter makes obvious that when it comes to form, story chooses me. Rather than my freely choosing story as form, method, and data for my research, my own bent for story and my blood connection to an oral storytelling culture dictate such decisions. In my own recent experience of trying to research my family history, I join a genealogical society and learn how to search documents through various archival records. I explore ship arrivals and passenger lists, records of births and deaths, city directories, and cemetery burials. I write to archives, in Kiev, for example, requesting records of my father's and mother's families. What is in print is minimal. Documents that tell my history, give me names and dates, and fill in the gaps of knowing who I am, either don't exist or are not within my reach.

I begin to ask questions. I look up my surname on the Internet and write to all those people I find. I make contact with a distant cousin who grew up in Russia and closer cousins in California who are descendants of my oldest great aunt. When I visit the California branch of the family, they tell me about an audio tape made by another cousin who had interviewed his grandmother in 1978. They send me a copy of the tape. This *baba* (grandmother) tells her memories of growing up in Russia (now the Ukraine), of the pogroms she lived through, and of her great grandfather whom she purports to have lived to 135 years of age! Every taped memory is a story, punctuated by the sounds of dishes clattering and soup pouring into bowls. The *baba* feeds her grandson her food and her

stories – the real meat and potatoes of her life. The stories are her family's history; the stories are her grandson's research. Documents may not exist, but memories and their telling can satisfy the hunger for connection with one's history, one's heritage, and one's place in the world.

The cultural and religious roots of Jewish storytelling run deep, spreading and branching from generation to generation. Peninnah Schram (1996), noted storyteller and scholar, confirms: "As a storytelling people, Jews traditionally have understood the importance of story ... to teach values and ... custom, to discuss points of Talmud ..., or simply to entertain... Jews have been telling stories in the oral tradition from the beginning of their history (pp. 55-56)."

Oral story was of such import that Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772 – 1811) made the telling of tales his primary method of conveying wisdom (Schwartz, 1998, p. 164). The now-recorded stories and dreams of Reb Nachman resemble all traditional folktales, in that they are filled with elaboration, enchantment, magic and, of course, "good" prevailing over "evil." Because of widespread opinion that Reb Nachman's oral tales contained hidden and powerful meanings, they were regarded, once written, as sacred texts (p. 165). Story, for the Rebbe, was a way of teaching Torah, the whole, huge body of Jewish teaching. By telling and retelling stories, and by his Chassidic followers studying and re-studying them, they were fulfilling one of the key principles found in the *Mishnah Avot 5:22*:

"Turn it and turn it over again and again, for everything is in it,
and contemplate it, and wax gray and grow old over it, and
stir not from it, for you cannot have any better rule than this."

In this way, Jewish storytelling gave opportunities for research and reflection, for seeking deeper meanings, and for making connections to spiritual and everyday wisdom.

To this very day, Jewish storytellers abound. Perhaps, the most spiritual and wise are not as famous as the irreverent Lenny Bruce or the sardonic Jerry Seinfeld. But story is in the blood. Story speaks and tells us who we are and where we come from.

This thesis is filled with my own stories of home and school, helping me to make fuller sense of my own life and the directions I have taken as a teacher. The stories of my teaching experiences connect to my own childhood and, hopefully, to the experiences of my readers, other teachers, and their childhood experiences. My stories weave back and forth between past and present. Sometimes they touch but lightly on the surface of a memory, and sometimes, when contemplated with other stories, they reach deeper levels of awareness and significance. My stories are not neat. The categories are not distinct. I include stories of home, stories of going to school, stories of teaching, stories of culture, stories of difference, and stories of searching for identity and a place of belonging.

As I explore the overlapping themes of my stories, I integrate a variety of ways that story can be used as methodology, drawing upon a variety of traditions, theorists and storytellers. True to life experience and to the nature of stories, when we read from text or novel, when we hear others tell their own stories, a story of our own may suddenly come to mind. We make a connection to our own lives; we are reminded of our own meaningful experiences. In this thesis, I will, therefore, break up the text in similar ways, injecting storied voices of my lived experience, poetry, and other voices as they arise. I invite the reader to shift discourses with me as I drop into the sound spaces where orality speaks, return to theoretical text, circle to voices of the past, or leave a question hanging in a space of uncertainty. Just as the voices of identity, belonging, culture and difference may be overlapping, complex and layered, so too is the form that I choose for this thesis, reflecting the lived and cacophonous quality of those voices.

Oral Story : Written Story

When I tell my stories, I *am* my stories. I gesture wildly with my hands or smirk sassily. I roll my eyeballs, expressing disgust, and furrow my brow at a moment of concern. I stand or I walk about; I sit comfortably in the warmth of friends in a circle; I 'perform' at a podium or whisper face-to-face in an intimate tête-à-tête. When I recollect the experiences of my childhood or reflect on the wonderful children who have graced my classrooms over the years, stories flow directly from my memory to my mouth. I don't feel the need to get everything worked out in advance because I *know* those experiences, I still feel them, and I

trust the words will come. That is not to say that there are no conscious in(ter)ventions in the telling. As I “read” the listener(s), I may, in the moment, adjust the wording in order to better relate “my” story to “theirs.” I may need to be a little more polite in my choice of language or I may allow myself to “get down” and “tell it like it is.” If the audience is restless, I’ll shorten it up and get to the point, or maybe I’ll grab hold of their emotions with a little elaboration on the most poignant aspect of the story. I focus on the lived events of the story, the people who inhabit it and the people who listen.

As I begin to write my stories for this thesis, I experience great difficulty. Like Reb Nachman and other oral storytellers of Jewish tradition, I struggle with the differences between a story told and a story written. To write a story is not merely to write down “talk.” If I decide to make the stories a “script” meant for reading aloud or performing, then writing in the style of talk seems appropriate; it is easier to detect the voice of the story if I fill it with oral dialogue. But, if I write stories meant for silent reading, theoretical study and reflection, it seems that the “telling” on paper is completely different.

How will my readers know the cadence of my voice or the speed of my delivery? How will they imagine the gestures I would have used in the telling? How will they see the expression in my eyes? Are these not constituent to the story? To bring the story to life on paper, I must use language which evokes the body and all the senses in order for the reader to experience its palpability, its visceral quality, its aliveness. I need to create a synaesthetic interplay between my story and the reader’s imagination. My words need to conjure up a living

exchange of meanings. I labour to embed them in the printed word. I want to recreate the experience as truly as I can, to give it the qualities of life and breath. I write in the present tense in order to live inside my memories, blurring the timelines between past, present and future. I write, as Natalie Goldberg (1986) describes, in the “nature of first thoughts, the way we see the world when we are free from prejudice and can see the underlying principles” (p. 35), “unencumbered by ego,” “expressing ... the way things are” (p. 9). I want my readers to feel their own presence and connection to my stories and to the stories that matter in their lives. I want to write so that a spirit of inquiry and reflection permeates my own pre-reflective experiences, the physically lived evoking a search for deeper and deeper meaning to the events of my life.

What I find difficult is the conscious creation, the deliberate use/misuse/reuse of language in my efforts to be “real” and to embody the lived experience. I must step back, observe, analyse, critique and edit my writing. I need to participate in a profoundly academic process which somehow removes me from the very real place I want to be. The simple act of “rendering” a story now feels like “rending” it, tearing it away from the moment, and then putting it back together, articulately/artistically/deviously. In the conscious writing of my stories I enter a new Garden where I lose my innocence again. I wonder if it is still possible for me to remain a talker, a teller of tales, one who speaks from memory to mouth.

And yet – the process of writing my stories invites me to attend to my own learning. I come to see that my battle between the oral and the written is yet

another manifestation of my own thinking in binary opposites. My struggle between the two invites me to open myself to studying both phenomena more deeply. I inhabit a mental dialogue, taking on the roles of each, each one speaking for itself, each one learning to listen to the other, each one reaching out to understand. The dialogue takes on a life of its own and transforms my thinking about the fixed nature of written stories. It becomes a metaphor for the main thesis of this paper -- the invitation to live with and appreciate the richness of difference and what each brings to the other.

Oral Voice:

When I tell a story of life experience, it is as if my voice *is* the experience. I speak from nature; I speak from the body. I am the voice of authenticity!

Written Voice:

I can't argue with your notion of the human voice being natural, but you are missing the historically natural essence of writing!

Oral Voice:

The natural essence of writing? My sources tell me a different story! Writing made the world turn *against* nature! In fact, you totally separated mind from body and from the natural world! You left nature appearing like some primitive backdrop, something to master and rule (Abram, 1996).

Written Voice:

But if you attend closely to the natural world, you will see that the earth itself is "shot through with suggestive scrawls and traces, from the

sinuous calligraphy of rivers...to the black slash burned by lightning into the trunk of an old elm” (Abram, p. 95).

Oral Voice:

The written word may be *about* nature, representations recorded in black and white, but what was natural and animate disappeared with the invention of writing systems!

Written Voice:

Ah, but don't you see that “[t]he swooping flight of birds is a kind of cursive script written on the wind” (Abram, p. 95)? “Leaf-miner insects make strange hieroglyphic tabloids of the leaves they consume. Wolves urinate...to mark off their territory ... [and] tribal hunters once read the tracks of deer, moose, and bear printed in the soil of the forest floor” (p. 95).

Oral Voice:

Are you saying that those earthly traces are akin to written words? That written language is “hardly different from the footprints of prey left in the snow” (Abram, p. 96)?

Written Voice:

Exactly! Writers just moved from physical footprints to living letters!

Oral Voice:

I know that early writing systems remained tied to the mysteries of pictographs, of hieroglyphics and ideograms...

Written Voice:

Then came the rebus, used extensively by early scribes.

Oral Voice:

But rebuses actually invoke certain *sounds*– not the thing named.

Written Voice:

Yes, they serve as a kind of inauguration into phonetic script (Abram, p. 98).

Oral Voice:

You must admit that once the original Hebrew alphabet established a particular character or letter for each consonant of the language, a huge distance was created between human culture and the rest of nature!

Written Voice:

You mean that the written character no longer referred to any sensible phenomenon? Solely a gesture made by the human mouth? (Abram, p. 101)?

Oral Voice:

Yes! It is then, when those traces of sensible nature were no longer necessary participants, that animals, plants and natural elements began to lose their own voices, and that lived human experience began to disconnect from the natural. In fact, by the time writing was flourishing in Ancient Greece, sensorial references were fading fast (Abram, p. 101)!

Written Voice:

Ah, but written text is still “implicitly sensorial” (Abram, p. 287). Even the act of writing is sensorial, what Natalie Goldberg (1986) describes as a physical engagement with the pen, and a hand, connected to an arm, pouring out the record of the senses (p. 50). In addition, when we read the written word, “our eyes converge upon a visible mark, or a series of

marks, yet what they find...is a sequence of sounds, something heard; the visible letters...trade our eyes for our ears” (Abram, p. 124). Synaesthesia!

Oral Voice:

I understand that the “Hebrew scribes never lost this sense of the letters as living animate powers” (Abram, p. 132).

Written Voice:

Yes, “the participatory proclivity of the senses was simply transferred from the depths of the surrounding life-world to the visible letters of the alphabet” (Abram, p. 138). So, if you can look at written text as providing merely another locus for participation, then perhaps you will recognize how the words on the paper are still spoken words, voices that we hear as we read. “As non-human animals, plants, and even ‘inanimate’ rivers once spoke to our tribal ancestors, so the ‘inert’ letters on the page now speak to us” (p. 138)! In fact, there are those who go as far as to say that letters can breathe, be out of breath, be breathed out (Cixous, 1993, p. 4)!

Oral Voice:

What you mention is making sense. I can see the possibilities. Although I, personally, feel connection to the physical and animate through my oral voice, I can entertain the notion that you feel such connection and voice through the written. Perhaps one is as good as the other, just different.

Written Voice:

I have one more thing to add. When our stories are written, they provide opportunities beyond the oral telling. What is visible and “fixed” can be returned to, examined, questioned, a “ponderable presence ...” (Abram, p. 107). In this way, writers “live everything a second time,” with a chance

to look closely at the “texture and details” (Goldberg, 1986, p. 48). You see, “[i]t is only as language is written down that it becomes possible to think about it” (Havelock in Abram, p. 107). Only with writing can the author view and respond dialogically in relationship with the text.

Oral Voice:

Is it not possible to reflect and respond to the *spoken*? I realize that the spoken word is not independent or separate from the body's experience, but must there be such separation in order to think and reflect?

Written Voice:

Prior to Socratic times, “[t]o speak was to live within a storied universe ...” (Abram, p. 109), but Socrates interrupted all this by asking speakers to explain their statements, thus separating them from their words. With the spread of writing, the separation became visible, furthering the utterance's ponderability by enabling many returns to it (p. 110).

Oral Voice:

So, you're saying that reflection on the written is different in quality than thoughts accompanying the oral rendering of lived experience; that it has a timelessness, transcendence, or permanence apart from the “fleeting world of corporeal experience” (Abram, p. 112)?

Written Voice:

Exactly! What is written needs to be apart from, in that particular sense.

I suspend judgment. I suspend comfort. Pondering the possibilities, I write my stories.

Animated Text

How can written text incorporate such bodily presence? How can written story embrace the interactive and dialogic quality of oral speech and bodily function? A text's power to make meaning seems to stem from its animate, physical nature. My thoughts drift to those who make meaning through art and dance as text, through music and drama. I am reminded of those who experience the sensing body itself as text to be read. Body as text: Embodied text.

The word was born
in the blood,
it grew in the dark body, pulsing,
and took flight with the lips and mouth

Pablo Neruda, 1962
(Trans. Mitchell, 1997, p. 213)

Attending to these visceral connections helps me to come to terms with writing my stories. Remembering these felt and lived connections challenges me to animate my written text, to experiment with in/trans/fusing the written with the oral, the physical.

Scholarly writings from my own religious and cultural background show me one form of text that *is* animated. When I see the pages of Talmudic commentaries, I notice, as remarked by Jewish storyteller, Peninnah Schram (1996), that the printed word is composed of "black fire on white fire" (p. 66).

Schram quotes the words of Rabbi Avi Weiss, who explains the meaning of this notion: “The black fire are the written letters...the white fire are the spaces on which the letters rest. The black letters represent the cognitive message, and the white space, that which goes beyond the cognitive idea. The black letters are limited; the white spaces catapult us into the realm of the endless, the limitless; it’s the story, the song, and the silence” (p. 66).

In Jewish tradition, the very layout of the black on white invites the continuation of an historical oral interaction with the text. In Schram’s words: “Discussion, debate, argument, inquiry, and interpretation, all interactive oral activities, have taken place for all these centuries” (p. 67). I come to understand that although the wrestling with ideas, events and meanings has traditionally been conducted orally, and still is, that same “living” nature is embedded/embodied in print. Though text may appear to be static, it actually opens up the spaces of imagination and possibility.

The following excerpt, a page from Talmudic writing (Figure 1, p. 38) shows vividly this sense of animation. The form is printed not only with “black fire on white fire” but in such a way that one hears the voices, questions and dialogues of many sages, all learned interpreters of Jewish law. Each voice has its own column, the central one representing the main text being analysed. The voice of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak, 1040 – 1105 A.D.), the “greatest commentator on the Talmud,” always holds the place next to the binding (p. 68).

Other components augment the orality and bodily presence of the printed words. Musical notation, *trop*, embedded in the text, instructs the required sing-

song tonality (p. 70). Position and repetition enhance meanings of words (p. 71). Punctuation, a seeming necessity, is omitted. The reader adds it by reading as an oral document meant to be heard (p. 77). Students of Torah and Talmud recite and discuss sacred texts with rocking movements and hand gestures which reinforce the vocalization (p. 70). "Words are viewed as equivalent to deeds ... treated with great respect..." (p. 71). A single letter can hold power.

Schram advocates a printed form for folktales that incorporates the Talmudic form, envisioning a balance between performance text and literary text, "text that will preserve and at the same time present the 'ear' of literature... [with] stylistic features, paralinguistic or kinesic features... idiomatic phrases... described and included" (p. 85).

I toy with this form. Can it animate the text of my thesis, enliven my stories and incorporate all the voices that need to speak? Can theoretical voices, student voices and voices of my own personal reflections co-exist dialogically in columns? Can such a form show the multiplicity of identity? Can it embody the messiness and complexity of the task to create a single thesis statement?

What is your thesis? What is your point? Define your purpose. State your method. Design your form. Include your literature review. Reveal your findings. Declare your recommendations.

There is an old Navajo saying that when we look at our lives from the earth side, it's like seeing the bottom of a rug. Unsightly threads hang down, and the pattern is confusing and unclear. But when we view our lives from above, ... we see a work of art woven from many strands, both dark and light, and we appreciate that all the threads were required to make the rug beautiful.
Joan Borysenko, 1996, p. 251

*To see the world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower
To hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour*
William Blake

To state my one thesis is akin to stating my one identity or to stating my culture as one grand unity. My thesis lives in multiplicity. My identity lives in multiplicity. My culture lives in multiplicity.

קלת Voices

I want a thesis that invites all the voices, recognizes and hears them. I want a form that reflects the dynamic, layered interactions of thought, experience and theory. I want to hear voices of reflection, argument, interpretation, and commentary; voices of the reader and the writer. I want to hear stories of the children and of the ancestors. I want to see and hear, touch and taste. Give me the dia/ tria/ multi/ logic. Bring on the solo voices and those in harmony. Welcome, dissonance! I want life as text, text as life, animated and alive.

To be spiritual, at one, at peace, why must we seek the essence, the truth, as if it were a solitary single entity? Why must we search for manageable meaning? The "big picture" usually means the small kernel, the jewel, shiny and clear. Why don't we seek the whole, the all, the mess of it? Why is the tangle not wonderful? We organize, we classify, we permit only traditions of science and the academy to back up our experience. Are there standards for beauty, joy and wonder of living? Are our standards grounded in what is lived?

Figure 2 Voices in Talmudic form

I wish to write an *anti-thesis*

Siseht-itnA

The Multiplicity and the Unity are one and the same thing, a thing that is both many and one at the same time. The waves, and the currents underwater, make up the ocean. The ocean is the underlying basis for every wave. Neither the ocean, nor the waves, can be understood in isolation from each other. Unity and diversity: the One and the Many. Principles of scientific pantheism, Paul Harrison, Time Magazine, Dec. 12, 1996

קלת

I want you to see, and hear and touch the bursting blossoms painted on my tree and yours. I want you to smell the smoky fall leaves as they pile in profusion. I want the view, the soundscape, the backdrop of my life and my thinking and writing to be evident to you. I want you to experience the joyous wonder of my search. I want my questions to encourage yours. I want the vulnerable voices of my uncertainty and complexity to quiver shakily, to appear in print like the loose threads on the underside of my canvas.

Multiple Voices

All existence is the expression, in different manifestations, of the one fundamental unity. Natural creations are basically composed of dual forces such as day and night, yin and yang, expansion and contraction, diastolic and systolic. A true expression of the infinity of unity is its capacity for infinite multiplicity. B'Or Ha'Torah Journal of Science, Art and Modern Life in the Light of the Torah (2005)

To write and read in this Talmudic form is distracting, confusing and difficult. Yes! This is as it is.

Figure 3 Multiple voices in Talmudic form

Phenomenological Themes

In keeping with basic themes of phenomenological study, I see some of my own work as interpretive, hermeneutically exploring and trying to understand the conversations, questions, language and cultural implications of my stories. In van Manen's (2002) discussion of hermeneutical phenomenology, he elaborates on Paul Ricoeur's work, particularly on the narrative function of language and how narrativity, such as found in storytelling, interacts with temporality and "ultimately return[s] to the question of the meaning of being, the self and self-identity" (p. 5). Much of my own work explores such themes; my childhood puzzlement about my own identity, wondering who I was and where I belonged; my longing to belong; and my experience of "otherness." Since my earliest days in school, I had a strong sense of my own difference; I saw myself as standing apart from my schoolmates. I make connections from these personal experiences to those of my students. How many of them saw themselves as "others?" What is this connection and responsibility that I feel towards them? What are the implications of my own childhood on my relationships with my students? As I learn to voice who I am through storying my life's experiences, I wonder if I have listened for my students' voices and invited their stories. Have I sought to find out how they experience difference? Have I helped them to belong? Story as the form for this phenomenological inquiry becomes an appropriate method for exploring those themes.

According to phenomenologists, phenomenological inquiry is practised as phenomenological writing (van Manen, 2002, p. 61). For those of us who use

oral storytelling as a means of phenomenological research, this may be, at first glance, a difficult notion to fathom. Does *telling* a story not imply *orality*?

Following on my own dialogic exploration of the oral and the written voices of story, I further explore the notion of writing as form for phenomenological inquiry.

What is involved in phenomenological writing? Strangely perhaps, the practice of phenomenological writing is quite difficult to articulate. Writing is not the practice of some clever technique; neither is writing restricted to the moment where one sets pen to paper, or the fingers to the keyboard. Writing has already begun, so to speak, when one has managed to enter the space of the text, the textorium. The space of the text is what we create in writing but it is also in some sense already there.

(van Manen, 2002, p. 61)

For van Manen, the writer dwells in the space that the words open up.

“When we write we enter the space of the words that transports us away from our everyday reality to the reality of the text” (p. 61). We are somewhere else.

“Language and experience seem to coincide in this lived meaning of space. This is where insights occur, where words may acquire a depth of meaning, where the author may experience human understanding” (p. 61). In van Manen’s view, “a text which is thoughtful reflects on life while reflecting life” (p. 67). Writing is not something that comes at the end of the inquiry, but rather “is the very act of making contact with the things of our world ... to do research is to write ... [T]he insights achieved depend on the right words and phrases, on styles and traditions, on metaphor and figures of speech, on argument and poetic image ... No text is ever perfect, no interpretation is ever complete, no explication of meaning is ever final, no insight is beyond challenge” (p. 61).

Through the writing, a phenomenologist seeks meaning by setting up a “questioning mood” (p. 62). Wonder seems to be the central methodological feature of phenomenological inquiry. We wonder and reflect. For van Manen, phenomenological inquiry must not only begin with wonder, but also induce wonder. “For a phenomenological text to lead the way to human understanding, it must lead the reader to wonder” (p. 62).

Story as Research of Lived Experience

From a phenomenological perspective, how does story connect to such wonder and meaning through writing and language use? Story gives a wonderful opportunity for studying lived experience. Story can make that lived experience “more immediate, more enigmatic, more complex, more ambiguous than any description can do justice to” (van Manen, 1997, xvii). Researching lived experience through story is a way to make “intelligible and understandable what always seems to lie beyond language” (xvii). For van Manen, if the writing “reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience,” it has then been adequately described (p. 10). It is my intention in writing stories of my own lived experience to “reawaken” this “lived quality” so that the significance of each experience is fully evident.

To study lived experience through story is “a profoundly reflective inquiry into human meaning” (van Manen, 2002). It is a human science method of research, based on a long philosophic tradition that delves into several domains of inquiry from a variety of perspectives. Phenomenological research is often

used in practical contexts, i.e., concerns of everyday living, or in professional contexts, such as the practices of education, psychology, medicine, etc. It can be used to investigate how knowledge comes into being, how meanings are constituted, or can analyse prereflective phenomena of everyday experience (van Manen, 2002).

Carl Leggo (2001) writes of his research into everyday experience, in a form that he calls “poetic ruminations” (p. 173). What he has to say strongly connects me to storying as research of lived experience, and research of lived experience as storying. His own research combines his own memories and “ruminations,” chewed-upon works lived and written by himself and others. His research involves “lingering...waiting on words...listening” (p. 177). I imagine researcher as cow, cogitating, grinding, mulling over meanings, mashing to make sense of themes that recur with each regurgitation. I am inspired to such scholarly enterprise “even though it may not always look or sound like the scholarly writing that fills academic journals beyond counting” (p. 176). Leggo wants “research that hangs out in the spaces between a poetics of possibility and a poetics of impossibility ... research fired in the spirit of a hermeneutics riddled with riddles ... that conceals as well as reveals ... that obfuscates, even as it clarifies” (p. 183).

To tell stories of our lives as lived, is to “hang out” in those spaces, re-searching, that is, searching again and again, for the meanings that are visible and heard, as well as those that lie in the spaces between the lines, those that flutter between my voice and your ears, those that tack between your story and

mine. Storied research may not always be linear. When stories are examined and re-examined with each telling, they are altered and reconstructed. Meanings deepen and change. Each layer of research reveals more, and at the same time brings more riddles and questions to consciousness.

Clandinin and Connelly, in their many works related to narrative inquiry in education, also attest to story as research of lived experience. For them, a narrative inquiry is “a dynamic process of living and telling stories, and reliving and retelling stories” in which the awarenesses of not only the participants but those of the researchers are revealed (2000, xiv). They articulate their move away from solely quantified and measured forms of research, going so far as to say that “[e]xperience is therefore the starting point and the key term for all social science inquiry” (xxii). For them, “experience is the stories people live. People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others” (xxii). Following in the tradition of van Manen, Leggo, and Clandinin and Connelly, I see my stories of lived experience as my narrative inquiry, my ruminations, my research into issues of identity and belonging.

Body as Locus of Story

“I am my stories.” “My stories are my lived experience.” “Storytelling comes so naturally to me.” I explore these sensate notions that I experience in telling my stories. How can story be experienced so palpably, so viscerally? I find connections in the work of David Abram (1996), who helps me to see the

sensuous core of all our experience. We are at once “sensing bodies” (p. 23, p. 56), “speaking bodies” (p. 60-61), “breathing bodies” (p. 63), “perceiving bodies” (p. 58) and “living bodies” (p. 45). Deeply influenced by the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964, 1968)), Abram writes:

If this body is my very presence in the world, if it is the body that alone enables me to enter into relations with other presences, if without these eyes, this voice or these hands I would be unable to see, taste, and to touch things, or to be touched by them – if without this body --- there would be no possibility of experience – then the body itself is the true subject of experience.

(p. 45)

Such a view gives rise to a philosophy which strives “not to explain the world as if from outside, but to give voice to the world from our experienced situation within it...” (p. 47). There is a reciprocity, an “ongoing interchange between my body and the entities that surround it” (p. 52), an interchange that is never wholly determinate, that is always adjusting and shifting.

This “participatory life of the senses” (p. 71) is evident in language, notably in the languages of indigenous, oral cultures. What Abram calls “the flesh of language” (p. 74) corresponds with Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) notions of the gestural genesis of language. Abram describes this gestural genesis as “the way that communicative meaning is first incarnate in the gestures by which the body spontaneously expresses feelings and responds to changes in its affective environment ... the gesture is the bodying-forth of that emotion in the world; it *is* that feeling of delight or of anguish in its tangible, visible aspect ...” (p. 74).

To tell one’s stories is such a gesture, my own “living speech ... a vocal gesticulation wherein the meaning is inseparable from the sound, the shape, and

the rhythm of the words” (p. 74). When we learn to speak, it is a bodily learning. “We appropriate new words and phrases ... through the way they feel in the mouth or roll off the tongue, and it is this direct, felt significance – the taste of a word or phrase -- that provides the fertile, polyvalent source for all the more refined and rarefied meanings which that term may come to have for us” (p. 75).

Meaning is conveyed “beneath the level of thought, beneath the level of the words themselves...more like a melody ...” (Edie, 1973, xviii), or what Merleau-Ponty (1962) called a “singing of the world” (p. 217). Spoken words, as gestures, and their direct bodily resonance, make verbal communication possible (Merleau-Ponty, p. 213; Abram, p. 79). “It is this expressive potency – the soundful influence of spoken words upon the sensing body – that supports all the more abstract and conventional meanings that we assign to those words” (Abram, p. 79). In addition, the speaker’s thoughts are not separate from the words s/he speaks. “His speech is his thought” (Merleau-Ponty, p. 209). Speech and thought are “intervolved, the sense being held within the word and the word being the external existence of the sense” (p. 211).

This notion, then, of a body which speaks, bears out my own experience of ‘my memory’ speaking. This expressiveness “extends...to the whole sensible world...” (p. 230), “human language aris[ing] from the perceptual interplay between the body and the world” (Abram, p. 82). “Ultimately,” says Abram, “it is not the human body alone but rather the whole of the sensuous world that provides the deep structure of language” (p. 85), the palpable and evident solidarity between language and the animate landscape (p. 87). He emphasizes:

“Only if words are felt bodily presences, like echoes or waterfalls, can we understand the power of spoken language to influence, alter, and transform the perceptual world” (p. 89).

Stephen Smith (1992, in van Manen, 2002) speaks of this physical kind of remembrance; that is, remembering “as a bodily act” (p. 2). He speaks of returning to a beach where he played as a child and feeling the childhood experience physically rush back to him. Quoting Proust (1924) and Van den Berg (1961/1975), he cites examples of those who have “become intoxicated with the feelings of an earlier time” when for example, revisiting a courtyard of the past, or when bending down to the level of a child, notices that “the smells, the voices, the expressions, the details of childhood experience” immediately come back to him (pp. 2-3). He speaks of Rilke (1910/1982) and the man whose present step is “filled with memories of an earlier walking” (p.3).

It is this physical presence, this embodiment, that I experience in my own storied memories. As I write, I embed myself in the experiences once again. Though it can be claimed that I cannot actually re-live or re-experience life, that I cannot examine old experiences pre-reflectively when years of other experiences have intervened, how is it then, that as I write, I experience myself physically immersed in those situations? How is it that as I search for meaning *here*, I am *there*? How is it that I hear the voices of my parents and my teachers when I speak to my students today? How is it that the taunts of “Dirty Jew” echo in my ears when I notice a child being excluded from a game? How is it that I bring my hand to my eye, touching gently the spot where the peach stone stung me when I

see a child bruised by stinging words? Is the body a container of such physical memory? Or is it, rather, an experiencer of remembrance?

I ride my bike down Sunnyside Avenue. My bike, the two-wheeler that I have longed for. Well, I didn't long for this one, with its big fat balloon tires. But my dad bought this one for me, and I know it is the only bike I will ever have. He got it second hand for only five dollars. It looked horrible when it came to the house, but my father paid Johnny to paint it and make it look new. "Red," I tell Johnny. "It has to be red." The bike shines new now, and, I convince myself, the rich, lush red makes up for the big fat tires. How was I to know that those tires would cause me nothing but trouble?

As I pick up speed and coast down the road, exhilarated as I fly through the wind, I create my course alongside the streetcar tracks that line the centre of the street. Suddenly, I see the boys in my neighbourhood, gathering on the corner in front of my father's grocery store. They are all there watching me sail down the street, probably admiring my new bike, or maybe ridiculing the balloon tires. As I get within a stone's throw, Jerry reaches back and heaves a peach stone at me. As it hits my eye, I hear the shouts, "Jew! Jew! You dirty Jew!"

A fearful shudder rises up from my stomach. I feel my chest weakening. My bike tires lock into the streetcar tracks, trapped, as I am, with no chance of escape. I am not experienced enough to rear up on my back wheel and lift the front end out. I wobble uncontrollably and crash to the ground, my new bike on top of me. My eye stings from the peach stone. My heart stings more. I stagger home, dragging my now heavier-than-ever bike, blood dripping down my leg.

These boys are my neighbours. They are my friends. They play hide and go seek with me. They trade comics with me. They are the ones who had

gently told me when my kitten was run over by a car. I don't understand their taunting curses. I don't understand the peach stone. I lie on my bed, sobbing, whirling with questions about friendship and trust. Why? Why did they do it? No one could possibly envy my bike! Why do people hate Jews? How did I become a dirty one?

The next day there is graffiti scratched in chalk on the brick wall of my father's store. A large swastika stands out, with the words Ye Olde Dirty Jew printed beneath it. They hate my father as much as they hate me. I don't tell my parents what happened the day before. I just say that I fell off the bike. I somehow know that if I tell, they will hurt more than I do. My father washes the chalk off the bricks. He mutters in Yiddish under his breath, cursing the perpetrators. Nothing is done. Nothing more is ever said.

Story as Meaningful Connection

Jack Maguire (1998) speaks of storytelling as a natural way for humans to invest their lives with meaning, as natural as “a bird trilling, a coyote howling, or a spider weaving...the sheer pleasure an animal takes in doing what it does best” (p. 9). To tell stories, then, is to connect with our own nature, and in so doing, for the teller and listener to “realize simultaneously our common humanity” (p. 10). This deep connection, through story, promotes powerful invitations to dialogue, creating sacred opportunities for people to be human together. For Maguire, it is this act of human connection that creates such profound meaning (p. 16).

Elizabeth Stone (1988), in revisiting her own and others' family stories, again attributes great significance to story. “For me, it was always the stories that held the spirit and meaning of our family” (p. 4). How powerful are her sentiments. How powerful are stories -- to physically *hold* the *spirit* of a family,

the *meaning* of a family. Family stories, according to Stone, tell us the codes, patterns and values of that family (p. 56), they place the family in time and space in the world (p. 58), and they pass on to the generations “what the world is like...and how best to survive in it” (p. 135). Again, it is the human connection through story which provides the deep meanings.

Story as Data for Theory

Robert Coles (1989), trained as a psychiatrist, learned through his mentors and his own on-the-job experience that listening to the stories of his patients was a crucial element in both his understanding of their lives and in his patients’ own learning. Rather than pointing to pre-existing theories about his patients’ problems and noticing how the patients fit into those parameters, he began to see theory in its more original form, as “a beholding,” what he calls “an enlargement of observation” (p. 20). Encouraged by his supervisor, he began to follow a more phenomenological research path than was traditional for psychiatrists, valuing narrative inquiry and recognizing that “what ought to be interesting...is the unfolding of a lived life rather than the confirmation such a chronicle provides for some theory” (p. 22). What needs to be told will “make itself known” in the telling of the story (p. 23). In this way, story reveals theory.

Coles’ writing is filled, therefore, with not only his own voice, but the voices of his patients, his students, and novelists he has read and shared with others. Reflection, moral analysis and lively exchange permeate the stories. Coles comes to understand that “the conceptual categories I learned in psychiatry, in

psychoanalysis, in social science seminars, are not the only means by which one might view the world” (xvii). There is more than one way to theorize.

Narrative, as a way of organizing experience to create meaning “opens spaces for people to theorize publicly for themselves” (Sleeter, 2001, p. 2). Narrative is not simply the reporting of unexamined experience, “but rather the telling of examined experiences in a way that reveals theory” (ibid.).

According to bell hooks (1994), “any theory that cannot be shared in everyday conversation cannot be used to educate ...” (p. 64). It follows then that theories which *can* be shared orally *can* be used to educate. Here, personal story and narrative find a place in not only making sense and meaning of our real experience, but as a form of action to promote rigorous debate, critical dialogue, and a “collective constructivism” of new theory (p. 67). Staying silent is an act of complicity (p. 66). To break that silence we must “create a theory that opposes oppression ... a theory that can be and is shared in oral as well as in written narrative” (p. 68 - 69).

Story as Perspective

Although I speak as both storyteller and researcher in this thesis, I voice my keen awareness that because my stories are of my own lived experience, I speak from my own perspective and standpoint. My stories and theories may be quite different from the ones my father might have told, and different again from those of my third grade teacher or the First Nations student in my class. Each reader, too, processes their own meanings while interacting with my stories, and

each one constructs yet another theory. As I search and re-search through my writing, I theorize and re-theorize, storying and re-stor(e)ying my own lived experience. According to Clifford Geertz (in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), we must be aware of the temporality and instability of narrative inquiry: “What we can construct...are hindsight accounts of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened...pieced-together patternings, after the fact...” (p. 6). While I strongly feel my own bodily immersion in the experiences of which I write, I need to recognize the situated and particular contexts of events and how, as Geertz says, they “can be woven together with a variety of facts and a battery of interpretations to produce a sense of how things go, have been going, and are likely to go” (p. 6). My own point of view, the places in which I stand, matter. My readers’ points of view and the places in which they stand also matter. As I explore the themes of identity and belonging in this thesis, I further examine the importance of place and context in the lives of the students I teach.

Story as Voice

It is through story that I have found my own voice – my voice as a child, a student, a teacher and researcher. To speak who I am is an extremely personal and profound privilege, and, at the same time, so public. It is, as Madeleine Grumet (1990a) says, both the inner and the outer voice, the spontaneous and the considered (p. 322). Grumet (1990) speaks of voice in autobiographical studies as a metaphor for feminist theory and pedagogy -- voice as resistance, voice as promise of cultural transformation, voice as exposition of private and hidden histories that may have been excluded from the normative discourse of

classroom curriculum (p. 277 – 279). Rather than taking one view of voice and holding it superior to another, I like Grumet’s notion of “the chorus that is our own voice” (p. 281). “We are both the writers and readers of our own stories, and we diminish our experience and our rhetoric if we limit ourselves to only one voice” (p. 281). In connection with identity studies, Grumet, like myself, recognizes identity as “a choral and not a solo performance” (p. 281). She hears the voices of educational theory in autobiography, sung in three parts -- situation, narrative, and interpretation (p. 281). “All three voices usher from one speaker and...each becomes a location through which the other is heard. None is privileged” (p. 282). The notion of voice as location, a place of intersection and reflection, creates new connections for me, new wonderings:

Voice as locus of stories

Stories as locus of voice

Stories as locus of identity

Voice as locus of identity

Identity as locus of voice

As I find my own voice through story, I listen through the telling, for the voices and stories of my students. Story gives me the opportunity to be mindful, re-mindful, and sometimes regretful of the stories I have missed, the voices of the children who slipped between the bar lines and sang in registers I did not hear.

To see my stories as research is to see story as data, form and method, three balls of yarn intertwined and interconnected. They are tangled, yet

possible to tease out; difficult to separate, yet with effort can be unwound. They require inordinate amounts of attention and reflection, perhaps a large magnifying glass and a fine crochet hook, in order to unravel even a few strands. My stories tell me who I am, where and how I belong. They lead me to educational settings where I listen for the powerful influences on my students' identities, on their voices and on the places they hold. Ultimately, I wish to use my own exploration through the means of story as a way of engaging others in the pursuit of making a difference in the lives of the students we teach.

Hear the voices –

dissonant – cacophonous – discordant -- out-of-tune – off-key – sour notes -- swan songs – medleys – codas – bridges – twangs -- symphonies – synchronies – syncopated sighs -- voices all in unison -- variations on a theme – descants – accompaniments — voices in a chorus – lone voices -- voices that can pierce – voices that object -- decry – accuse – voices striking chords – glottal – labial – guttural voices– lingual – nasal – palatal voices – melodious – mellow -- harmonious voices – hollow tones -- overtones – undertones – monotones -- sharp voices – flat voices – voices that glide – swinging voices – singing voices -- resonant refrains – joyful voices – angry voices -- voices steeped in pain – voices of the past – voices of the earth – voices of humanity – voices of the heart

VOICES OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING, CULTURE AND DIFFERENCE

My father, an enlightened spirit,
believed in man.

My grandfather, a fervent Hasid,
believed in God.

The one taught me to speak, the other to sing.
Both loved stories.

And when I tell mine, I hear their voices.
Whispering from beyond the silenced storm,
they are what links the survivor to their memory.

Elie Wiesel (1972) *Souls on Fire*

By permission

Voices of Home

Little wooden stoop so small
Barely space for my mother and me.
We sit on chairs, the pail between us,
plucking the chicken for Shabbos soup.

Every Friday, it's the same,
boiled chicken, rice, knaidlech, too.
"Too much salt," my father will say,
"Not the way MY mother made it!"

She lights the matches, one by one,
singeing, tweezing carefully.
I watch her hands; they show me how,
Our Fridays, together, Ma and me.

My parents were born in Russia. They came as children to Canada between pogroms and the First World War. They observed Jewish religious laws and practices very closely. Their families had suffered many losses in "the old country" and because of their many fears and their strong convictions, "sticking together" was an important watchword in our home. Home – the place where I first hear the voices of who I am and where I belong.

In our home we practised age-old traditions – we had two sets of dishes, one for meat and one for dairy; our meat was *kosher*, having been killed under

rabbinical supervision, and we ate no pork (“God forbid!” my mother would say). I learned that my neighbourhood friends ate hamburgers and hotdogs, meatloaf and shepherd’s pie, all of which were considered *traif*, not koshered, and, therefore, forbidden in my home. I was stuffed instead with *knishes* and *gefilte fish*, *lokshen kugel* and *brisket*. We ate Kardish’s “rye bread with caraway” during the weekdays, and *challah* twist (egg bread) on the weekends. Neighbours who came into our store bought “English” bread – Walker’s white, sliced and packaged distinctively in a waxy blue-and-white checkerboard wrap. I loved my Jewish bread, but often longed to be a Walker’s girl.

Every Friday night, my mother covered her head with a clean cloth, and with welcoming arms outstretched, she beckoned the Sabbath to enter our home. She lit the *Shabbos* candles, five of them, she said, so that my father, she, and the three of us would all be blessed for the week to come. We shared a *Shabbos* dinner, always with boiled chicken and chicken soup. It was a ritual, something expected, familiar and warm.

From time to time our grandfather came from Montreal to visit us. My mother’s father. His special presence changed our daily routines while he was there. A memory, age four:

At the head of our table for the Shabbos meal, he takes my father’s seat and breaks the bread. My father is not happy, displaced from his place. He will complain to my mother on Monday. On Sunday morning, my grandfather and I sit together on the bathroom floor, the linoleum, black, painting the toilet seat,

white. We count in Yiddish with every stroke, Ein, Tzvei, Drei, Fier. "Ma! Zaida's teaching me! Ma! Zaida lets me paint!" Then, I tear open the huge cardboard box he has brought. A Sunshine tricycle, gleaming red, for me alone. I burst with joy. I ride one block and call out to him as he watches. "Zaida! Come and turn me around!" He runs for me, laughing, to the end of my world and turns me back safely on my pathway home. I pedal swiftly, the wind on my tongue, and I call him again when my round trip is done. "Zaida! Zaida! Turn me around!" He heeds my call; he's always there. I am the rider, but he gives me wings. Calm and smiling, tall and golden – my zaida, my own.

My sense of home and family was positive and very strong. I knew who I was and how secure I felt in the arms of my parents and my grandfather. As Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) tells us: "Specific everyday tasks can be life-giving, binding individuals to each other and to the past ... building blocks of identity" (p. 131). In keeping with tradition, my sisters and I went to *cheder* (Hebrew School) after regular school from Mondays to Thursdays each week, and again on Sunday mornings. We learned to read and write in Hebrew, the language of the sacred texts. We learned to recite *B'reisheet...* (In the beginning...) -- from the first book of the Bible -- and to compete with classmates in timed speed reading. Our family attended the synagogue regularly and my sisters and I got a new outfit once a year, at *Rosh Hashana* (Jewish New Year).

Yiddish melodies warbled in my home. My mother, lost in reverie as she scrubbed the kitchen floor, replicated the ancestral tones of life in a minor key, often sighing, her voice fragile and shaky. My father, emulating the famous tenor voices of Kussevitzky and Jan Peerce, practised his cantorial chants religiously.

The inspiration of his muses sweetly spun on his old 33s, resonating throughout our house on Sunday afternoons.

I often went to *shul* (synagogue) with my father and sat in the men's section, strictly forbidden for girls, enveloping myself in the voices of male prayer. Strangely, I could always hear their individual voices, though all sang from the same page. Mr. Cohen's voice was sweet and smooth like honey, melting malleably into the congregational chant. The cantor's voice was soulful and reverent, his eyes lifting every few minutes to check in with God. Mr. Goldstein's voice scraped metallically, like a grater grinding tin rather than potatoes for *latkes* (pancakes). And then there was my father's voice, proud, practised and pronounced, his phrases noticeably ending just before or just after everyone else's.

Voices of home, family, religion and culture were everyday sounds that marked my life. I became a living embodiment of those voices; I hear them to this day. Who I was and where I belonged were given, unquestioned, embraced and very clear. Even today, with the intervention of decades of time and lifelong experiences in the world beyond home, when I hear and read "Jewish" stories, I recognize the voices on a very personal level. It is a recognition that almost doesn't need the story told. There is a felt familiarity and deep connection, a physically comforting sense of home. As each teller speaks, I recognize the syntax and intonation, the sense of humour or expression of sorrow. I can see their gestures, smiling as I visualize the familiar shrugs, smirks and frowns. The language may be English, but the story is Jewish.

As I read Barbara Myerhoff's (1978) exploration of aging through the storied voices of elderly Jews in a California retirement home, those voices remind me of my beloved grandfather and of old aunties in my own family. Rachel, one of the women in the retirement home, talks about her sense of Jewishness and how it became part of her very being:

These things were injected into you in childhood and chained together with that beautiful grandmother ... You could not just put it aside when you don't agree any more. When it goes in ... this way ... Jewish comes up in you from the roots and it stays with you all your life."

(Myerhoff, p. 235)

Such vivid images of injection, chaining together, and strong rootedness provide an extremely powerful source of identification. Zeitlin (1997), in the process of collecting Jewish stories, including folk tales passed down through generations and family memories from a vast array of North American Jews, is convinced that there is "a core Jewish American experience" (p. 22). The stories of Jews who were Hasidim, Sephardim, Russian immigrants or even Jews of the American revolutionary war hold something recognizable for Zeitlin. What is this recognizability? This core experience?

Zeitlin speaks of "the ineffable," (p. 23) the deeper strands that perhaps cannot be explained or told but are felt, that certain something beyond expression, akin to the French "je ne sais croix." My parents spoke of people or places having a *Yiddishe tam*, a Jewish flavour, the recognizability being compared to taste or smell, as familiar as chicken soup or matzo balls. While I

cringe to consider the Jewish experience in essentialist terms, I confess that I understand this recognizability.

What characterizes Jewish experience, I suppose, is the connection to a long history of living in the Diaspora as wanderers. Jews live inside the mainstream culture wherever they are, and, at the same time, they are outside, in the margins. They have spent centuries seeking a home and place to belong, and what they say and how they say it reflects this experience in what have become familiar ways. Corey Fischer, storyteller with A Traveling Jewish Theatre, tells this beautiful myth:

Once there was a people who were scattered over the entire earth. Everything was taken from them. Their Queen wandered from land to land, disguised as a beggar. As she wandered and as she traveled, she saw that she would have to find a way for her people to remember themselves. She gave them Yiddish ... The language was like a golden thread pulled from the Queen's garment. It bound the people together. And they used it. They used it to mend and they used it to weave and they wove it into poems and songs and dreams and they made themselves a home in the language.
(in Zeitlin, p. 85)

Language and stories are inextricably bound to our sense of home and belonging. Onomatopoeic words fill the tongue and the throat with home – *shmeer* and *schmaltz* drip with the very fat being spread; *khacking* clears the throat. If you've got *chutzpah*, the gall of it all is embodied in the utterance. A single familiar word can hold a myriad of understood meanings. I am reminded of an old Jewish joke:

Three Jewish women get together for lunch. As they are being seated in the restaurant, one takes a deep breath and gives a long, slow, "Oy." The second woman also takes a breath and sighs, "Oy." The third woman begins to frown and says impatiently,

"Girls, I thought we agreed we weren't going to talk about the children."

For the "wandering Jew," then, home is portable. Language and faith are easily transported from place to place. They need to be. As travellers we carry our stories with us, housing identity and home, like turtles with protective shells, on our backs.

"The old people look around their houses
and ponder what to take [to the nursing
home]... every object becomes a container
... becomes a reservoir of memories."

Meyerhoff in Zeitlin, p. 244

"They told their child to pack some things
because they would be leaving in a hurry.
and he pondered as to what he should
take." [Holocaust in Hungary]

Meyerhoff in Zeitlin, p.244

*"So in my life, I carry with me everything –
all those people, all those places. I carry
them around until my shoulders bend."*

*Meyerhoff, quoting Shmuel,
in Zeitlin, p. 247*

Where do I belong?

In the warmth of my mother's arms;
in the smells of her kitchen;
in the sizzle of Chanukah latkes;
in the tastes of my father's store;
in the songs and gestures of a people;
in cahoots with my sisters;
curled up with my children;
alongside my students;
in dialogue with the teachers;
in compassion with the learners;
in the everyday presence
of each sacred moment

I am a part of

Essential constituent
Component
Equal portion of the whole

~AND YET~

I am apart from

Separate
At a distance
Different

Such strength in the voices of home. A child's sense of identity and belonging are so tied to those earliest times and places. I think of Raymond, in my classroom, and how much home meant to him.

Raymond lives with his mom and two younger brothers. On top of the fact that English is his second language, his speech is extremely difficult to understand. He is unable to articulate consonant sounds, either in Chinese or in English, but has picked up the musicality of both languages, the patterns of syntax and inflection, the question's rise and the statement's fall. Until the arrival of the planned intervention by the speech pathologist, I depend on Raymond's "melodies" and my own listening ability to decipher his communication efforts.

It is clear from the outset that Raymond's mom has a very difficult time handling her three sons. They all come to school for an initial conference so that I can find out more about Raymond's home background, his likes, his dislikes, habits, etc. I hold these conferences with all of the new families each year, finding that the information I learn is most helpful in getting to know my students and the dynamics at work in their families.

During this initial conference, Raymond's little brothers pull out toys from every shelf. They begin throwing things around, darting from one activity to another in a very excited manner. I stop them part way and say they need to put back what they are finished with. All three stare at me, not understanding the instructions. I show them and offer to help them do it. The amazed looks tell me that putting things away is not something to which they are accustomed.

Through the interpreter, the mom tells me that the boys are "out of hand" at home – they scribble all over the walls, they scream and yell, and go to bed when they want. She tells me she has no idea how to handle them. The father

is out-of-town a lot and she feels like a single parent, on her own with the kids. She tells me that although the younger ones are "active," Raymond is "bad." He does many things to upset her. I listen carefully, asking questions about the situation when appropriate, and try to be as supportive as I can be. This mom has so much on her plate. I let her know of services available in the Chinese community to help her. She is reluctant. To ask for help is seen as weakness. She fears inviting a violation of her family's privacy.

One day Raymond comes to school and rushes up to me in the school yard, very excitedly. He wants to show me what he has in his school bag. When he opens it up, I can't believe my eyes. There are stacks and stacks of \$100 bills. "Where is this from?" I ask. "My home," he tells me. At that moment a screaming and harried mom appears across the yard. "Raymond! Raymond!" She is yelling at the top of her lungs, still wearing her housecoat, her hair completely dishevelled. I go with Raymond to make sure she gets back the money. "You see!" she says. "He so bad!" and she growls at him with a look to match her voice.

I am very concerned about Raymond having stolen from his own home, but I am also concerned about the reasons why such huge wads of money are available to him. The family seems to have so little, and yet that school bag was so full!

At school, a speech therapist begins to work with Raymond and gives me some instruction in helping him articulate the consonant sounds. He enjoys the extra attention and works hard to make himself clearer. As our relationship grows, his achievements encourage me, and things seem to calm down at home for a while.

A few months later, Raymond arrives at school with bruise marks on his face, very close to the eye. When I ask him what has happened, he acts it out for me, as he says, "My mom do it." He pretends to punch himself, over and over. "Your mom did that to you?" I show my fist, too. "Yes," he says. I feel

sick at hearing this confirmation as I am now obliged to report his disclosure to the child welfare authorities. My phone call prompts immediate action.

The day after telling my story to the intake worker, Raymond is not at school. I feel very worried, check with the principal, and find out that Raymond has been removed from the home and taken into foster care. The following day he arrives to school late, by cab, accompanied by the foster mother. She is not Chinese. Raymond looks completely lost; his face and eyes speak volumes to me of his bewilderment and sadness. He shows me his lunch bag. The food she has sent is totally different from what he is used to at home. The woman speaks to him in English, of course, but I notice that her manner is dispassionate, matter-of-fact, distant. He's just one of many children who have stayed temporarily with her. I see right away that Raymond's placement is not positive for him. He has been immersed in a situation so foreign to him – culture, language, food, family style – there is no way that he feels safe and comforted in that environment.

At school, Raymond acts out his confusion, finding it hard to settle. He creates arguments with his classmates, dissolving into tears easily. I try to spend extra time with him, to help him feel that school is at least one stable place to be. I try to reassure him that his classmates and I will be here, day after day, and will continue to care about him, no matter what. But I see on his face the pain of not being home. Regardless of how he has been treated there, home is the place he wants to be. Home is where he belongs.

His mom is not permitted to see him for two weeks. She then appears in court. If she agrees to participate in parenting classes, including ways to manage angry feelings, then she will be allowed to see Raymond, and, as she progresses, he will be able to return home. The mother refuses to do this. She says in court that she has not hurt him, that he has bumped himself on something hard and that he is lying. The situation remains in a stand-off, both mother and child extremely unhappy without each other. After some time, and

some informative counselling from the social worker involved, the mother tells the truth. Her fear of incarceration has kept her silent. She admits that she has great difficulty controlling her anger towards Raymond, and that yes, she has punched him. She agrees to ongoing counselling.

The day arrives for Raymond to return home. The arrangement is for his mother to pick him up from school. When she arrives at the classroom door, I can see the trauma that she, too, has been through. I can see the unmistakable relief and sheer joy to see her son again. They run to each other, clutching and crying. My own tears release the joy and pain I both witness and experience.

It is so clear to me what home, even an abusive home, means to a child. I understand the resilience of the human spirit, the will to try again, the determination to make things better this time. I realize that taking a child away from family, although safety and necessity may require it, may not feel like a "good" thing at all. It may feel like a form of punishment. The child longs to belong at home with parents and family.

I reflect on the weighty power and responsibility we have as parents, to ensure that home is a safe and caring place, because, no matter what, our children feel it is where they belong and where they wish to be.

Raymond's difference in culture and language, and his ability to participate fully in school were so affected by the internal and external voices that influenced his life. I was not aware of all the nuances and details of his story, of his culture, and of the intricate family relationships that had been forged over time. I did know, however, the significance of those early voices of home. As Carollyne Sinclair (1994) so aptly quotes from Stephen Shaw (1990, p. 226) in her phenomenological study of home in the classroom:

For almost everyone the notion of home is usually a positive one. It is the known as opposed to the unknown; it is certainty as opposed to uncertainty, security rather than insecurity, the knowledge that in the final analysis someone else, our parents, will make the necessary decisions and will protect us from harm.

(in Sinclair, p. 7)

Although “home is defined in different ways, depending on who we are ... what we all have in common in our personal definition of home is the familiarity and intimacy found in relationships” (Sinclair, p. 10), whether positive or not. Like Sinclair, in making every effort to make my classroom “a place of intimacy, familiarity and trust where I could create a place of ever-increasing openness in which children could grow” (p. 18), I saw that Raymond wanted more than anything for his own home to be home. This did not deter me in any way from striving to make my classroom a home for my students. In fact, I worked all the harder at it, after facing the reality that there may be limits to what one can achieve in a school setting, and that I had better do whatever was humanly possible for me.

Voices of Authoritative Discourse

With such a strong sense of identity and belonging, or perhaps because of it, I experienced such shock and confusion upon entering the world outside of my home. When I played with the kids on my street, became a part of my local community and went to school, I found that my own sense of a single, unified and clear identity was challenged. There seemed to be so many other sides and parts of me, layers and questions and multiplicities bubbling up, all of which I worked hard to submerge, assuming that it was very important for me to be one,

unified, consistent whole. Is this, too, the experience of my students? Some of them? All of them?

Daniel Yon (2000) confirms this “passion for identity” (p. 1) and our difficulty with the questions. When “assumptions about sameness or difference between selves and communities [are] brought into question ... people begin to reflect upon who they are or worry about what they are becoming” (p. 2). In the school community, I felt the need to submerge the Jewish part of my identity in favour of identities that seemed to be more favourable in that community. I feared that I would not fit in; I would be seen as different. There were no other Jewish children in my class. Although I could sense in some small measure that my identity was larger than the one-ness I brought from home, I always felt compelled to choose, and, in so doing, I began to recognize, as Yon puts it, that “[i]n the process of claiming who one is, one is also announcing who one is not” (p. 102).

To have a singular identity was self-limiting, placing me in the midst of either/or thinking. Both Yon and socio-cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, tell us that constructing identity is a very complex process, “continuous and incomplete,” that can “shift and change in contradictory ways” (Yon, 2000, p.13). In relation to culture, gender, race, class or religion, the identity of the sociological subject is “mediated and produced by cultures and socialization ... the result of symbolic interaction between the individual and ... ‘significant others’” (p. 13). However, it is the “condition of fragmentation, of multiple, competing identities, that makes for the postmodern subject” (pp. 13 - 14).

Both Yon and Hall move away from the notion of an “integral, originary and unified identity” (Hall, 1996, p. 1). Both, rather, think of identity and belonging in terms of discursive fields. The practices and positions of each field of discourse shape how we come to think. A particular discourse may facilitate our shared understandings, but at the same time “may work to constrain, set up parameters, limits and blind spots of thinking” (Yon, p. 3). Referring to Foucault, Yon says, “Discourse disciplines subjects even as it positions them...” (p. 3).

Yon and Hall’s views make sense of my own childhood experiences of feeling torn and fragmented. I belong *here*; therefore, I do not belong *there*. And yet, I *do* belong there, too. There is a “correct” way for me to be at home and another way at school. I can do both, but I am unable to achieve a sense of unity in doing so. Hall (1996) says, “[I]dentities are never unified ... increasingly fragmented and fractured ... multiply constructed ... across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions” (p. 4). Specific discourses become “authoritative” or “dominant” (Yon, p. 4). I am reminded of Helene Cixous (1991) who writes of her struggle with what she terms “the code” or “the Law” (p. 40), the authoritative discourse that informed her of who she was and who she should be. The prescriptions and judgments within that Law, regarding her Jewishness and her gender identity, caused her intense inner conflict, for she felt unable to simply conform.

In Bakhtin’s (1981) view, there is a constant struggle between such authoritative discourse and our own internally-persuasive discourse, the intersection of which creates a dialogic space, a site for possible growth, learning

and transformation. Yon and Hall echo his voice, but with some variation. For Yon (2000), it is “the lived tensions of identity and the ways that culture is experienced” which manifest hope for new practices, particularly in the field of antiracism. The “elusiveness” of cultural definitions, because of lived ambivalence, conflict and multiplicity, bring increased attention to “multiple voices that are competing and contradictory” (pp. 9 -10). A new kind of polyphonic listening is, therefore, demanded. As a child, I listened as attentively as I could to the authoritative discourse of home, and experienced the impossibility of a strict singularity when I continued to hear, as I strove to block out, the competing and contradictory voices of other authorities:

Mary Delaney (pseudonym), a neighbour of ours, takes me to a tap-dancing lesson. Mary is thirteen, and I am eight. My mother thinks well enough of Mary to entrust my care to her. We dance in the hall of St. Margaret Mary's Church – shuffle-step-step, shuffle-hop-step – and I dream of the day that maybe, just maybe, my parents will buy me real tap shoes, the day when everyone will hear my personal Morse Code clicking out loudly on a stage with a hardwood floor.

On the way home, interrupting the joyful reverie of my first, and, little did I know, my last tap-dancing class, Mary tells me that she has to stop off to pray at a different church. It is a Catholic convent close by St. Margaret Mary's and just a few blocks from home. As we approach the huge white edifice, whose dome bulges into the sky, I read the sign on the front lawn-- Sisters of the Precious Blood. Their name punctures my dancing dream-world and smears it with new visions – yes, eviscerated nuns, “starchly” dressed in black and white, oozing and dripping red blood from God-knows-where, reaching out to me in

their desperate pain, begging me for my help, praying/playing on my all-too-ready sympathies, transforming me without my consent into, God forbid, a Christian! "Mary," I plead, "I'm not allowed to go in there." "But you have to," she says, "I'm in charge."

I follow her in through the enormous hinged doorway, a massive wooden gateway into a huge, hallow/hollow hall. Dead Jesuses dangling on crosses stare out at me from the walls. Some of them are dripping blood, too! Magnificent stained glass windows inside the dome entice me with the stunning beauty of innocent lambs and kindly shepherds. Mary Delaney kneels down and crosses herself, turning her head critically to glare at me. Her look speaks with authority. I have to kneel; I have to cross myself. These are the rules!

I hear my parents' admonishing voices and feel trapped, torn, no, ripped in half. Maybe I, too, will start bleeding from my wounds. Maybe this is the way they recruit the Sisters of the Precious Blood! I am sure that either the nuns will get me or God will get me. I am doomed in either case. I follow Mary's orders, crumbling to my knees. I mumble under my breath, "God, I don't really mean it."

Rules, all kinds of rules. My parents gave keen, nurturing attention to plant and cultivate in me a strong sense of who I was, and, just in case I should happen to forget (*why leave anything to chance?*), they also made abundantly clear who I wasn't. They pointed out my difference from neighbours and classmates, their intention, I later came to realize, to ensure that I would marry within my own faith. They imbued me with a strong sense of my religious and cultural identity and pride in my background. In carrying on a revered and age-old tradition that spanned thousands of years, they "didn't want me to turn into

someone who was unrecognizable to them” (Morinis, 2002, p. 23). At the same time, they wanted to protect me and shield me from what they saw as the dangers of the world – prejudice, exclusion, and the ever-present threat of anti-Semitism.

While I was encouraged to be a social person and to play with other children in the neighbourhood, I was at the same time warned about “not getting involved” with non-Jewish boys. It was a pretty serious offence, I figured, when those regulations were placed on me as early as five years of age! The instructions were clear, my reactions were confused, but I dared not voice those inner questions. How can friends be all right to play with but not all right to marry? What’s wrong with them? How and why does my Jewishness separate me from others? Is one religion better than another, as my father surely believed? None of this made sense to me. None of this seemed fair.

When secular or Christian holidays came, we did not celebrate those in my home. We didn’t “believe in” Valentine’s Day or even Thanksgiving – and certainly not Christmas and Easter. Even the word “Jesus” was taboo in our house. I got into trouble many times for peeking in the back of an “English” bible, trying to read the forbidden red letters in the New Testament.

Numerous other fruit were forbidden to me, all of which my father so succinctly summed up by saying, “Jewish girls don’t ...” The list was extensive and could always accommodate new items on an as-needed basis – Age 4, Jewish girls don’t whistle, Age 6, Jewish girls don’t fight with their sisters, Age 8,

Jewish girls don't go into churches, and Age 13, Jewish girls don't open their legs!!

When I eventually interrogated my father on the source of these pronouncements, he always said in most reverent and final tones, "Ours is not to question – it's God's will." In those days, I was never sure whether God really made all these rules or whether they were my father's own creations, but in my home, it didn't matter; one was as good as the other! Threats of serious repercussions reminded me not to do what Jewish girls don't. "God will punish you for that!" "You'll be struck dead by lightning!" Every summer, those predictable Ontario thunderstorms vowed to "teach me my lesson."

The daily routine, the food, the sounds, the gestures of home, all pronounced my identity indelibly, all permeated my very being. My parents' verbal warnings and admonitions reinforced the environmental cues. In addition to my own personal experience of steeping in Jewishness, I came to identify with the historical and political experiences of Jews throughout time. I grew up during the years of the Holocaust, but not in Poland, Germany or Russia. I was born and raised in Canada. How is it that I so readily took on the identity of a people? How is it that the horrors of the Holocaust seem, even now, to live within me? Can history be passed on through the blood? Is it possible to physically inherit the collective memory of a people?

Voices of Authoritative Text

In addition to the oral voices of home, printed text seems to play a part in authoritatively passing down a culture. The stories of Sholom Aleichem, for example, or Yiddish writing in the flourishing Jewish newspapers of the time, reflected the shared experiences of Jews, particularly in pre-Holocaust Europe. Prevalent in Jewish homes, even today, is the annual reading and recitation of the Passover *Haggadah* (narrative text). Jews are compelled to retell and remember the story of the Exodus at an annual *seder* (ordered ceremonial dinner), the Hagaddah teaching us not only to remember, but exactly how to remember. It instructs us with an order of the telling as it incorporates various pedagogic devices to stimulate children to attend to its content and message. The story must be told in four different ways so that the message reaches many styles of listeners and learners. Children must be included and participate actively so that they will be familiar with the imperative to pass on the story and its message from generation to generation. The evening begins with the following words:

All who are hungry - let them come and eat.

All who are needy - let them come and celebrate the Passover with us.

... Now we are slaves; next year may we be free.

Rabbi N. Goldberg (1988, p. 8)

We are told that in every generation “one must look upon himself as if he personally had come out from Egypt” (p. 23). The youngest child asks the Four Questions, a ritual meant to encourage the valued disposition for inquiry while it invites the story of the Exodus and its deeper significance. We learn that no one

should ever be enslaved by another and that we should never forget those who are enslaved. In some Hagaddahs, we are reminded of modern-day Pharaohs and our duty to do all we can for universal freedom. While these humanistic messages are passed on, one's identity as a Jew is also being shaped. The annual recitation reinforces the memory and the identity.

Voices of School

The authoritative discourse of home and culture is powerful. When a child starts school, a new authority begins to speak. If the tone of voice is welcoming and curious, reflecting recognition or familiarity with the child's background, the transition may be eased. If the child recognizes him or herself in the culture of the school, the transition may be eased. However, when normative practices are in effect, the child comes face-to-face with an authoritative discourse which is unfamiliar and, in many cases, exclusionary, a discourse not set up to hear the varying voices of children:

For all the exposure to difference in our world today, for all the increasing interest in multiple realities, for all the questioning with regard to the 'canon' or the official tradition of what are considered to be the great works in the history of literature and ideas, we are aware of the persistence of patriarchal thinking where learning and the curriculum are concerned.

Greene (1993, p. 215)

The curricula, standards and accountability that we face as teachers today still seem to come from on high, sent down from the authoritative "God, the Father." Through His "Ministries," we, the teachers, the servants of society, will abide by the "commandments" for fear of falling out of favour, for fear of

punishment, for fear of not living up to the expectations of “big daddy.” Those teachers who are seen as different, unable or unwilling to abide, will suffer “ex-communication.” Those children who do not fit the norms will be marginalized and excluded.

The authoritative voices of school strongly influence our students’ sense of their own personal identities, their identities within the group, and their feelings of belonging. Often, children are assigned identities by their teachers and their classmates. Power relationships, hierarchies and labelled competencies play a pivotal role in telling us who we are, and whether or not, or to what degree, we belong.

When curricula are set in stone, without regard for particular students, there is little opportunity for inclusion of the particular “selves in the making” (Greene, p. 213). A one-size-fits-all curriculum stagnates us, puts us in a concrete mould from which it is difficult to escape. It does not reflect the diversity of our humanness. There is a particular view of what is “normal,” or “meets expectations,” pre-determined and prescribed. This authoritative voice cannot help but exclude those who do not fit.

What were once descriptors of child behaviours common in wide age ranges of development have become the required norms for specific grade levels at specific junctures of time. If Johnny can’t read by March-April of Grade One, Johnny no longer meets expectations, and Johnny is excluded from being seen as a reader. He is less valued by the very words, “not yet meeting” expectations, just as those who “fully meet” or “exceed” expectations hold a place of higher

esteem and inclusion. Our tests, standards and measurement tools are all designed to categorize students, and that very categorization indicates that certain categories are acceptable while others are not.

McDermott (1993) points out how the evaluative measures inherent in normative practices cannot help but place some students in no-win situations. The practice of ranking, hierarchizing and categorizing student achievement within proscribed standards inevitably places those who deviate from the norm in subordinate identity positions. Severe differences may separate those students from the community altogether, labeling them as “ESL,” as a “behaviour problem,” or even, as described in McDermott’s article, as “learning disabled” (p. 271).

Louise was one of those children, easy to label in so many ways:

Louise arrives to the classroom, two sizes too big. Although our family grouping of five, six and seven-year-olds, by its very nature, welcomes children of different shapes and sizes, she stands out as “different” immediately. Her physical development had exceeded her years, and she stands in the classroom, tallest and huskiest. She does not wear her body with grace. Perhaps it is a sudden growth spurt. Perhaps it is a genetic predisposition. She towers, and they cower. It seems that in her discomfort with her own physical presence, she finds a way of being at school, a way dictated by her grandeur. Louise is a bully.

She develops a pattern of sidling up to the youngest and smallest, becoming their protector, and then extorting the small goodies that they have brought to school – a glamorous lipstick, two mint candies, a beaded plastic necklace, a stuffed Winnie the Pooh, a blonde Barbie doll. Her locker and pockets are always stuffed with other people’s belongings. These goods are

often difficult to locate as she creates a huge mess in the locker, cramming in overdue library books, odd socks, scrunched up papers and art projects that I discover are not welcome at home.

Louise's discomfort with academic work is evident. It is extremely difficult for her to focus when working with mathematical processes and almost impossible for her to recall the sounds or appearance of the letters of the alphabet. She is able to remember the configuration of a limited number of words and writes them over and over in her journal – mom, MOM, m-o-m, or MARIANNE, M-a-r-i-anne, one of her favourite "protectees." Other students busily read and write stories, poems, shopping lists, science logs, all so enthused and excited about their learning. Louise's attention seems otherwise occupied. Although she enjoys listening to stories at class Read Aloud, social events take precedence over what might be considered "the work" of the classroom. Trips to her locker are frequent. She always volunteers to accompany one of the younger students to the washroom. Many of the children complain about her – "Louise took my pencil" – "Louise isn't sharing the crayons" – "Louise says she won't be my friend unless I give her my money" – "Louise won't let me in the dress-up centre." If something goes missing in the classroom, all eyes turn to Louise.

Louise loves that dress-up centre and chooses it every day to enact the imagined events of home. I say "imagined" because I come to know that she enacts events as she wishes them to be, not as they are in her own home. In the play house, she is either the mother, in charge, giving orders to which no refusal is permitted, or she is the family cat, stealthy, lurking, slinkily rubbing up against legs to experience contact and enforce what I see as much-needed stroking. As the cat, she is able to avoid direct conversation but her movements meow with intense meaning.

Louise's dad has severe problems with drugs and alcohol and has frequently assaulted her mom. He has been unable to hold down a steady job.

I am told by the welfare worker that Louise's mom is emotionally unstable, at times able to cope, and at other times barely scraping sanity to survive. She, too, has used drugs to blot out the realities of her situation. As a result, Louise is in and out of foster care, often being removed from the home at particularly bad times. A social worker accompanies Louise to our report card conference, and we all wait anxiously to see if Louise's mother will join us. The only math work of importance to Louise since setting up the student-led conference has been counting the days and sleeps until she will see her mom again.

It is during one of those periods of foster care that Louise begins to tell me about some of her home experiences. She speaks as if the traumas in her life are all just a matter of course. She has mastered the art of the "no big deal." When her dad is "mad" or "sick," she and her younger brother "just" lock themselves in their room. She tells me that she doesn't pay attention to what her dad is yelling or throwing. "I just don't listen," she says nonchalantly. "I only have to make sure I take care of my baby brother so he won't be scared. So we play games and I sing." She tells me about the time that her father lit a fire and one section of the house was destroyed. "We just had to be at the back; that's all."

It is towards the end of the school year that Louise's mother cleans up her own act. She, usually the ever-forgiving mom, finally puts her foot down and goes through official channels to keep her husband out of the house until he undertakes an alcohol and drug rehabilitation program and holds down a steady job. She receives strong support from her social worker, starts taking a course and plans to go to work in the fall. Louise and her brother return to live with her.

At the end of June, the children in the class decide to write me beautiful letters to say goodbye. I receive cards, pictures, poems and gifts. Louise stomps up to me and hands me a blank piece of paper. "I can't write," she says. I can see that she wants to give me something. "Aha," I say, "an invisible

message! It's a little hard for me to read. Can you think of a few words you know, Louise, to help me out? Could draw me a picture? I'd really like that." "O.K.," she says. *Encouraged by the confirmation that her efforts will be appreciated, she goes off to work. As she leaves for recess, she shoves the completed letter at me. "Here," she says gruffly. "This is for you." She has worked hard at it for over an hour, pondering, erasing, sounding and writing. I sit down beside her to read it:*

*"I love Ada, my Favorit gril.
my Favorit girl. Ada Ada Ada
Ada Ada Ada Ada. I love you"*

"This is a beautiful letter, Louise. Thank you so much. I will always remember you and your kind words."

We hug. I feel so moved by Louise's reaching out. Although some might describe her actions as clumsy or aggressive, or her work as so primitive and repetitive, I see the letter and her ability to give it to me as incredibly positive. She has made a real attempt to communicate with me, a very successful one. I have high hopes that in the fall Louise will continue to move forward – extend herself to relate more positively with her classmates, maybe even find a friend that she doesn't need to coerce.

In September, as suddenly as Louise had entered our school, she leaves it. When I inquire about her at the office, I am told that she and her brother have moved and go to another school. Is she with her mom? Has dad followed through on the rehabilitative measures? No information is available.

As teachers, we have such limited time with our students. In transient communities, even one school year may be longer than we have. I worry how Louise will be received in the next classroom. Will she be outside the

mainstream again? Will she continue to behave aggressively toward others? Will her casual, "who cares" attitude push others away? Will her way of being at school condemn her to labels regarding her ability and her behaviour? Will she be able to establish some connection and trust with her new teacher and with her classmates? Will her learning continue to be affected by her home life? There is so much more to Louise than she shows. Will the voice beneath her words and actions be heard?

Vivian Paley (1992), in her work with Kindergartners, observes that it is not only teachers who create the hierarchies in classrooms. "Certain children will have the right to limit the social experiences of their classmates. Henceforth a ruling class will notify others of their acceptability, and the outsiders learn to anticipate the sting of rejection" (p. 3). Those in powerful positions, even children, can manipulate, constrain, shape, coerce or define the identities available in the practice. According to Paley, "although we all begin school as strangers, some children never learn to feel at home, to feel they really belong. They are not made welcome enough" (p. 103).

It is very important to look at who makes the judgments about what is seen or read as acceptable, and what are considered appropriate acts of belonging. Sometimes there are unwritten social or cultural expectations, unseen, unspoken, but acted upon. Sometimes, even mandated governmental policies, meant to be inclusive, reflect assumptions that have not been contested openly.

Neil Bissoondath (2002) points out that in the incorporation of Canada's Multicultural policy, there is a normative, societal expectation for those with ethnic backgrounds. "Multiculturalism is ethnicity as public policy: it is society's view of the individual's assigned place within its construct" (p. 223). He objects: "[T]he specifics of my personality did not freeze ... into a form suitable for multicultural display" (p. 222). He fears for the stereotypes bound up in such display. "To pretend that one has not evolved, as official multiculturalism so often seems to demand of us, is to stultify the personality, creating stereotype, stripping the individual of uniqueness: you are not yourself, you are your group" (p. 222). Bissoondath says that there is "no space for government to tell anyone who he or she is" (p. 226).

It is my second year teaching. I prepare the paints this morning, freshening up the now watery scarlet by adding a scoop of powdered tempera, dumping out the aging blue, its sulphuric smell overtaking this corner of the classroom. I make sure that a wide array of colours is here so that the children can express themselves brightly and darkly and in all the shades and hues of their four-year-old lives. Emma approaches me. "Miss, you forgot one of the colours!" "What's that?" I ask curiously. "You don't have the colour of Babu's skin. How can he make his face?"

It is my first realization that I, without thinking, have performed a discriminatory act. In my total self-delight of mixing up the gorgeous colours, I have neglected to consider the real students of my class. My memory shifts to my days as a student in teachers' college and my art class there. "Here is the formula for flesh colour," announces the instructor. Imagine! I learned a formula, one equation, one colour for all skin. I have mindlessly followed his instructions throughout my campus experiences, all my practice teaching and

through my first year in my own classroom! I always begin with a pot of white paint. To it I add one spoonful of red, to make pink, and then sprinkle with a pinch of yellow and a touch of brown. It is a habit, already ingrained.

I cringe at my ignorance and thoughtlessness. The last thing I intend to do is to place one of my students in a marginalized position. I see myself as a culturally-sensitive teacher, always seeking to make my classroom a welcome place for my students. I believe that my own childhood experience of living outside the lines has given me clues to shape my own practice more inclusively. I now see how easy it is to omit and exclude. It wrenches me that it takes no effort whatsoever to be part of the one-size-fits all mentality that I so often rail against. I am grateful to Emma for her attention to the details, the details so simple and yet of such significance. Her keen observation and her willingness to share teach me an important lesson.

Racial prejudice, according to Fleras and Elliott (1999), consists of racial or ethnic relations which arise from the action of the majority who define and enforce patterns of exclusion; knowingly or not, the assumptions of the dominant affect their view and their relations with others (p. 23). Through the lesson I learned from Emma, in the simple act of making “skin-coloured” paint, I may have been an unwitting participant in such systemic racism. As teachers we must look very closely at our own responsibility in the perpetuation of differential treatment of those belonging to a variety of cultural or “racial” groups. We need to critically reflect upon our own complicity (p. 74). Do we challenge our own behaviours and beliefs? Do we question those of our colleagues? This is sometimes difficult, especially when concerns about professionalism and “codes of ethics” arise. However, is silence and complicity the only alternative? It is important for

us to find ways of openly stating what we notice, at the same time respecting the dignity of all concerned.

George Sefa Dei (1996) concurs with Fleras and Elliott, encouraging teachers to examine how we ourselves are implicated in the anti-racist dialogue (p. 12). Our personal assumptions impinge on our pedagogical ideas (p. 14). He alerts us to be aware of the role of systemic barriers to self and group actualization (p. 16). How do we raise such awareness? According to the research of Lisa Delpit (1995) “the white community believed there were no racial tensions ... we get along in this town ... Two groups of people living side by side, smiling and greeting each other every morning and evening, yet holding completely different views of the realities surrounding them – one group never conceiving of the other’s sense of powerlessness and rage” (p. 134). Why is it that some seem to be aware and others not? How do we facilitate this awareness? How do we operate from an inquiring stance, a noticing and curious stance? Not everyone is as astute as Emma. Not everyone hears Emma’s voice.

McCarthy (1988) says that our current liberal pluralist approach, to sensitize white teachers to minority differences, is still a very naïve view. Though we may be well meaning, we make assumptions that do not recognize the realities experienced by minority groups in such areas as employment, levels of income, school drop-out rate, or access to educational opportunities leading to college degrees, etc. How do we incorporate these qualitative differences in experiences into our teacher education programs? How do we ensure that

teacher educators search for ways to acknowledge and open for discussion the “tensions, contradictions and discontinuities” (p. 38) of our varied lives and worldviews? McCarthy sees school as a site which produces a “politics of difference” and a struggle over unequal resources. He says we need to see literature on these tensions and contradictions, we need critical scholarship, and we must integrate into our research the “non-synchrony” of our differing realities (p. 45). I long to hear the voices of those differing experiences.

Judith Butler’s (1997) discussion on the construction of gender is an illuminating one when considering expected or demanded societal accommodations. Butler does not see gender as a fixed identity from which various acts proceed, but rather “an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through *stylized repetition of acts*” (p. 402). She sees gender identity as a “performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo” (p. 404). In other words, even when it comes to gender, Butler says there are “normative” gestures and movements to be performed in order to be seen as the “correct” gender.

L A B E L S

Different

unlike

distinguishable in nature, form, or quality

DISTINCT

separate

unusual

(Ayto's Dictionary of Word Origins, p. 171)

Difference

I want to make a difference –

Yes, that's so positive –

Make a change, beyond the usual,

Make things better, make a contribution that matters.

And yet

When I experience difference –

I am unlike, unusual, separate.

I am deficient,

deviant in my difference.

Can they not see I am unique?

Can they not accept me as I am?

Why doesn't my difference make a difference?

Jacob is different. His difference is so visible. I learn from the experience of having Jacob in my classroom how easy it is to ostracize, exclude, and conclude that he just doesn't belong in a "regular" classroom. But I learn from Jacob that he has much to teach. He provides such opportunity for deep listening and compassion; I will never forget his lessons:

Jacob is almost eight years old when he first comes to my classroom. It is well after the September school start, and when I discover that his sister has begun her school year on time, I wonder why Jacob hasn't. Jacob is much bigger than the other children in my class. He enters the classroom with large and awkward movements. Suddenly, he charges toward the piano, hammers on it forcefully and then veers off to the fish tank, seemingly oblivious to the people in the room. I am told very matter-of-factly that he has had no previous schooling either in Canada or in the Philippines, his country of origin. No reasons are given. His mom and dad seem very nervous at this initial meeting, revealing very little about Jacob to me. When I ask what they can tell me to enable me to understand Jacob better and to be the best teacher I can, they tell me only that he fights a lot with his sister at home. When I ask about his prior schooling, they say that they decided to keep him out of school until they thought he was ready. I sense that Jacob's story remains untold and may be difficult to tell. I wonder why someone of eight years of age is not "ready." I wonder what meaning there is behind Jacob's unusual way of moving and the shouts and squeals now exploding from his mouth.

It isn't until the parents leave my room that the principal informs me that Jacob, in his home country, had been unable to cope in a regular classroom setting. He has been kept home. Efforts for him to attend Kindergarten, and later, grade one, have failed. Not only was he unable to cope, but his former

teachers were unable to cope with his presence. The principal tells me that in an initial assessment carried out by our School Board, there is a strong suspicion that Jacob has autistic tendencies. No formal testing has yet been done since the family arrived in Canada. I have very little knowledge of what "autism" actually means. I have met a couple of other children who were labelled as such in a previous school, but I have no first-hand experience myself.

A barrage of observations and tests is carried out over the next few days, in cooperation with the school officials and the medical community, in order to make clear Jacob's condition. It is determined that he suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism, and I am told that because his is a very mild case, he should fit nicely into my class, with the occasional help of a part-time Special Education Assistant.

When Jacob comes to our class, nothing he does seems mild to me. Here, in an environment filled with twenty other students, he seems unable to stop himself from making loud, screaming noises. He bangs on the piano every time he passes it and perseverates until someone is able to distract his attention with something else. He engages in much repetitive behaviour -- whacking the pointer on the chalkboard over and over again, or rocking himself for long periods. Sometimes he flops down on the floor and bangs his feet until stopped. As exciting and interesting as I try to make my lessons, it seems impossible for him to sit during group discussions and to connect meaningfully with the material being discussed. He seems to be involved in his own private experience, not in what is going on in the classroom. As I lead the class through a language game or a math lesson, I find his behaviour very disruptive and distracting, and I am not sure if or what he is learning.

Things are a little more positive during the time of open centres each day, when children are involved in free-choice activities and can move about. Jacob, although very excited and sometimes boisterous, is frequently able to find opportunities for focus. He draws the most intricately detailed boats and

airplanes, bringing great admiration from the other students in the class. He takes much pleasure in creating strings of tiny coloured beads, sitting patiently with needle and thread, methodically making his "necklace" longer and longer. In these cases, his perseveration seems productive. Jacob also enjoys experimenting at the water table, even though more often than not, he ends up splashing gleefully, shrieking out loud, and upsetting other classmates as he wets their clothing, apparently without notice or care.

The expectation I set up for myself is to "help" Jacob fit in. I want to let him know what is acceptable in my room. I want the disruptive behaviour to be cut down or eliminated. I want him to pay attention and to learn – if not just like everybody else, then as close to everybody else as possible. I want Jacob's behaviour to subscribe to the orderliness I had already well established in my room. I don't want him to interfere with other people's learning.

How little I know. Fortunately, I am not long left to my own intuitions. We are fortunate in our school to have a special worker who helps the Special Ed Assistant, Jacob, and myself in trying to make sense of this new situation. Having had a great deal of personal experience with autism (both his wife and his son have it), and having studied in depth and conducted workshops in the area of autism, his knowledge is extensive. The support and information he shares with us completely changes my perception of Jacob in the classroom. As a result, my goals, expectations and teaching practice change dramatically over the next few months.

The first thing that I learn is that people with autism do not process stimuli from their environment in the same way that non-autistic people do. Not only is the process different, but also, for an autistic person, the ability to process external stimuli is extremely difficult. Whereas you and I can block out extraneous information to focus attention on the book we're reading or on the person we're looking at, the autistic person cannot, and, therefore, every single visual stimulus bombards that person equally and competitively. The visual

*environment becomes extremely confusing. Similarly, and at the same time, auditory stimuli become totally overwhelming to the autistic person. What becomes "white noise" to us while we attend to the speaker or the teacher – for example, the breathing of the person beside us, the crunch of the paper being tossed into the garbage can, or the roar of the airplane going by outside -- simultaneously vies for the autistic person's attention. Can you imagine the incredible stress and confusion to the senses? As a result, a variety of reactions can occur. What I originally thought were a set of "autistic **mis**behaviours", I find out are reactions to all that bombardment on the senses. Jacob is a person in my class, not trying to outwit the routines, not misbehaving, not wilfully creating a problem, but someone at the mercy of his own body's wiring, responding to how he uniquely perceives his environment.*

Following this initial piece of valuable information, I am fortunate enough to attend a meeting of the local Autistic Society. The guest speaker, Dr. Grant Gillett, a philosopher and neurologist, states the importance of trying to understand what autism is like from the point of view of the autistic person, rather than from our own point of view. He entitles his presentation, "Ways of Knowing," comparing how most children learn through recognizing the typical patterns in daily life and how autistic children may not see or experience such order, pattern and meaning. Autistic children often feel terribly alone, "foreigners in any society," suffering speech and language disorders which affect both their personal and social development. They seem to have an obsessive desire for sameness, creating their own patterns by repeating actions or words, spinning in circles, or banging with their head or feet.

I now understand how Jacob's perseverating behaviour is a cry for security. Dr. Gillett goes on to say that most children, consciously or not, pick out the competent and caring people in their lives and "copy" them. They pick up learning cues by seeing what their parents see; they begin to speak as their parents speak. Most of us organize our understanding by our connection with

others. We learn that our parents protect us and that we can take risks in the world. An autistic child, on the other hand, may not feel such a connection, even with his or her own mother. Other people may appear as objects, no different than a desk or a chair. When there is no assurance of a competent and protective caregiver, the world may seem a very impersonal and scary place. I learn that the processes taken for granted by most of us must be analysed, broken down, and taught to the autistic person. These things don't "just come naturally." Feelings must be articulated, labelled and communicated.

I wonder how it is that we can learn another person's ways of knowing. How is it possible to understand another's way of being in the world? One of the speakers on the follow-up panel is an adult autistic. She is able to speak first-hand of her own experience. She takes a cultural perspective when looking at the "difference" she experienced growing up and suggests that we non-autistics should look at autistic people as people from a different culture. When we meet a person from another culture, we may notice differences, perhaps in appearance or language or customs. We may have a lot of questions about values and background and try to find out in a very respectful manner about that person's culture. We will probably try to share with them aspects of similarity or difference with our own culture. I am so impressed with the speaker's ability to articulate her experience to us. Her message is hopeful and positive, her approach so respectful. Rather than a top-down medical view of curing disease, or perpetuating a value system full of power imbalance, where it's better to be non-autistic than autistic, her suggestion is to take the approach of building bridges across cultures, suspending value judgments, and using an inclusive approach similar to current sociocultural or anti-racist, multicultural education.

I realize that what I need to do is to find out how Jacob learns, what Jacob needs, what makes him comfortable at school, and what makes him uncomfortable. I need to understand his reactions with respect. Instead of trying to fix him or to make him fit a predetermined mould, it is important for me

to find ways that help him feel comfortable and happy coming to school, to find ways that ease the stress he feels. If he needs to rock, then it is important for him to rock. I always sit in my rocking chair to read stories to the class or to gather them around me for important class meetings, but my rocking chair soon becomes Jacob's. I am the person who can figure out how to tell stories or gather groups in other ways, so I willingly relinquish it. At the same time, I need to help him know how the school culture works and to give him as many tools as I can to enable his positive participation. When Jacob really needs to move and be physical, we try to find opportunities to help him do that. He participates in gym class, but most often needs to do his own activity, sometimes amidst the rest of the class, sometimes alongside. There are still many times that his SEA takes him out on the field to play ball or shoot baskets when the echoes in the gym are too intense and the excitement level too high. During in-class activities, I always invite Jacob to join in, whether he is able to or not. When he needs to shout, sometimes he still does it inside the building, and we learn to give him opportunities to do it outside.

Jacob often seeks contact with others now; this is so positive. However, we are troubled frequently by how he goes about making that contact. He might suddenly throw his arms around someone, laugh excitedly, and grab at a belt or other article of clothing and not let go. Many of the children or other adults are put off by these seemingly aggressive acts. Instead of reacting harshly, we find it works best to speak to him softly and soothingly, with affectionate, calm talking, giving words to his actions, such as, "Yes, you really want to make friends with Joanna, and you want to hug her gently. She feels scared when you hug too hard. You need to be so gentle."

For the duration of the school year, we try to accommodate to Jacob's needs as best we can. Some days are easier than others. We are committed to being as flexible as we can and to making whatever adjustments we can. As a

result, Jacob becomes and is able to remain a valued member of our classroom, eventually coming to school daily.

Although his assistant's and my comfort level increases with information and experience, I notice that several teachers on our staff see Jacob's comings and goings as erratic. It appears to them that Jacob is allowed to do "whatever he wants," without any clearly defined expectations. Once he interrupts a solemn whole-school assembly by talking out loud. By the time his assistant realizes that he needs to go out, we see disgusted looks on many staff members' faces as he leaves the gym noisily. I realize that it is important for me to speak at a staff meeting and share with my colleagues what I have experienced and learned about Jacob. It is important to me that the staff looks at Jacob as a treasured child of our shared community, someone that all of us can welcome and support in the school. I don't want him to be considered an oddity, someone outside of the community, someone to ridicule or criticize or ostracize. It is up to me to introduce this person from "another culture" and tell a little about what I have learned from him and his culture. I want the other staff members to appreciate what we are trying to do and at the same time find out information that might transform their own thinking and actions as mine has been transformed. I want them to understand that for Jacob, as for every child in that school, we are trying our best to match our practices to our school-wide philosophy. We are trying to make a difference in the lives of all our children, honouring, to the best of our ability, their individual differences.

Of course, Jacob has a great impact on the other students in my class and in the school. I admire those children and their open willingness to reach out to him. I have to make sure there are plenty of opportunities to discuss openly with the class their concerns and questions, and I find that as Jacob becomes less of a mystery, there are fewer fears, fewer giggles and a minimal number of provocations at Jacob's expense. I am able to ask the students for their understanding, cooperation and respect. In time, my class, as a whole, becomes

extremely supportive of Jacob. They pull together as a community, offering friendship and encouragement to him while he is in school, and always asking after him when he has gone for the day.

I explain to the staff how we try to model for the kids positive reactions and interactions with Jacob, and how quickly they pick up those cues and follow our example. We ask that the staff talk to their own students about Jacob, or invite his assistant or myself to talk with them. We want to alleviate their concerns, answer their questions, and reinforce with them the need to maintain respectful behaviour for every person who attends our school. I close my remarks to the staff by letting them know how I have come to see Jacob as an opportunity for all of us. He gives us a reason to revisit our common purpose, an opportunity for all of us to learn so much, and a chance for us to make a meaningful difference.

I am unsure, to this day, whether I truly heard Jacob's voice, whether I honestly was able to welcome him as compassionately as I desired to do. I do know that he was easy to exclude, easy to measure and judge. Evidence for exclusion was easy to find. The authoritative discourse of a school constructs very real boundaries for those whose difference is so noticeable. I wish to contest those boundaries and to equip myself to deal with whatever particular child walks through my classroom door. I fail to understand why one's difference is still so often seen as something negative. I want to remove the blinders to equal recognition. I want all children to feel security in belonging at school. I want all of us to experience the opportunities for learning with and from others.

Voices of Place

Home, school and society have authoritative voices that inform, assign, and influence identities and sense of belonging. Place and context then seem crucial to the particulars of who we are. When a Jewish story is told, it incorporates the worldly events from the days of Moses and the dire warnings of the prophets; it is filled with the laughter and smells of the Passover seder table; it reels from the persecutions of the wicked Haman, whether or not such events are mentioned in the story. You may be from a *shtetl* (small village) in Europe, you may have landed at the docks in Quebec City in 1912, or you may have raised your family in Vancouver. According to Lenny Bruce's famous monologue, "If you live in New York or any other big city, you are Jewish. It doesn't matter, even if you're Catholic ... If you live in Butte, Montana, you're going to be *goyish* (non-Jewish) even if you're Jewish" (in Zeitlin, p. 22). In these cases, perhaps it is not so much the location but the critical mass of Jewish populations that makes those places "Jewish" or "goyish." Can the presence of people create place?

David Gruenewald (2003a) brings to light, not only the very important contextual and environmental influences on our identities and our experiences, but the need for critical pedagogy and practices which "explicitly examine the place-specific nexus between environment, culture, and education" (p. 10). He sees such a pedagogy as a challenge to educators "to expand the scope of their theory, inquiry, and practice to include the social and ecological contexts of our own, and others', inhabitation" (p. 10). He seeks to challenge and rethink the

taken-for-granted notion of “the classroom as the fundamental site of teaching and learning” and to ensure that “definitions of school achievement ... take into account ... the social and ecological quality of community life” (p. 10) He sees that place-based practices must include local cultural and nature studies (p. 11). Gruenewald acknowledges the “messy complexity” of this type of politics which interrogates the links between environment, culture and education, due to the “uniqueness and diversity of cultural and ecological interactions as they are produced and experienced in particular places” (p. 11).

Gruenewald’s citations and commentary on Haymes’ (1995) *Race, Culture, and the City: A Pedagogy for Black Urban Struggle* have bearing on my own sense of cultural identity and those of the children I teach as well as on the possibilities for “acting on” this “situationality” (Gruenewald, 2003a, p. 5). He writes: “Haymes’ pedagogy is grounded in a spatialized critical social theory ... that recognizes how relationships of power and domination are inscribed in material spaces. That is, places are social constructions filled with ideologies, and the experience of places, such as the Black inner city or the White suburbs, shapes cultural identities” (p. 5).

Central to Haymes’ work is the notion of people telling their own stories “in a place where people may be both affirmed and challenged to see how individual stories are connected in communities to larger patterns of domination and resistance in a multicultural, global society” (p. 5). A place-based pedagogy of this sort connects to what Gruenewald calls “radical multiculturalism” (p. 5).

The power relationships of the situated experience, the locus of one's position in a community, one's distance from the centre of a community and one's access to participation in it are strong determinants of one's sense of belonging and identity in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Surely, the historical places inhabited by my ancestors, the *shtetl* life of my grandparents, the threat of pogroms, the escape from Europe, the weeks in steerage aboard a ship bound for a foreign land, were all situated places and environments that affected how my parents thought of themselves and their place in the world. Surely, the situated stories of my students and their families, their war-time or refugee experiences in coming from their countries of origin, all affect my students' sense of identity and belonging.

And yet -- in Jewish tradition, it is said that place doesn't matter. We can be home anywhere. Abraham Heschel (1951) says: "What is retained in the soul is the *moment* of insight rather than the place where the act came to pass" (p. 6). He is much more concerned with "the architecture of time" than he is with place (p. 8). This view seems distinctly at odds with current phenomenological notions and certainly with my own reflections on experience. Our very rituals, our expression of "next year in Jerusalem" at every Passover seder are historical statements of a people always on the outside, always searching for the place of home, the place to belong. I often wonder if living in the Diaspora has its own sense of place. If we experience ourselves as living in the margins, even outside the margins, we are still somewhere identifiable. The place may not be where

we long to belong, but, in this sense, even 'no place' is 'some place.' Have we, over the centuries, found our place in being out of place?

When we think of finding a place in the world, a place of belonging, the place seems to require the ambience of home. To have a place is to belong, to be comfortable, comforted, and safe. To be identified with that place, there is an assumption of peace and harmony. Ted T. Aoki (2005) speaks of this desire for a harmonious sense of unity:

Harmony, as Plato ... understood it, is a fitting together, a conc(h)ord, an integration of sounds – a sonic univocity ... could it be that such an understanding of 'integration,' of conjoining, of belonging together is ... a metaphysical notion of oneness, a harmonic oneness, an integrated totality?

(pp. 370 – 371)

He goes on to quote Daisetz Suzuki, a Zen scholar, who "puts into turbulence" this sense of 'harmony':

It is not a sense ... of tranquility that Zen sees ... Nature is always in motion, never at a standstill ... To seek tranquility is to kill nature, to stop its pulsations, and to embrace the dead corpse that is left behind. Advocates of tranquility are worshippers of abstraction and death.

(p. 371)

The desire for a gentle, peaceful, harmonious place of belonging, therefore, remains problematic, and, in the view of Aoki, unrealistic and unworthy of our desire. If it is our human state to experience identities and a sense of belonging in such unsettled multiplicity, we actually need to relish being in the place of "turbulence" or to make the space "turbulent" if it is not.

The Sound of Silence

We know that the forces that silence us,
because they never want us to speak,
differ from the forces
that say speak,
tell me your story.
bell hooks, 1990

bell hooks' poignant quote expresses with clarity the marginalized position of many students in our schools. Students who are culturally "different," or whose abilities, interests and unique learning styles don't fit the status quo may experience such marginalization and a consequent loss of voice. Those whose home lives, personal struggles, sexual orientation and race are not reflected in prescribed curriculum may feel that schools simply don't want to hear their voices. Those who ask serious questions and resist the givens may be seen as deviant and may be quickly silenced so that they will not create disturbance. Anyone interfering with the smooth transmission of knowledge from teacher to learner learns quickly not to "speak," adapting to what Maxine Greene (1993) calls "structured silences" (p. 213). Such students, without voice, become invisible. The faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons, are screened out (Greene, 1995, p. 11). For Greene, the very humanness of those students is what is screened out and is what is at the heart of what should include them into our schools and society.

Cixous (1991), not recognized, not recognizing herself in the authoritative discourse, embodied the ultimate silence, being no-one. “This was in fact what most obscurely worried me and pained me: being no one. Everyone was someone, I felt, except me. I was no one. ‘Being’ was reserved for those full, well-defined, scornful people who occupied the world with their assurance, took their places without hesitation, were at home everywhere where I ‘was’-n’t except as an infraction, intruder, little scrap from elsewhere, always on the alert” (p. 16).

Kelleen Toohey’s (2000) study, *Learning English at School: Identity, Social Relations and Classroom Practice*, researches classrooms where young children from minority language backgrounds are taught in the English mainstream. She found that the nature of particular school practices “determines who particular participants can be, what they can do, and thus what they can learn in that setting” (p. 135). When reading of Randy (pp. 24-31), one of the focal students in her study, I was moved by his personal decision to silence his own home language, both at school and at home. Although his family spoke Punjabi and encouraged him to do so, Randy seemed to notice that school required English, not Punjabi. Did Randy interpret this omission of Punjabi as its unacceptability? Did he deduce from the authoritative discourse of school that his home language was subordinate, something to be hidden or cast aside, a voice to silence?

When my parents came to Canada, it was a fervent desire of theirs to become active and accepted participants in Canadian society. In their early years of marriage, they spoke Yiddish at home, but never in public. By the time

my sisters and I were born, my parents had made a decision that in order for us to be seen and positioned favourably in the community where we lived, they would not speak Yiddish with us. I remember begging my mother to teach me Yiddish, but I think she and my father were fearful, given the tenor of the times following World War II. Best for us just to fit in; best to leave the signifiers of difference behind; best to keep Yiddish silent.

Joyce Bellous (2001) speaks against the silence enforced by authoritative discourse, when that authoritative voice is the only one permitted to speak. “Pedagogic hypocrisy opens the door to a culture of silence ... this is a culture that works against the development of skill in democratic conversation” (p. 132). She recalls professors who clearly state the importance of class discussion in the course experience, and who then make it even clearer that questions and discussion are interruptions and are not welcomed. “We learned to sit still and say nothing” (p. 132). Passivity and submissiveness sit in the silence, disempowering students from making valid contributions to the classroom community. Freire (2000), too, implores us to denounce such “arrogance.” “It is intolerable to see teachers giving themselves the right to behave as if they owned the truth – and taking all the time they waste to talk about it” (p. 103).

However, many teachers, along with many students, feel that they, too, must live and teach by the defined roles of their positions. It is their responsibility to see that children meet the expectations assigned by curriculum and standards. Many teachers feel inadequate if their students aren’t reading fluently by the end of Grade One, for example. Pressed by a renewed societal focus on skills and

measurement, they may find it difficult to remain open to the variability of their students. They may become part of the current trend to push Kindergarten children into reading earlier and earlier. Taking into account learning styles, pace, ability, behaviour, language use and home culture often may be seen as too tall an order to fill.

“[W]e must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness” (Delpit, 1995, p. 471). Many of us do not allow ourselves to be so vulnerable. Pressured for time, teachers may see the contesting of the status quo as a dangerous enterprise, or reflection on practice as yet another chore for the “to-do” list. Those wishing to be seen favourably by “producing” students who meet expectations may plug their ears to their own inner turbulence and to the real stories they and their students live. As teachers, we silence ourselves as we silence our students.

To limit voice is to limit possibility. It is important for us to understand what power the authoritative discourse holds over us and the impact that power can have on ourselves and on our students. “The exercise of power is capable of silencing or instilling the art of voice” (Bellous, p. 138).

Appropriated Voice

While the authoritative discourse of schools may silence many of our students, some go beyond simply adapting to expectation and come to “appropriate” the authoritative voice (Bakhtin, 1981). Cixous (1991), attempting

to follow "the Law," sarcastically berates herself, taking on a critical and supervisory voice, a voice in charge of her "correct" way of being: "Aren't you the very demon of multiplicity?" she asks (p. 29). She makes dramatic efforts to conform and fit in: "I was there with my big pair of scissors, and as soon as I saw myself overlapping, snip, I cut, I adjusted..." (p. 30).

Or as Eva Hoffman (1989) so poignantly expresses:

Since I lack a voice of my own, the voices of others invade me as if I were a silent ventriloquist. They ricochet within me, carrying on conversations, lending me their modulations, intonations, rhythms. I do not yet possess them; they possess me. But some of them satisfy a need; some of them stick to my ribs. I could take on that stylish, ironic elongation which is X's mark of perpetual amusement; it fits something in my temperament. I could learn to speak a part of myself through it. And that curtailed, deliberate dryness that Y uses as an antidote to sentiment opens a door into a certain ... sensibility whose richness I would never otherwise understand. Eventually, the voices enter me; by assuming them, I gradually make them mine. I am being remade, fragment by fragment, like a patchwork quilt; there are more colors in the world than I ever knew."

(p. 220)

In the desire to belong, do children suppress, even lose, some aspects of identity in order to gain others? Is it through enacting behaviours seen as favourable that we gain access to a sense of place and legitimate participation? When there is a feeling of loss, in giving up aspects of identity, or a feeling of dis-identification, in taking on aspects of identity, one wonders about the nature of the community itself -- its inclusionary or exclusionary practices. In classrooms with a correct way of "doing school," it is the student who must make all accommodations and approximations towards the centre of the practice. If to belong in the community and successively approximate its practice one

recognizes that only certain approximations are applauded, then it is of concern to me that the process of “becoming,” or of being considered a legitimate participant in the community, may not be a positive experience for some of our children.

Davey smells. I pretend otherwise, but practically throw up every time he comes near me. I speak to the school nurse, a community home nurse, but for some reason nothing ever changes.

Davey has other problems. It is very difficult for him to focus attention during group times, and when he does, it is obvious that the discussion always seems to float over his head. I try so hard to ask questions that will help him to feel successful, but often these are nothing more than naming something rather obvious. I don't know how to draw Davey out nor to find his special gifts.

One day, as the children are tidying up at the end of our large block of “centre time,” I notice that one puzzle has been put away with a missing piece. I immediately call attention to the class and announce that we have to search together for the missing piece. No puzzles are to be returned to the shelf unless they are complete. We go through the usual dialogue of why that might be.

“Because then, the puzzle is wrecked.”

“Yeah, and then the next person doesn't get a good puzzle.”

The students understand well why it is important to find the missing piece. As they search the room, high and low, it is Davey who discovers it. We are all delighted, especially me.

“Well, Davey,” I congratulate. “You certainly have very sharp eyes! Thank you so much for finding that puzzle piece. You've done something really important!”

Davey beams from ear to ear. He can scarcely contain his pride in having the "sharpest" eyes in the class. He immediately sets out to develop a reputation for himself. Every day following, there is always at least one puzzle piece missing. When I stop the class to undertake the search, it is always Davey who discovers the piece. As a matter of fact, it is always Davey whom I see taking the piece out of his shirt pocket at the opportune moment!

Would I spoil his victory by revealing the "theft?" Never! I realize that in some very special way, Davey is like the missing piece himself – often "lost" in his thinking, or in his interactions with academic notions, but always "found" as a valued and necessary piece of our classroom puzzle.

As I reflect on Davey these many years later, I wonder at my decision. In my desire to include him, have him feel special and important, I realize that perhaps I have given him a designated label – a fixed identity. Davey is the puzzle finder. His desire to belong in the community was very strong, and he found a way to achieve it through his accommodation. While positive on the one hand, it makes me question whether or how I could have helped Davey to be included and valuable just for being Davey. Had I contributed to creating an environment where only certain aspects of a child were welcome and others not?

Lave & Wenger (1991) describe communities of practice in this way:

A set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice ... an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge ... members have different interests, make diverse contributions to activity, and hold varied viewpoints ... Participation exists on multiple levels and participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities ... Agent, activity, and world are seen as mutually constitutive, and there is opportunity to escape from the assumption that learning is the reception of factual knowledge or information.
(p. 98)

In what Lave & Wenger call communities of practice, curriculum reflects shared purpose among participants. It is negotiable, or at the very least, flexible, its co-construction being based upon the interactions and relations amongst the participants. The practice develops over time, acknowledging and honouring the diversity of its members.

Do we honour this diversity? School attendance is compulsory. One has little, if any, choice in deciding which “community of practice” to join. Other than expressing the fervent desire to go to school, a child placed in Teacher X’s classroom, needs to participate in that particular community of practice. Teacher X’s philosophy, style and expectations may differ vastly from those of Teacher Y. It is the child who must make the adjustments. The child needs to “read” the teacher, “read” other classmates, and figure out how to belong. Difficult as entering any new classroom may be for some children, the task may become all the more difficult if the core of the practice is steeped in prescription, denying access to those who may not “fit” the norms. If to become an accepted member of the community you must give up your difference and take on the expected, the school experience can be negative and confusing.

Diane Hodges (1998), who examines the practices of an early childhood education program in which she was enrolled, was very troubled to see children identified by their distance or proximity to “normality.” In fact, she saw her *own* identity in terms of distance or proximity to the predetermined norms of the practice! To identify with the practices of the early childhood community required “agonized compromise” for Hodges (p. 279). She felt that her “difference” was

reinforced on a daily basis, that her questions and arguments were seen as abrasive, and, in her case, that her lesbian identity was seen as deviant.

Although her classmates saw her as a member of the community, she identified herself as “participating differently,” and in a conflicted manner (p. 283). In order for her to be successful, she felt that she needed to “practice the suppression of difference” (p. 289), which brought, for her, a great sense of loss. She says we must recognize that “legitimate peripheral participation entails the loss of certain identities even as it enables the construction of others” (p. 289).

When we accommodate to the norms, either enforced or perceived, are there, indeed, parts of identity lost? In the re-shaping that takes place in the socialization process itself, do we discard or feel we must discard certain aspects of ourselves? Do we accommodate to particular acts in order to be placed in powerfully perceived identity positions? While the approximations made by babies and young children in learning to walk, talk, read and write, may be lauded and seen as positive, we must be sensitive to societal or school conventions that are arbitrary, and which place resisters or “deviants” in marginalized identity positions, removing aspects of identity, and, therefore, voice.

I recall looking at student journals in my early years of teaching an ESL class. Wonderful ideas and adventures were recorded on their pages. Some were difficult for me to read; many had grammatical errors. When I felt obliged to take my red pen and make corrections or insist on corrections, the work for the balance of that school year became “correct.” However, compound and complex

sentences became simple; imaginative stories became mundane. Details were kept to a minimum; only known spellings were included. I realized that what had been lost and excluded was far more valuable than what had been found.

I remember Toan, a former student of mine, who thought she needed to give up her name in order to be an accepted member of her new classroom:

Toan is a Vietnamese girl in my multi-aged classroom. She begins with me in Kindergarten. Her name is pronounced "Tong" which I verify with her and with her mother on the first day of school. I am very aware of the importance of one's name— how it represents in great measure one's identity. It is how we are recognized by others, how we are greeted, or how we are yelled at. It's the way we are known in the world.

I suppose my initial sensitivity comes from my own childhood experience of having both a given name and a surname that are uncommon and apparently difficult to pronounce. I was called Adda, Ah Dah, Aida – the names that were not mine plagued me. Eventually, I sent away to Kellogg's Corn Flakes with 25 cents and a box top to receive a name badge that said "Judy." In high school I was called Miss Glue Stein, with a long ī sound, by many of my teachers, and the mistaken Goldstein and Gluckstein on occasion. The worst of the "misnomers/misnamers" was my Latin teacher, who called me Miss Finkelstein, laughing each time he said it, as if this was a hilarious representation for any Jewish surname.

Toan is a distant child, hard to reach. Her mom, one of the "boat people," has a difficult time adjusting to Canada. She has had number of partners, and it comes out that each of the children in the family has a different father. Toan and her older sister do not know who their fathers are. A new baby is born while Toan is in my class, and she begins to call her mom's new partner, Dad, although, she confides in a bitter moment, he doesn't come to their house very

often and she doesn't like him. Toan's lengthy silences often frighten me. I know so little of her. She is so guarded, always on alert, always ready to strike first. It takes her almost the whole three years she is with me to learn to trust the classroom community and to share bits of her own life. She tells me one day that she hates her new baby because her mom is out most of the time, and she and her older sister are always left in charge. Although it seems that school is some sort of refuge for her, the level of trust in that comfort is just beginning as she moves on to Grade Three.

When she starts up in the next class, I make sure to go to the next teacher to tell her about Toan's name – how it appears one way in print but is pronounced another. I am already too late. The teacher calls her "Tone" on the first day when taking attendance. She hasn't checked with Toan, and Toan, shy, embarrassed, too self-conscious, never says a word to the teacher. After our conversation, the teacher approaches Toan and says that she understands that her name should be pronounced differently. "No," denies Toan. "You're right. It's "Tone." She takes the path of least resistance, denies her name and her identity, just so she'll fit in, just so her name will be easy, just so no one will draw attention to her. She pays the price of inclusion.

Cacophonous Voices

Am I One?

Am I Two?

Am I Either One Or the Other?

Am I Half and Half?

Am I Both?

I am Many !

The voices of authoritative discourse impact strongly on our sense of identity, belonging, culture and difference. The context and situatedness of each environment has the power to invite or silence the voices of those within it, the power to include or exclude. Fit or don't fit – in or out – the black-and-white choices appear to be clear, concise, measurable, and predictable.

William du Bois (1902, 2003) writes of his first sense of his difference from others, the “two-ness” he experienced as a black person. “Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil” (p. 8). He describes his own experience of exclusion:

[T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two

unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

(p. 9)

Du Bois's "double-consciousness" fills him with strife as he walks the tightrope between, never feeling complete in one camp or the other. He longs "to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self" (p. 9).

William Pinar and Rita Irwin's recent collection, *Curriculum in a New Key: The Collected Works of Ted T. Aoki* (2005), reveals the tensionality Aoki experienced in attempting to identify himself as *either* Japanese *or* Canadian (pp. 382 – 383). In Pinar's introduction, he points out that in Japanese tradition, every person is automatically considered a "twofold of self and other" (p. 54). It is "[t]he English word *individual* [which] implies an entity unto itself, a self 'indivisible,' a 'totalized self'" (p. 54) Aoki eventually identified himself as a "Japanese Canadian," coming to terms with *both* Japanese *and* Canadian identities.

Memory: age 9

My teacher gives out the form for parents to update school records.

"Let me fill it out, Daddy. I'll ask you the questions and I'll fill it in. What is the Country of Birth?"

"Russia," says my father.

"But, I think it means me!" I interject. We are not sure. I print Canada.

"Well I was born in Russia," repeats my father.

"Religion ..." I read aloud.

"Jewish, of course," says my dad.

"Home language..."

"Put Jewish," he says.

"But, that's just you and Ma." I print as I screw up my face.

According to my father, if the home is Jewish; the language is Jewish.

"Nationality?"

"Jewish," says my dad.

"Jewish? I thought I was Canadian!"

"Well, yes, sure. You're a Canadian, a Canadian Jew!"

Aoki cites his encounter with the same identity reference, Canadian Jew, in the work of one of his Jewish students. Because of Aoki's self-identification as Japanese Canadian, he is surprised and wonders why the student makes so many references to Canadian Jews (p. 383). I wonder if it is common for Jews to identify themselves in this way. I wonder why. I, too, ponder the word order and the student's intended meaning. Which part of me is the noun? Which is the adjective? I experienced both parts of myself in opposition and felt that I must choose between them. For my father, there were no doubts as to which identity should prevail. The noun was always *Jew*. For me, it was difficult. I was a constant grammatical struggle.

To be seen as different and face the possibility of exclusion were fears always paramount in my mind. As long as my difference wasn't pointed out, I could carry out my "masquerade." I felt guilty, sly and dishonest in what I saw as

“putting one over” on the world as I moulded and reshaped myself to fit in. All the while I was both an outsider and an insider, conflicted, at war with myself.

Aoki recognizes that we can be at once the insider and outsider, both belonging *and* not belonging (p. 56). He understands this “tensionality in the midst of difference” as something very positive, a kind of “aliveness” of the “concretely lived space” (p. 384). He deems it crucial for teachers to recognize this uncertainty and ambiguity in a child’s experience, expressing concern that lived meanings for students not remain silent (p. 380).

In our busy world of education, we are surrounded by layers of voices, some loud and some shrill, that claim to know what teaching is. Awed, perhaps, by the cacophony of voices, certain voices become silent and, hesitating to reveal themselves, conceal themselves. Let us beckon those voices to speak to us, particularly the silent ones, so that we may awaken to the truer sense of teaching that likely stirs within each of us.

(p. 188)

The cacophony of voices resounds within us. Deciding on a one-ness from the experience of two-ness can be difficult enough, but as our world expands and the chorus builds, perhaps it is more accurate to say that we experience our identities as multiple. Helene Cixous (1991), experiences herself multiply but still tries to conform to one single acceptable identity -- “All the people I caught myself being instead of me ... I exhorted them to silence” (p. 29). She judges herself an impostor for pretending to be what she was not, pretending to be one, when she was many.

Mary Catherine Bateson (2000), like Aoki, sees the positive in the multiple and puts it beautifully: “Even the self is no fixed constancy but changeable, more

in motion, like a pool reflecting passing clouds and stirred by underwater springs” (pp. 242 – 243). “Wisdom ... is born of the overlapping of lives, the resonance between stories ...” (p. 243). Aoki (2005) warns us, however, that in being aware of the “manyness” and diversity of ourselves and our students, we do not, as teachers, contribute to the creation of “half-lives” (pp. 380-381), reducing identities to less than what they are in reality. He sees the teacher holding a powerful position that “can help us to open ourselves to who we are,” compelled to reveal and examine “the lived space of between” (p. 382). He contends that it may be a necessity to experience this tensioned struggle in order to gain transformational understanding of ourselves and others:

The opportunity for probing does not come easily to a person flowing within the mainstream. It comes more readily to one who lives at the margin – to one who lives in a tension situation. It is a condition ... that makes possible deeper understanding of human acts that can transform both self and world, not in an instrumental way, but in a human way.

(p. 382)

Feeling comfortable with one’s sense of identity and where or how one belongs seems very dependent on our understanding and acceptance of the complexity of such notions and such experiences. The strong influences on a child may lead that child to think that he or she must take on one single, harmonious and clear position in the world. As I began to learn through my own life experiences, through the examination of the abounding literature in this area and through ongoing dialogue with colleagues, students, and family members, a view of identity and belonging as elusive (Yon, 2000), fragmented and fractured (Hall, 1996), multiply constructed (Cixous, 1991; Hall, 1996; Bateson, 1989,

2000), dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981) and tensional (Aoki, 2005), creates the opportunity for more realistic and possible pedagogies that not only hear all the voices, but welcome them. In the words of Mary Catherine Bateson (1989): “Instead of concentration on a transcendental ideal, sustained attention to diversity and interdependence may offer a different clarity of vision, one that is sensitive to ecological complexity, to the multiple rather than the singular” (p. 166). We do, indeed, live “multiple stories” (Bateson, 2000, p. 101).

The remainder of this thesis explores the use of story as a way of listening to the multiple voices of our lives. It is my purpose to heed and encourage this call to story, and through it, to find our own voices and the voices of our students.

THE CALL

Over and above the din of desires
there is a calling, a demanding, a waiting, an expectation.
There is a question that follows me wherever I turn.
What is expected of me? What is demanded of me?
What we encounter is not only flowers and stars, mountains and walls.
Over and above all things is a sublime expectation, a waiting for.
With every child born a new expectation enters the world.
This is the most important experience in the life of every human being:
something is asked of me.
Every human being has had a moment in which he sensed a mysterious waiting for
him. Meaning is found in responding to the demand,
meaning is found in sensing the demand.

Abraham Heschel (1991, p. 60) *I Asked for Wonder*

When I reflect on my childhood experiences and the troubling questions of my own identity and sense of belonging, I recognize that it is through my stories that I have been able to voice my own struggle and my changing insights into my experience of “difference.” Examining my own stories alerts my sonar system to my students, allowing me to pick up the signals of their silences, the confusion and exclusion that many of them have experienced. Through my stories, the complexity and multiplicity of fragile human experience ring out, cry out to be heard.

I experience the other as a voice,
as an appeal to me ...
And this is what we mean when we speak
of our living with children as a vocation,
a calling
van Manen, 1991, p. 141

The call echoes across many fields. Yon, 2000; Hall, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Dei, 1996, and hooks, 1994, all concerned with multicultural and anti-racist education, ask us to heed the call. Lave & Wenger, 1991; Shields, 2004 and Wolk, 1998, striving to create democratic communities of practice, ask us to hear all the voices. Freire, 2000, 2001; van Manen, 1991, 1996, 1997, 2002, and Todd, 2003, urge that we pay attention to our common experience of human difference as we face each other, as do Aoki, 2005; Chodron, 2002; Hanh, 1987, and Isaacs, 1999, reflecting on mindful practices.

A complex view invites variability rather than sameness; it honours alternate, even conflicting viewpoints, rather than a “correct” one; it recognizes many ways of being and doing, rather than a given, reified and ritualized one. Possibilities for hope and empowerment are engendered by repeating different acts than those expected (Butler, 1997, p. 402).

If we truly listen to the multiple voices, and heed that call, those who feel constrained or marginalized by an essentialized or assigned view of their identity or by the positions they are permitted to access in community may move beyond fixity to fluidity, may experience themselves as more recognized or recognizable.

What exactly is that call to which we are summoned? What is the demand articulated by Heschel? What is the calling that van Manen tries to answer? As we might now expect, the call, though simple, is also multiple.

The Call to Voice

Schachter-Shalomi (2003) calls us to break away from the voices of authority and to determine ourselves who we are and how we will live. He calls us to a state of consciousness, a switching off of the habitual and the automatic, a call to take charge of our own life journeys, and to take charge of constructing ourselves.

We do not live deliberately enough ... there is so much of my living that is determined: I am being lived by heredity, by environment, by society, by rules. Only when I make a deliberate effort, and switch off a number of habitual and automatic acts before they dictate my behaviour, can I say that I live or that I love.

(p. 84)

bell hooks (in Delpit, 1995), tells of her ability to do this; to speak in her own voice. Through her experience as a marginalized Black woman, she learned that she was “capable of not only participating in the mainstream, but redirecting its currents” (p. 162). Her response to the call for deliberate and conscious voice came in the form of active resistance and rebellion against the sexism and racism she experienced. Her courage is inspiring. Through her own voice, she found a way to participate powerfully; she made a conscious place for herself.

To speak one's voice and one's identity sounds like a simple act, the voicing of a known fact. However, Greene (1993, 1995), Dunne (1996) and van Manen & Levering (1996) all point out the ever-changing and constructive nature of identity formation. We are all “selves in the making,” says Greene (1993), always in the process of creating the meaning of our lives and in the process of “becoming” (p. 213). Identity changes and grows throughout a lifetime. Through an invitation to story, narrative can provide “a conversation drawing in voices kept inaudible over the generations ... telling their stories, shaping their stories, discovering purposes and possibilities for themselves ... We are moved to provoke such beings to keep speaking, to keep articulating, to devise metaphors and images ...” (p. 213).

Greene (1995), recounting personal memories, uses her own story as well as works of literature to illustrate her movement from “entanglement” to “being” and “awareness” (pp. 5 – 6). “I have learned that the search for narrative has indeed imparted a shape to my childhood, perhaps a worthwhileness to my

experience I might never have known before” (p. 74). She says, “We are appreciative now of storytelling as a mode of knowing, of the connection between narrative and the growth of identity, of the importance of shaping our own stories and, at the same time, opening ourselves to other stories in all their variety and their different degrees of articulateness ... We have to decide on the value of provoking students to speak in their own voices in a world where other voices define the mainstream” (p. 186). Her point of view reiterates Schachter-Shalomi’s call to consciousness, using story as the means.

Joseph Dunne (1996), too, speaks of the “storied self” (p. 144). In his view, the construction of self, through story, is largely in response to those around us. That is, relationships are overwhelmingly significant in the process of self-construction, giving nurturance, meaning and a coherent sense of self. In Dunne’s words: “It is in interaction, in confrontation with and confirmation by others, and especially in being drawn by them into language, that a child can begin to deepen awareness and orientation as a self” (p. 144).

For Dunne, the “notion of a history or narrative seems to be necessary in order to make sense of the notion of self; for we make sense – or fail to make sense – of our lives by the kind of story we can – or cannot – tell about it” (p. 146). He brings into play the notion of life story as a form of accountability and narrative as “the paradigm form of giving an account” (p. 146). According to Dunne, “Who are you?” is the question which is best answered in the form of a story (p. 147), and the tension points in our narratives serve as invitations to self-understanding (p. 151).

Van Manen & Levering (1996) further explicate the notion of narrative in relation to self by quoting from Ricoeur: “The identity of a person lies in the story that the self narrates” (p. 100). From a phenomenological perspective, “the identity of the person is usually associated with the body and the memories of the person” (p. 89). Such perspective calls into question “how one experiences personal identity. How do I experience my sense of self? And who am I when I speak of myself as self” (p. 90)?

Van Manen & Levering concur with Dunne in recognizing the significance of relationship. “‘I’ becomes possible when the child is being addressed with ‘you’ ... From the point of view of everyday experience, identity seems to emerge in concrete situations with others ... [However, o]ur experiential sense of identity differs from cognitive, psychological, social, or analytical theories, in that these theories tend to sacrifice the immediate, visceral knowledge of self for the sake of an intellectual concept” (p. 93). The self as experienced is, therefore, primary.

When working with young children, it may well be that we as adults can see the child’s identity before the child can (p. 96). There may be conflicts between “the me” as experienced and “the me” as seen by self or others (p. 97). There may be “an ambiguous sense of a plurality of changing emotions, feelings, memories, and thoughts” (p. 99). The narrative self, making “secret” all the hidden selves in the plurality, is “involved in constant reinterpretation of the past ... or recategorization of its identity” (p. 100). The self conceals and reveals in a variety of ways and circumstances, as it tells and retells its story, all of which

points out the many “different layers and domains of meaning” involved in the understanding of identity” (p. 100).

Van Manen & Levering: “ ... [O]ur reflections [are] propelled by the self that is trying to discover itself through reflection. This is again the common paradox of trying to see the eye with which we are looking” (p. 102), or, in this case, hear the voice with which we are speaking. As we create ourselves narratively, our “[u]nderstanding of self and others is an incomplete, dynamic, ongoing, and developing communicational experience” (p. 105).

The dynamic nature of our story reflects the dynamic nature of emerging self identity. “Neither my self nor my narrative can have ... a single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces ... My identity has to be perceived as multiple, even as I strive towards some coherent notion of what is humane and decent and just” (Greene, 1995, p. 1).

“Amidst this multiplicity,” says Greene, “my life project has been to achieve an understanding of teaching, learning, and the many models of education; I have been creating and continue to create a self by means of that project ...” (p. 1). She sees her life story as a “quest” (p. 75), not only to liberate herself from the forces that wished to keep her silent or defined by authority, but also to find meaning in teaching and learning (pp. 74-75). “Like Charles Taylor and others,” she says, “I find the very effort to shape the materials of lived experience into narrative to be a source of meaning making” (p. 75).

In sharing personal testimony, one can give voice to feelings and ideas that may have been kept to oneself, the expression of that voice breaking the

silence, creating “a space ... to change thought and action ... to ease pain ... to feel the hurt going away” (hooks, 1994 , p. 73). To find voice is to find a sense of healing and the possibilities for transformation (hooks, p. 71; Greene, 1995, p. 167).

Narrative as a means of breaking silence, for constructing self identity, for resisting the voices of authority, and for deliberately making our own meanings is a very powerful tool. When I think of my own childhood and the experiences of the children I have taught, I wonder how it is possible for children to live as “deliberately” as Schachter-Shalomi advocates. How can children find their voices and speak them? How can children consciously create their own life stories? Is this a realistic call for a child to heed? Is it even possible for those in less powerful or marginalized positions?

The Call to Responsibility

Whose responsibility is it to see that “resistance” and “agency” are welcome? What place do we in the “given” positions of power have in encouraging that resistance, in sharing our power and in giving up power “over” others? In classrooms where “[c]ommunity ... produces success and failure for the children” (Toohey, p. 75), and “where one can be and what one can do” so strongly influence “what one can learn” (p. 81), can we leave it up to the child, the “stranger” (Paley, 1992, p. 130), to figure out the way to gain access to the practice and access to his or her own voice?

“I contend,” says Delpit (1995), “that it is those with the most power, those in the majority, who must take the greater responsibility for initiating the process” (p. 46). But in order to take on that responsibility, it is necessary to let go of our own positions, our own beliefs. “To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment – and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another’s angry gaze. It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue” (pp. 46 – 47).

Heschel’s call to responsibility in the opening quote to this chapter is the call that Delpit hears. It is a moral and ethical call. The responsibility involves a responsiveness to the real children in our classrooms, what van Manen (1991) calls “response-able ... in a manner that is indeed responsible ...” (p. 15). For van Manen, the call is for “pedagogical intent,” that is, the teacher’s concern with the child’s well-being and “authentic becoming” (p. 17). “The pedagogical intent is also the expression of our fundamental experience of encountering this child as another person who has entered our life, who has a claim on us, who has transformed our life ... a stirring responsiveness to which we find ourselves called in facing this child” (p. 20).

“... [S]omething is expected of the adult, the parent or the teacher. In each situation an action is required even if that action may be non-action” (van Manen, 1991, p. 40). The expectation is of the teacher in the face of the child.

Todd (2003), in her exploration of learning *from* “the other,” elucidates on the generally accepted meaning of “otherness” in our society – otherness or difference as “a consequence of social, economic, or political disaffiliation,” according to Todd, and an “undesirable attribute of being or social position” (p. 2). This is certainly the way in which I saw myself as different or “other” as a child – undesirable, always at risk for exclusion. This is also the way I have seen many of my students, labelled by their difference as undesirable or deficient, leaving them vulnerable in disenfranchised and disaffiliated positions.

Todd looks at otherness, however, as a “radical alterity that is independent of social forces” (p. 2). In this view, difference is an “ontological given” (p. 2). She turns to the work of Emmanuel Levinas and his notion of “otherness” as “an absolute and unknowable difference” requiring “the inevitable responsibility each one of us has to the other we meet” (p. 2). It is this “encounter with the Other who is radically distinct from the self that enables the self to learn and to change” (p. 30). This response to the vulnerability of the other is experienced as a responsibility. This is what van Manen (2002) calls an ethical experience, an ethical phenomenology.

The Call to Mindfulness

Ted T. Aoki (2005) terms this responsiveness and responsibility the “watchfulness” of teaching (p. 195). It is “a watching that was watchfulness,” a “mindful watching” (p. 196). A mindful teacher sees the import in a single

moment when his or her “listening is attuned aright” (p. 195). A mindful teacher tunes in, attends and watches. A mindful teacher heeds the call.

Such responsiveness, watchfulness, and attention to the “other” in teaching practice remind me of the call to mindfulness in Buddhist meditative practice. To encounter the other responsibly, we must “pay attention, notice, watch, be fully present,” all watchwords of compassionate practice (Hanh, 1987, Chodron, 2002). “Those who are without compassion cannot see what is seen with the eyes of compassion” (Hanh, p. 108). Hanh advises: “Try to examine what makes this person happy and what causes suffering; contemplate the person’s perceptions ...” (p. 93). Hanh uses stories to “glimpse through the eyes of” peasants labouring in the rice paddies of Vietnam, for example, in order to call others to compassion for the peasants’ plight (p. 102).

Chodron (2002) tells us that “compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It’s a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity” (p. 73). Her message is strong for me as a person, and as a teacher. In examining and seeking to understand my own childhood with compassion, I am enabled to examine and seek to understand the experiences of the children I teach, knowing that we share in the ups and downs of human experience. In seeking to understand the children I teach, I need to let go of the power imbalance between teacher and student and recognize our equal human status.

Chodron encourages us to create the space for the stories of others by developing our curiosity and our inquisitiveness (p. 159). “In the elevator with a stranger, I might notice her shoes, her hands, the expression on her face. I contemplate that just like me she doesn’t want stress in her life. Just like me she has worries. Through our hopes and fears, our pleasures and pains, we are deeply interconnected” (p. 200). This noticing and compassionate connection is what is demanded of me as a teacher who, in the face of her students, hears the call of their voices.

The Call to Listen

In current work on the art of dialogue, William Isaacs (1999) expounds on four principles of that practice: listening, respecting, suspending and voicing (pp. 79 – 80). Again there is a strong message of making a practice of deep listening in order for understanding to develop. “Listening requires we not only hear the words, but also embrace, accept, and gradually let go of our own inner clamouring” (p. 83). Being able to suspend our judgments and assumptions can be difficult, as mentioned earlier by Delpit (1995), but is a necessary condition for listening to take place.

If we try to listen we find it extraordinarily difficult, because we are always projecting our opinions and ideas, our prejudices, our background, our inclinations, our impulses; when they dominate, we hardly listen at all to what is being said ... One listens and therefore learns, only in a state of attention, a state of silence, in which this whole background is in abeyance, is quiet; then, it seems to me, it is possible to communicate.

Krishnamurti, in Isaacs (p. 84)

Freire (2000, 2001) confirms that to listen deeply we must silence our own views. Silence “affords me space while listening to the verbal communication of another person and allows me to enter into the internal rhythm of the speaker’s thought, and experience that rhythm as language” (2000, p. 103).

“To listen well, we must attend both to the words and the silence between the words” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 86). When we truly listen, “we begin to see how others are experiencing the world” (p. 100). When we listen respectfully and suspend our judgments successfully, we also create a space for the other to voice.

“Just the physical experience of hearing, of listening intently, to each particular voice strengthens our capacity to learn together ... Hearing each other’s voices, individual thoughts, and ... associating these voices with personal experience makes us more acutely aware of each other ... [makes us] engage in acts of recognition with one another ... “ (hooks, 1994, p. 186).

Isaacs tells us that often “the voice that is genuinely ours is not well developed” (p. 164). We have fears in voicing because even when invited, we think our voices must be securely formed, our ideas already complete. “To leap into a moment of silence with a thought that is not well formed or one that is potentially controversial ... terrifies ... “ (p. 164). Certainly, some children in our classrooms, and many adults, for that matter, may experience such terror. If we, as teachers, are not truly listening with mindful attention, the child’s unsure voice may quickly recede into silence.

You say you want to hear my voice

Your gaze looks past

You see -- not me

My words suspend like molecules

You strain to hear

You hear -- not me

Without your eyes

Without your ears

I lose my state

Evaporate

To promote dialogue, Isaacs speaks of encouraging *all* aspects of our voices, the sure and the unsure. Let every voice sing. How else will we discover our own music? “Who will play your music if you don’t do it yourself” (p. 169)? As teachers, we need to help ourselves and our students to overcome our own self-censorship, our fears and lack of trust. We need to ask, “What is my music? What is yours?”

“The voice of a group of people is a function of the emerging story among them” (p. 172), says Isaacs. It is up to the teacher to “make space for what is seeking to be spoken ...” (p. 174). It is the democratic-minded teacher who learns to speak by listening. In Freire’s (2001) view, it is crucial for us to learn and to know “with” our students, to “understand the pain of others and respect the expectations and knowledge of our students” (p. 145). This need to know the

other, to observe, to ask, to listen deeply, this humility is prerequisite to our hearing the voices of our students.

*I live in the spaces, the holes, the gaps,
silent and wondering, abandoned, alone.*

Listen! Can you hear me?

I am whispering questions,

I am juggling possibilities.

I am speaking up to live.

I demand to be included!

Hear me! Listen to me!

You can't say what's good for me

any more --

No more.

When the voices do not speak openly, when a child keeps his/her identity “secret,” the teacher needs to listen through the silence. The teacher cannot assume that someone “fitting in” doesn’t need to be heard. I think of Charlie, seen by me as an “expert” at accommodating to the norms of my classroom. It was only by accident that I began to notice Charlie’s unique situation, and only after that experience that I began to wonder who he was outside the classroom. Which aspects of himself was he bringing to school and which had he chosen to keep under wraps?

Charlie comes to class as regular as clockwork, fits in well with other children, and characteristically meets school expectations by proceeding with tasks and projects in a reliable and acceptable manner. I do not question nor even dream what lies beneath the surface of Charlie's outward appearance. He seems to be happy and positive, he makes choices thoughtfully and confidently, and he exhibits a strong sense of independence in school.

Because Charlie is one of very few students who fit in so easily in my class, I seem to focus on his learning, watching and interpreting his academic performance, making plans to enhance and extend his thinking. There are times, I confess, that I don't focus on Charlie at all. There are so many demands in this classroom, so many children obviously in need, that it is all too easy to overlook Charlie, to assume that at least I don't have to worry about him.

It is a perpetual habit of mine to stay late at school, cleaning up, planning and readying myself for the next day. It is around six o'clock when I finally leave today, trudging up to the corner of Dundas and Jarvis to catch the streetcar. It has been dark for some time, the damp chill of Toronto's winter wind seeping through my heavy coat. I stand at the streetcar stop, shivering, anxious for the warmth of the seat heater, anxious to get home, eat, and relax at the end of my day. Across the street, the door to the pool hall swings open. There is Charlie, stepping out into the cold in his light windbreaker. What on earth is a five-year-old doing at a pool hall at six o'clock at night, by himself? I clutch my bags and books and stumble across the street as fast as I can.

"Charlie! Charlie! What are you doing here? Are you on your way home for supper?"

"Nope," he replies with a shrug. "My dad gave me ten bucks and told me to get lost for the night."

His words kick me in the stomach. My heart pounds in panic. Should I call the police? Is there some kind of children's service?

"Where are you going?"

"To get something at the store."

"And then what?"

"I dunno," he shrugs. "Maybe I'll come back here."

Charlie seems totally undisturbed by spending the evening "getting lost." As regular as his routine at school is by day, his evenings at the pool hall are apparently as regular by night. Charlie eyes me questioningly, as if I am the one behaving in an unusual manner.

One morning, not long after, Charlie comes up to me at school. He is smiling as usual, but the smile is pasted on and his eyes bulge and stare.

"Guess what?" he says. "Last night my dad beat me up, and I didn't even cry." He speaks so proudly as he shares his hurt with me. I ask him to tell me what happened. He dramatically shows me how he was bounced from wall to wall, flung and flung again, as the butt of his dad's anger.

"Are you hurt?" I ask him.

"Yeah, my back is hurt," he says. "Ya wanna see?"

Charlie turns around. I pull up the flimsy plaid shirt and look. His back is covered in red welts, each bang against the wall recorded, imprinted, swollen.

"You're a very brave person," I say.

As my eyes well with tears, I run across to the office. I sputter out to the vice-principal what I have seen and what Charlie has told me. The vice-principal wants to see for herself, so I go to get Charlie to ask him if it is all right for her to take a look at his back.

As she raises his shirt, her horror overwhelms her. She cries out, "Oh, Charlie! Look what happened to you! Oh! You poor darling!"

He turns his eyes towards me with a look that means, "What's up with her?" His source of pride has become a source of pity, and that is something he has not anticipated nor desired.

When Charlie returns to the classroom I demand at the office that something be done to help him. My thoughts spill torrentially Remove him from his home...Take him away from his dangerous dad... Let me take him home... My place is safe. With me he'll know what a loving home can be... No, I want the dad removed ...Yes, incarcerate him for abusing his child ... I want action, and I want it now!

The vice-principal calls the Children's Aid Society, the service in place at that time. As soon as they hear the child's name, the conversation is all but over. The Children's Aid is familiar with this family and more than familiar with Charlie's dad. What happened to Charlie last night is not unusual. What happened at the pool hall was not unusual. The only action "possible" is to hold back the dad's welfare cheque because he apparently uses most of it to buy booze. The booze, in turn, leads to his evenings of raging violence. The Children's Aid has apparently tried this withholding measure several times but it does not serve as a long-term deterrent. They are not about to try it again "right now."

I scream at the vice-principal, "So does he have to be dead before anyone will do anything?"

The Children's Aid's matter-of-factness is beyond my comprehension. Charlie's strength is beyond my comprehension. Charlie's ability to perform in school is beyond my comprehension.

For a new teacher, it is so alarming for me to learn that the calm and smiling face, the determined work ethic, and the standard of performance do not tell the whole story. What I see sits on the surface; it's visible. Had I not seen Charlie at the pool hall, would I have known anything about the realities of his

life? Would he have come to me about his back? I don't know. Does my knowledge about his "lost" nights and his drunken dad make things better for Charlie at school? I don't know. How powerless I feel to be part of a system that appears to do nothing for Charlie and his family. I come face-to-face with the complexity of being a teacher, face-to-face with the pain of a child and his family, and face-to-face with the fact that there aren't always answers, fixes, or solutions to make everything fine.

Charlie, at five, knows how to live within such difficulties. For me, it is a lesson that I meet over and over, a lesson that is so difficult for me to learn. I want to make everything all right, and I have to settle for working on it. I have to settle for doing what I am able to do, knowing full well that that is not enough. I suppose that Charlie already knows this, too. But for him, it isn't "settling." His attachment to home and family does not, can not, waver. He accepts, must accept, how things are. Home is home.

What is my responsibility to Charlie? I hear the call of his voice, the call of his pain with compassion. Is to hear enough? What action can I take? What is my next step? I am left with something very large and unsettling to contemplate. Do I settle for living with the unsettling?

“To exercise tact means to see a situation calling for sensitivity, to understand the meaning of what is seen, to sense the significance of this situation, to know how and what to do, and to actually do something right” (van Manen, 1991, p. 146). I did not handle the situation with Charlie with the tact demanded. I did not look beneath the surface until I was hit face-to-face with the swinging pool hall door. “A tactful educator,” says van Manen, “realizes that it is not the child but the teacher who has to ‘cross the street’ in order to go to the

child's side" (p. 155). I did not cross the street soon enough. In fact, I did not hear Charlie's voice until after I had crossed Dundas Street because I wasn't listening for it.

I think again of Duke, tear-stained, slumped against the classroom door, ready to paint in black. Duke was someone I noticed; Duke was noticeable. And because his pain showed, I was mindful of him. I feel remorse about Charlie; what I needed to notice was unnoticeable. How can I notice what I need to? Tact is mediated through silence, through the eyes, through gesture, through atmosphere and through example (van Manen, 1991, pp. 176-186). "Ultimately, to be able to be attentive to what is expressed in the face, the eyes of the other, is to be able to see and interpret the soul of the other" (p. 180). I continue to look deeper and listen harder to my students. I try to see each soul, even those whose gestures are hidden, those who fit in in silence.

The Call to Democratic Community

To take responsibility in the face of our diverse students, we must heed the call to create environments in our schools that welcome those students, not as we wish to see them but as they are. We need to create space for them to voice who they are, how they experience, and what they think. We need to invite their "resistance, aimed at exercising the democratic competencies that are necessary for the development of personal and political voice in future citizens" (Bellous, 2001, p. 136). Voice as expression of human agency, authenticity, personal power, critical opinion and legitimate interest can change objectionable

states, according to Bellous. Voice enables us to state our needs and wants. It provides others with a response and conveys plans and purposes. “An art of voice enables us to sense, address, and resolve the conflict that will inevitably come up if we take seriously the dialogical aspect of the teaching/learning relation” (p. 137).

The teacher must create the space to invite such voice. If story can be used as voice, it can be a useful way to “speak” the resistance and participate authentically in the classroom community. To envision classrooms which work in a truly democratic style, it may be useful to look at Maxine Greene’s (1995) notion of community. In her words: “Any object – a classroom, a neighbourhood street, a field of flowers – shows itself differently to each spectator. The reality of that object arises out of the sum total of its appearances to all who view it. Thinking of those spectators as participants in an ongoing dialogue, each one speaking out of a distinct perspective and yet open to those around, I find a kind of paradigm for what I have in mind” (p. 156).

In answer to the call, Carolyn M. Shields (2004) talks about creating communities of difference:

Although we generally think of *community* in terms of what binds participants together – shared norms, beliefs and values – communities of difference are based not on homogeneity but on respect for difference and on the absolute regard for the intrinsic worth of every individual. Members of such communities do not begin with a dominant set of established norms but develop these norms together, with openness and respect, as they share their diverse perspectives”

(p. 38).

To create such communities, “education leaders must take responsibility for developing a meaningful relationship with each person they encounter – student, teacher, parent, board member, or legislator” (p. 39). She urges a rejection of “deficit thinking” regarding difference, and a move toward democratic classrooms which, once again, incorporate dialogue to promote meaningful relationships and deep understanding:

Dialogue is the basis for understanding difference, for celebrating the diversity of our school communities, and for creating community within difference rather than ignoring difference.

(p. 39)

Story can spark such dialogue, helping to create democratic communities of practice which honour difference. In Chapter Five, several concrete examples of dialogic teacher-education and classroom communities will be shared.

Can You Hear the Call?

The intent to create classroom communities that honour difference and the voices of all students is expressed by many. Looking at Lave & Wenger’s (1991) framework for communities of practice, it would be purposeful to see not only the individual classroom but the teaching profession at large as a community of practice in its own right – a practice that values resistance, inquiry, and many ways of being and doing. We need teachers to feel that they are “legitimate peripheral participants” within the practice and can move toward the centre of the educational community as they hold powerful positions in that community and can effect change in it.

Is it possible, however, that teachers, members of a top-down system, under close “surveillance” (Foucault, 1979) for carrying out prescribed and standardized outcomes, hold what Lave & Wenger would call “subordinate positions” in the educational community, and, by virtue of that fact, find themselves unable to grant children the voice that they themselves have not yet found?

How can we, as teachers, recognize our own voices? Without doing so, how can we take on not only the personal responsibility required in our own classrooms but our collective responsibility to listen to the unheard voices, to share power in our educational community and to appreciate the intersections of multiple worldviews (Dei, 1996, p. 17)? Dei acknowledges that “we live in a world where many still have lingering doubts about the social justification for addressing the social ills of racism and other forms of human oppression” (p. 19). How can we look at our responsibility, when we may not even acknowledge that there is a problem, or, acknowledging the problem, we may not recognize that we are implicated? How do we come face-to-face with ourselves?

Teacher resistance to self-examination may put up a barrier to possibilities for inservice education. In American schools, the unexamined privilege and assumptions of a predominantly white teaching force continue to prevail (McIntosh, 1989). Here, in Canada, perhaps more hidden from view, similar attitudes come into play. We seem to think that because we have a government multicultural policy and because we are known to oppose the assimilation inherent in the “melting pot,” that the need for self-examination doesn’t apply to

us. I believe that most teachers feel they do have a heartfelt commitment to creating classrooms with space for all children, regardless of their culture, ability, gender, or race. Over the years, I have heard many teachers voice that their classrooms already are such spaces and that special inservice programs will merely be preaching to the converted.

Conflicting aims of educational programs and the time to do justice to inservice programs also stand in the way. Teachers wonder: Are inservice sessions merely another way to enact policy? Should I participate because it looks good? Should I participate because it makes me feel good? Should I do it to quiet critics? Or raise student test scores? I wonder: Are we truly committed to eradicating discriminatory practices in our schools, or at least to examining and interrogating our individual and systemic practices?

The Call to Self-Examination

Dei (1996) makes recommendations. He would provide teachers and teacher educators, first of all, with information -- information on race, social difference and oppression. He would encourage the interrogation of existing information and practices. He would wonder how a classroom teacher, or a university professor, or the Ministry of Education, for example, defines what is acceptable in the classroom. What behaviours fit in? What information, assumptions, worldviews fit in? Dei would question how it is decided what knowledge is valid and what is not in each particularized setting. He would

advise that the curriculum be questioned – not only the written curriculum, but, more importantly, the unwritten (p. 21).

Dei's work expounds on several critical ways to examine ourselves, our schools and society in general (p. 84). The questions are centred on the broad themes of race, class, sexual and gender equity, as well as on pedagogical and educational practices of teachers and schools. His questions of the educational community, I believe, have great relevance in beginning the process of critical examination of the status quo in terms of increasing the availability of more powerful identity positions for all our students and heeding the call to hear their voices.

As I read through his compelling call to self-examination, I recognize the need for ongoing interrogation of my own theories and practice. Are my ways of being with students and my ideas of honouring their complexity the only way to go? Am I, as a teacher, deciding on curriculum that is relevant in my classroom and relevant with my student teachers? What should be read? What should be asked? Is my view hegemonic? Have I, without intention, silenced voices of young children or student teachers? I see myself as a reflective teacher, willing to question my beliefs and practices, with a view to creating an open and invitational environment with all my students. I recognize my responsibility in reaching out to the particular students I teach. Do I go far enough? Do I practice what I preach? For me, it is in the exploration of my stories that I am able to reflect on these questions. Through my own stories, I examine what Dei would ask.

It is Dei's desire that students, parents, community workers and caregivers are all recognized as genuine partners in education. He favours development of strategies which address exclusion, which target all students, teachers and staff, and which reflect the lives, history and experiences of all participants (p. 85). Here again is an opportunity for all the stakeholders to share their own stories from their own viewpoints, a strategy that fulfils Dei's terms.

The Call to System Examination

Delpit (1995) and Sleeter (1993) enter into the dialogue on diversity from a different direction than Dei. "I do not believe that political change toward diversity can be effected from the bottom up, as do some of my colleagues. They seem to believe that if we accept and encourage diversity within classrooms of children, then diversity will automatically be accepted at gatekeeping points ... We must push and agitate from the top down" (Delpit, p. 40).

It is only "in the meantime, we must take the responsibility to teach, to provide for students who do not already possess them, the additional codes of power" (p. 40). Delpit speaks to teachers who recognize students' differences but fail to provide the tools which will empower those students to take on more powerful positions in our schools. Delpit's forceful attack makes me wonder whether diverse voices can really be heard without structural changes to the ear of our society. And yet, if students and teachers were given "the tools" to empower them to speak in their own voices, would they not be heard?

What is required is neither an agitation from the bottom up nor the top down, but rather a shared response to the calling, a responsibility taken from every direction and on every level. Not only do we need to share the stories of our personal experience and invite the stories of others; we need to demand for ourselves a welcome invitation to do so.

Great courage is required to resist existing convention and assume more powerful and agentive roles as teachers and students. Great courage is required to respond to the demand inherent in Heschel's introduction to this chapter. How can we ease the transformation? Maxine Greene (1993) shares some possibilities: "There cannot be a single standard of humanness or attainment or propriety ... there can only be an ongoing collaborative decoding of many texts" (p. 212). The possibilities for freedom and for being able to make choices for creating ourselves are endless. Through the arts, through story, through dialogue we can awaken ourselves to alternative possibilities of existing and of being human. Through critical reflection, questioning and resistance we can be who we are. Through breaking the mechanical routine we can invite all students into curricula, we can regain central ways of being human and welcome different ways of being in a pluralistic society.

In her never-ending fight, Greene pushes us to strive to be healers, to overcome "the plague" of abstract thinking, indifference and depersonalization. She encourages us to wake up from the anaesthetic. She articulates some avenues to pursue in becoming more inclusive, in seeing "the other" and in being "the other." I feel empowered by her words to explore further the inclusion of all

the voices – our own and our students’ – to find ways of breaking the silences in order to better understand the possible pathways toward an education for human beings that is inclusive of all.

SPEAK, TELL ME YOUR STORY

All one might need,
All that we might ever need,
Is still whispering from the bones of story
Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992, p. 17)

The need to break the silences, to heed the call, and to invite the voices is evident. How can we encourage them to speak? If we are to “learn with” and “learn from” our students, we need to create classrooms of invitation – invitation to our students, their expectations, their knowledge, and their stories. Freire (2000) speaks of teachers modeling the behaviours we expect from children. “The kind of reader and writer we want children to be, we have to be – we have to know it – and teach it – by living it” (p. 151). I see this statement as an invitation for teachers to tell their stories, and, in so doing, they will invite the stories of their students.

Narrative Inquiry in Teacher Education

In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks (1994) encourages the voices of students and teachers alike. “In my books,” she says, “I try to show how much my work is influenced by what students say in the classroom, what they do, what they express to me. Along with them I grow intellectually, developing sharper understandings of how to share knowledge and what to do in my participatory role with students” (p. 152). She urges us to open our minds and hearts and move “beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable” in order to make “education the practice of freedom” (p. 12).

From a top-down restructuring of schools, which demands that the teaching force more closely reflect our school populations (Sleeter, 1993), to expansion of existing curricula to incorporate positive images of minority groups (Delpit, 1995), the routes to teacher education for diversity are many. Particularly

striking in the literature is an approach through narrative inquiry. Researchers from many fields in education include examination of firsthand experience as a means of interrogating relevant issues and deepening understandings. Below, I look at narrative inquiry as a way of working with preservice teachers, practising teachers and teacher educators as a way to invite voice, self-examination, and the broadening attitudes regarding difference. Using several examples from the field of multicultural and anti-racist education, in which narrative inquiry has proven useful in dealing with systemic discrimination on the basis of race, class and gender, and from real classrooms where teachers have used narrative inquiry as a means to invite the voices of all their students, regardless of their differences, we can find ways of empowering our preservice teachers, practising teachers and teacher educators to take their own actions in preventing, educating and dealing with the real children in their classrooms and the experiences with issues of difference that may and will arise in their practices. The work of Bakhtin (1981), sprinkled throughout this thesis and particularly in this chapter, helps to provide additional light on how narrative works in doing so.

Individual Narratives

Marilyn Cochran-Smith (1990, with S. L. Lytle, 1991, 1995, 1995b) advocates the use of both written and oral teacher inquiry which interrogates our own positions and our practices regarding race, class and gender. The involvement of teachers in writing their own reflective journals, ever seeking to critically examine themselves, their practices and what they see in terms of anti-racist themes, is central to her work. Cochran-Smith cautions us “that unless

teacher educators engage in the unflinching interrogation of pre-service pedagogy and then work to alter their own teaching and programs, it is unlikely that they will be able to effectively help student teachers do the same” (1995, p. 541). Her passion and conviction are strong. For Cochran-Smith, “as teacher educators attempt to open the unsettling discourse of race in the pre-service curriculum, they need to examine how this discourse and its implications for particular schools, communities, and classrooms are constructed and interpreted” (1995, p. 542).

In order to gain that “particularity,” she uses both the written and oral inquiries of two student cohorts from a teacher education program that she directed. The program, Project START, was designed for educational reform wherein pre-service teachers “would develop an intellectual and socially responsible stance toward teaching and design their own roles as agents for school and social change” (1995, p. 543). An important factor in the project was the perceived need for student teachers to learn “in the company of school-based mentors who have developed critical perspectives based on their work inside schools” (1995, p. 544). In other words, the narrative inquiries, although personal to each student, had a much larger effect when used as part of the larger discourse. When student teachers and classroom teachers shared their stories and perceptions, and when they were looked at in light of teacher educators’ on-campus readings and activities, the discourse about race and teaching was opened.

Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1990) cite the work of Lynne Strieb, who, through journaling, found a way to step back from the daily teaching stream and take stock of what was happening in her classroom. Her journal writing made visible her intuitive actions, giving her an avenue to search for meaning, patterns, structures and questions, many of which concerned issues of race and gender. Journals “provide windows on what goes on in school through teachers’ eyes and in teachers’ voices” (p. 89).

Similarly, essays, though often seen as personal, retrospective, and often based on a single, “narrow” perspective, are highly recommended. For example, Ming Fang He (2002) uses her own narrative voice as a search for her identity as a person, a teacher and a parent as she navigates back and forth between Eastern and Western cultures and languages. My-Phung Quach (2002), S.F.U., in her Master’s comprehensive exam, writes in a narrative voice, asking, “How do we encourage the maintenance and development of a voice which reflects home, culture, gender, history, self, and learning ... a voice which weaves fluidly between the many influences that define identity” (p. 3)?

June Wyatt-Beynon (1985) studied the relationship between reflective writing and attitude changes toward multiethnic education and ethnic minorities with preservice and inservice teachers. She found that the reflective writing allowed students to transform their experiences through such conscious reflection (p. 36). Students explored, among other things, how someone else’s cultural background may have compared to their own, and influenced their ideas and feelings about the teacher role in a multicultural community. This reflective

writing task, one of many strategies used to meet course objectives, was rated the highest by students and instructors in helping to meet those objectives (p. 43).

Eliot Wigginton (in Lytle and Cochran-Smith, 1990) used essays, journals, letters, in-school memos, directives and passages from students' writing in his work with adolescents (p. 90). "I have found that it is the constant, unrelenting examination and revision of approach – not a package of answers to packaged questions – that makes the better teachers among us the best" (p. 90). He used his own and his students' writing to explore roots, form community and explore questions relevant to anti-racist education – for example, "What is power in education? Who has it and who does not? What is the extent of the teacher's power? How can teachers help adolescents understand the problems of the world outside the school (p. 92)? His questions are particularly relevant in the discourse of culture, race, class and gender when he and his students explore "the discontinuities and connections between life inside and outside of school, and the forces that constrain and support the integration of adolescents' lives and the school curriculum" (ibid.).

Donald Hones (2002) also uses narrative inquiry and participatory action research to share the perspectives and awareness of three bilingual secondary students. The stories, told in their own voices, were used to begin a dialogue between and among those students, researchers, and university students.

Narrative inquiry has also been used in bringing forward the viewpoints of parents. Susan Auerbach (2002) writes about the need for "culturally patterned

stories” of parents to mediate their understandings and actions around schooling. She points out how the voices of parents of colour are typically silenced in schools and muted in research. She draws on narrative analysis, sociocultural theory and critical race theory to show how telling their stories helped parents build social networks, negotiate conflict with the school, and envision new roles.

Shared Narratives

In the work surrounding narrative and teacher education, we see clearly that the voices of student teachers, classroom teachers, teacher educators, high school students and parents in school communities are being sought. There is some sense that in our pluralistic society the multiplicity of voices needs to be heard. Above all, it is individual persons who write, individual voices that speak, and individual stories that are told. Further work in narrative points out the necessity for the sharing of those stories in order for understanding of one another’s perspectives to have a chance at taking place.

Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1990) talk about such sharing as collaborative inquiry, that is, two or more teachers examining issues, in order to build on each other’s insights, to analyze and interpret, to provide richer understandings, to enhance respect and to cause more divergent thinking. She cites the work of Patricia Carini -- work which involves the sharing of teachers’ perspectives and children’s perspectives resulting in “an unusually rich and complex rendering of patterns that invites rather than forecloses further interpretations” (p. 95).

bell hooks (1994) advocates the hearing of one another's voices, the insistence that everyone's presence be acknowledged, "an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic" (p. 8). It is important to hooks to "create participatory spaces for the sharing of knowledge" (p. 15). In her classes, she has students write short paragraphs to read aloud so that all have a chance to hear each one's unique perspectives. "That moment of collective participation and dialogue means that students and professor 'look at' each other, and engage in acts of recognition" (p. 186).

Interactive Narratives

But is it merely the sharing of voices that leads to attitude changes and growth toward more inclusive beliefs and actions? Goli Rezai-Rashti (1995), in looking at teacher in-service programs, propounds the need for student voice, the need for curriculum reformation through teacher input, and a very strong emphasis on increased active interaction between academics and practitioners. The word "interaction" seems key.

Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991), in their work with preservice teachers, express how pedagogies can be shaped through personal histories not merely by the sharing of the stories or the hearing of each other's stories. For them, as well, it is more the "interaction" of preservice teachers' personal histories with the world that gives the possibilities for "creation" or "transformation." "We simply find ourselves unable to draw preservice teachers' attention to social factors except as they clash, conflict, amplify, or aggravate well-developed and long-held

beliefs, values, and experiences” (p. 88). Their use of autobiographical writing with their students becomes especially valuable when the “writing becomes interactive, shared with others as a dialogue” (p. 107). Only then is it “productive.”

In Lawrence and Tatum’s work (1997), much of their success with suburban white teachers’ writing samples is attributed to the interactive nature of their class sessions (p. 176), and Barlas et al (2002) again confirm the value of “cooperative” inquiry as a learning strategy particularly suited to transformative learning (p. 1). Participants in their study examined their own lived experiences of manifesting white supremacy, self-describing the nature and processes of change in their lives as well as the role attributed to the process of cooperative inquiry in facilitating those changes. In addition to examining their own experiences, they were required to share in the group setting reflections on each other’s actions. This interactive sharing heightened the group’s awareness of the consequences of their previously unconscious assumptions. The use of narrative in a collaborative manner not only gave participants a voice, and opportunities for their own growth and learning, but opportunities to take positive action on their learnings in their work with others. Using the narrative device of examining personal stories and participating in an inquiry group seemed *together* to facilitate and support changes in participants’ ‘meaning perspectives’ as well as changes in behaviour (p. 11).

Bakhtin's Theory of Dialogism

As I explored the literature and the successes of personal, shared, and interactive narratives, I began to wonder if there was some common thread, some reason that narrative “worked” in teacher education for diversity and anti-racism. It appeared that in all those particular readings, there was no specific theory to account for the success. I recognize that the invitation to hear all voices has something very powerful to do with it, and the recognition of oneself in “the other” plays an integral part. To express one’s lived experiences with difference and to hear others’ experiences are, indeed, crucial. However, can listening to others account for change and growth? Is there another process involved to account for the possibilities of transformation by personal, shared and interactive narratives alike?

All of the narratives were situated; that is, located in the particular contexts of particular experiences. Bakhtin (1981) sheds light on this contextuality:

There are no ‘neutral’ words and forms – words and forms that can belong to ‘no one’; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents. For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world ... Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word. As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing ... language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other.

(p. 293)

Our thoughts and speech seem to form and come into awareness on this border, this place of intersection.

When I looked at the actual language used to describe the processes and effects of using narrative, phrases such as “unsettling and uncertain discourse,” or “juxtaposition of perspectives” arose. There was mention of “conflicting viewpoints,” “tensions,” and “reconsider[ing] and reconnect[ing] experiences to new understanding[s].” The language of “disconcerting insights,” “construct[ing] and reconstruct[ing]” beliefs and “confront[ing] the dilemmas” filled the literature. I read of those places of “clash” and “aggravation” brought forward by Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) and bell hooks’ (1994) space where assumptions are disrupted and contested (p. 186). There is obviously something of a problematic nature inherent in narratives, some point or space where intersections between points of view take place, a place that is always filled with the same tension and uncertainty described earlier by Aoki (2005).

Ming Fang He (2002), in writing her personal narrative, navigates back and forth, “reinventing (herself) again and again in response to such a flux of flows in both ‘Chinese and Canadian rivers’... We cannot tell which is the beginning and which is the end” (p. 320). My-Phung Quach’s (2002) voice “weaves fluidly between... many influences” (p. 3). Wigginton (in Lytle and Cochran-Smith, 1990) and his students explore “discontinuities and connections”, p. 92). It is in these opposing voices, in the back and forth movement, that I recognized the elements of what Bakhtin (1981) calls the dialogic.

If we look at the work of Bakhtin (1981), his theory is useful to illuminate the underlying possibilities for the successful use of narrative in teacher education. It is in the dialogic that critical examination of our beliefs and

opportunities for change can occur. For Bakhtin, all utterances are dialogic and involve struggle:

The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse. This process is made more complex by the fact that a variety of alien voices enter into the struggle for influence within an individual's consciousness just as they struggle with one another in surrounding social reality
(p. 348)

This helps to explain why even personal narratives *not* shared still embrace the interior struggle of the old with the new, what Bakhtin calls the gap or struggle between "the authoritative word (religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults and of teachers) ... [and] ... the internally persuasive word" (p. 342). He explains that struggle:

The *authoritative word* demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own ...it demands our unconditional allegiance...permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions ... It enters our verbal consciousness as a compact ... indivisible; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it. It is indissolubly fused with its authority.
(1981, pp. 342-343)

The *internally persuasive word* is affirmed through assimilation or 'appropriation.' It is tightly interwoven with 'one's own word.' Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words... it does not remain in an isolated and static condition... it is freely developed, applied to new material...it enters into an intense interaction, a struggle with other internally persuasive discourses...it is open...able to reveal ever newer ways to mean. "
(pp. 345-346)

“The struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness” (p. 346). In fact, whether in story, personal narrative, reflective journals, single voices, shared experience, or collaborative inquiry, there is dialogue. It may be inner, outer, shared or not.

This multiplicity of voices, within and without, seems to match with Bakhtin’s idea of “heteroglossia,” that place where “centripetal” and “centrifugal” forces collide, where the set of social, historical, meteorological, and physiological conditions will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions (Holquist’s Glossary in Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428).

Heteroglossia keeps us in conflict with the monologic, fatherly wisdom, the mainstream authoritative voice. Heteroglossia demands that we struggle with multi-voices and multi-dialects, creating and developing new voices through human thought and expression. Our inner and outer engagement in the dialogic allows us to examine the old, struggle with the new, and come to new forms of consciousness or take on new approaches. I see connections here to my inner struggles as a child and my ongoing struggles as a teacher, connections that help make sense of my past experiences and give me hopeful possibilities for new ones.

This possibility for new consciousness and new approach is evident when I read of Eleanor, a teacher participant in Barlas’ (2002) study. Eleanor writes in her narrative about her ability to allow new information and experiences into her life that she would not previously have encountered or reflected upon – her ability

“to turn one disorienting dilemma into a stream of new awareness and changes in behavior” (p. 11).

When Maggie, a Project START participant, considers issues and questions in the company of experienced teachers and finds ways to “construct the meanings of her own later teaching experiences,” it again seems that her “construction” of meanings matches the process which Bakhtin describes (Cochran-Smith, 1991, p. 303).

Our personal, shared or collaboratively contested narratives, by their inherently dialogic nature, may be helpful to preservice teachers, practising teachers and teacher educators in making explicit the reflective and critical in examining the old and hearing the new. In so doing, the possibilities for the field of teacher education, in relation to difference, race, class and gender, are opened up. In these ways, Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism contributes a very convincing voice on how the use of personal, shared and collaborative narrative may become positive forms of teacher education.

Inviting Classroom Voices

It is heartening also to read of actual classrooms where teachers have found ways to appropriate powerful positions, or, at least, to use the power and autonomy of their own classroom situations to reflect critically, to resist prescription and standardization, and to provide increased participation for their students through narrative.

An interesting study by Manyak (2001) explores a classroom practice called *The Daily News*, used with students who had previously been read as “strugglers.” By incorporating a wide range of participatory roles for the students, many of whom did not speak English, each person gained agency to contribute in his or her own way. First language expression was given equal status to school language. Students helped one another share, translate, encode, and edit each others’ “news stories.” As a result, students “shed their identities of incompetence” (p. 456).

“In my books,” says bell hooks (1994), “I try to show how much my work is influenced by what students say in the classroom, what they do, what they express to me. Along with them I grown intellectually, developing sharper understandings of how to share knowledge and what to do in my participatory role with students” (p. 152). hooks creates an inclusive classroom climate, welcoming the stories and experiences of her adult students.

Steven Wolk (1998) details his own experiences in creating a democratic classroom, a unique “community of practice” in Lave & Wenger’s (1991) terms.

Wolk’s vision:

Seeing a classroom as a living ecosystem with a seemingly infinite number of variables can help us appreciate and respect its complexity and uniqueness. It can shed some light on why list after list of so-called generalized effective practices don’t work, and why much-touted rigid “standards” – even national standards – won’t work either...Every classroom is a unique environment with a unique set of variables.

(Wolk, 1998, p. 53)

Among the variables are the students' individual voices and the encouragement of those voices in building the community of practice. Wolk describes many ways of encouraging talk so that student voice is consciously developed in "defining who we are, who we want to become, and how we see our role in the world" (p. 186). Some talk is formal, while other talk is spontaneous. Specific chunks of time are set aside each day for dialogic discourse. The focus is on purpose, sharing important topics, questions, ideas, thoughts, opinions, concerns, and lives.

Among the structures he uses are: project-based learning, class meetings, social issue writing, small group talk, "take a stand," and the infusion of a critical literacy into the reading and writing program. Stories and diaries play a prominent role. "To nurture the voice of democracy we must live the voice of democracy" (p. 187).

Within the structure of the classroom as a purposeful project centre, opportunities for access to the learning are provided for all. Variability and conflict are welcome. Hierarchies do not exist. Teacher and students share the practice as participants. Wolk shows himself as a critically reflective teacher who views himself as a learner and researcher – not having all the answers, but sharing his process in order to encourage and guide access to our own.

At Charles Dickens Elementary School in Vancouver, where I taught for a number of years, a whole-school philosophy is in place which allows long periods of time for students to move from "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 29 - 43) to full participation in the community of practice.

Arranged in multi-age groupings, each classroom is a practice of built-in “newcomers and old-timers” (p. 29, p. 57). When I taught there, my class consisted of approximately six Kindergarten students, six Grade One students and six Grade Two students. We never identified the students by their grade level – it was one class, one practice. The oldest students moved on to another multi-age grouping at the end of the year as six new Kindergartners arrived in September.

Our classroom practice insisted that the returning children help newer ones to become valued members of the community. They familiarized the new students with the routine procedures of the class, buddied with younger students to go to the washroom or out for recess, and informed them where to find classroom supplies. All materials were shared communally. There were no desks, but rather work areas, or centres, where children gathered freely in flexible groups. For the most part, children grouped themselves around interests or projects at the centres. No one was restricted by age or ability.

We talked with the children about the best ways to organize the classroom and our projects. Some activities needed a more experienced person to serve as a guide or mentor. Some work required that one person be the writer, one the illustrator, one the idea person, etc. In this way, children all found powerful positions with which to identify. Children of varying abilities read together freely each day. I often observed the little ones joining in a chorus with the big ones, their words coming out of their mouths milliseconds behind the big ones’ words. More proficient readers spent time listening to beginners “reading” – the lessons

of home and family put into place in the classroom. Everyone had something to learn from another.

These practices did not happen miraculously and independently of the teacher. Many class meetings, on-the-spot “feedback” and requests for individual and collaborative reflection took place. We worked out together how to make things work better on a daily basis. At “Class Temperature” each day, we shared our feelings one at a time in a large group, teacher and children free to notice and bring up for discussion things that made them feel closer to a low of 0° or to a high of 10° degrees. In this way, issues difference, of personal experience, feelings, fair and unfair practices, were all welcomed.

We tried to work together towards peaceful and unique solutions to difficulties. Conflicting points of view arose and I often had to ask myself and the class, “What would be fair here? How can we work this out so that no one is left out and everyone is safe?” Given the opportunity to deal with the problematic nature of working in a group or community, many children seemed to develop skills in noticing the plight of others and in sharing access to resources, time, and identities of power in the class. Everyone had memories of being new and being supported to participate. I asked the older children to tell those stories, not only to help the newer children feel that they belonged, but to remind the older ones of their responsibility to be sensitive. Most were willing to grant to others the same support they had received. Some found it difficult.

It was not a utopia. Some days I felt that I was being successful at hearing my students, and other days, I just wanted them to hear me!! Difficulties,

conflict and difference are inherent to social settings. We can use Bakhtin's (1981) theories again to see the discourse of the classroom as a "diversity of ...speech types...even diversity of languages and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (p. 262). Regardless of our best-laid plans for total democracy, "internal stratification [is] present in every language at any given moment ... [In fact, it is] the indispensable prerequisite ..." (p. 263).

To create classrooms with "compositional unities," we need "the social diversity of speech types and ... differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions" (p. 263). Bakhtin invites the "multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of ...links and interrelationships ..." which create "movement" or "dialogue" (p. 263). "A dialogized word...the resonance or oscillation of possible meanings within it is not only not resolved, but must increase in complexity as it continues to live" (p. 426). The overall structure of Charles Dickens School and of each classroom allowed for a similar dialogic process to take place. That is what made it an effective and powerful educational experience. The discourse made difference, difficulty, and multiple viewpoints not only acceptable, but necessary, and, in so doing, created student access to more powerful identities in each community of practice.

In Vivian Paley's (1992) kindergarten classroom, Paley tells all her students that "a full share of the sun is rightfully theirs" (p. 130). If the share isn't granted, then they have the right to fight for it, work it through, and resist the status quo. She takes responsibility as the teacher to create a place where voices can be heard, where resistance is welcome.

Toohey (2000) mentions the work of Eisenhart (1995) in which she “shows how subjects in her study express narratives of self and how these stories might be useful as ways to understand how individuals take up and/or resist the identities offered them by their cultural context” (Toohey, p. 78).

I begin to wonder about the children in Toohey’s study, and the children I have taught over the years. It is too often a rarity that we actually ask the children how they themselves experience their identities or how they feel about how they are identified by others. Could Toohey have interviewed the focal children in her study, to see the interpretations and meanings they gave to their experiences and applied to their identities? Did they see identities as assigned? Were they aware of any changes, dynamics, or constructions over the course of the three-year period of her study? Is it possible for such young children to interpret their experiences reflectively? I wonder how they would now describe their experiences in those classrooms, now that they are older and can look back reflectively.

I am haunted by those same questions. I never “interviewed” any of the children in my stories, and yet it is their stories, from their points of view, that I long to hear and wonder if I’ve heard.

Does it take a formal program to invite a child’s voice? Does it take a program to hear a story? Stories live within all of us and what we need is to hear them in many ways. As thoughtful and responsible teachers, we need to build our proficiency as “child-watchers” (van Manen, 2002a) so that we hear and read our students’ stories not only from their words, but from their faces, their

gestures, and their silences. We need to suspend our assumptions and judgments in order to deeply listen to the story beneath the voice and the voice beneath the story.

Tien is a student from Cambodia. He begins his time in my Gr. 1/2/3 class speaking no English. He looks mature, somehow appearing to have aged faster than the other seven-year-olds in the group, and I begin to wonder about his past life. All I know is what he presents to me here.

Each day I reserve a time for journal writing, and although the stories of my students are written simply at first, I discover from Tien that they hold hidden meanings, deep beneath the printed words on the page.

After attending school for several months, Tien's oral language skills are developing nicely. I notice that he no longer just labels things with single words but starts speaking in sentences. He participates in class and shows increasing comfort in speaking about himself. I welcome the opportunity to finally learn a little more about him.

One day Tien speaks to me privately: "Guess what? I not really seven years old."

"Oh?" I frown. "How old are you, Tien?"

"Let's see," he says, as he counts on his fingers and mouths each numeral in Cambodian.

"I nine!" he exclaims. "I really nine."

He reveals that the documents presented to the school actually belong to another child, a child who is seven ... or would have been. I am perplexed by his words, recognizing that his upbringing and arrival in Canada are mysteries to me,

secrets that long to slip out, one confidential clue at a time. Who is Tien? Has he been forced to adopt some other child's identity?

The questions are not answered; in fact, as Tien shares more with me, more questions are raised. I am now no longer sure about his relationship to the family he lives with, as he discloses quietly on another occasion: "You know my mom and dad? They 'a little bit' my parents."

It seems that Tien wants to be himself and share himself. Bit by bit, he voices who he is. I wonder where his parents are, if they're alive, and where it is that Tien longs to belong.

In journal writing today, I see that Tien finally prints something. He has drawn a picture, as he usually does, but this time he has written a complete sentence: "I hate rats."

When he comes to conference with me about his writing, I ask him,

"Have you seen rats, Tien?"

"Yes," he says, "in Cambodia."

Tien proceeds to tell me a story:

"Here I am with my family. Here my mother. Here my father. We hide in a ... ground." He points to the ditch he has drawn.

"A ditch?" I offer a word.

"Yes, a ditch. See? The ditch is ... uhh, mud, and the ditch is water."

He goes on to tell me that he has a baby brother.

"See? I hold my baby."

Tien points again and shows me as he speaks that it is his job to keep his hand over the baby's mouth at all times so that the soldiers won't hear the people in the ditch and won't come to kill them. While he stifles his baby

brother's cries, Tien watches the only thing that he can see: the rats in the ditch.

I can see that he is as frightened of the rats as he is of the soldiers. All he can do is watch in silence.

At recess time I rush to the staffroom to share his story. It is too much for me to hold. I am spilling over; I am exploding; I am gushing in pain. I pour out Tien's story to the ESL teacher, sure that she will be able to shed some light on Tien's experiences and those of other Cambodian refugees. Maybe she can help me to understand the bigger picture, find a way to deal with Tien's story on another level. She shocks me with a terse response:

"Why did you ask him if he had seen rats? Why did you let him talk like that? You should have just marked the journal."

I tried to understand the ESL teacher's point of view. I am sure that she was concerned about my upset, didn't want to see me in tears, but at the same time felt that I had brought that upset upon myself by opening up the question to Tien about the rats. I suppose it would have been easier on me to "just mark the journal." However, that idea had never entered my mind. Tien wrote his first story and shared it with me. I felt the privilege of being his chosen listener. I wanted to know about him and his experiences in Cambodia. If I hadn't asked him about the rats, I'd never have known about the horror he had been through. I would have overlooked a major period of his life. I would have been less than the teacher and person I was striving to be if spelling and grammar came before the meaning underlying that story.

I can't pretend to fully understand Tien or his experience. I can only imagine how frightening the ditch was for him, how heavy a weight it was for him

to bear his story and how important it was for him to be able to express it. Although he wrote only one simple sentence, I recognized in those moments that Tien had begun to find his voice, and I had begun to hear it.

The impact of Tien's story on my teaching practice was powerful. It opened my heart and mind. I began to wonder how he felt in this place called school, in this strange country, with a strange language. Did English vocabulary and learning materials on theme studies of dinosaurs or fairy tales bear any connection to him? How real was my classroom for him? How open? How inclusive?

I learned that the printed word was merely the tip of Tien's iceberg. It would have been easy not to consider that iceberg's depth -- the complexity, feelings, issues and reality of his life. I began to wonder how many other students in my class had unheard voices, hidden in icebergs that had formed well beneath the surface. Was it within my power to hear them? Was it possible for each of us to hear one other?

When I told Tien's story to a group of pre-service teachers some years later, I began to recognize fully the value of the story-telling process. I had chosen to tell several stories of children I had worked with in inner city schools over the years. I wanted the student teachers to understand from the inside what it was like to be a teacher, and particularly in that setting. When I finished the presentation, there was absolute silence in the room. As I glanced around, I saw that my stories had had a very powerful effect. Some of my students were crying. All appeared to be shaken in some way.

After some moments, some in the group were able to speak. Later, others wrote private responses to me. They told me that they had learned more about real teaching and real kids from my stories than they would have done listening to a lecture or attending a workshop. They recognized the value of making our classrooms safe places. They saw the profound impact of making simple and honest connections with students. They expressed the awareness that teachers need to create spaces in classrooms to see and hear all their students. They understood the importance of making experiences at school relevant and real to students.

I was surprised when several wrote me their own stories, telling me of incidents of their own that connected to my experience with Tien, Duke, Louise and others. They wrote stories of incidents that had changed their lives, as the stories of each one of my students had changed mine. They wrote of defining moments that made them want to be teachers. There were a few who included in their stories reflections on what they saw as mistakes they had made in dealing with children, one confessing that she knew she should have contacted the authorities regarding an abused child under her care and didn't.

What particularly impressed me were the number of student teachers who wrote stories of their own experiences of feeling "different," those times when they were not included in the classroom dynamic, times when yes, they excluded others, and times when they felt that the teacher really didn't care.

I learned that my stories had opened a door. By sharing my experiences, I discovered that these pre-service teachers had their own stories to tell and

important contributions to make to an ongoing pedagogical dialogue. A bond was created between us, and a renewed commitment to carry on with our work in becoming the teachers we wished to be.

I recognized that experiences of being different or feeling marginalized are not unusual, that visible exclusions because of race, class, gender and ability walk hand in hand with exclusions based on less visible and often hidden differences. I learned that the “unalterable otherness” of which Levinas speaks is a phenomenon which connects us all on a deeply human level, and the recognition of that connection continues to demand the responsibility that we, as teachers, share in the face of all our children. Speak. Tell me your story.

THE WIDENING CIRCLE OF STORIED VOICES

The community we hope for
"is a community attentive to difference,
open to the idea of plurality.
That which is life-affirming in diversity
must be discovered and rediscovered,
as what is held in common
becomes always more many-faceted, open and inclusive
and drawn to untapped possibility ...
But as we do so, we have to remain aware also
of the distinctive members of the plurality,
appearing before one another with their own perspectives on the common,
their own stories entering the culture's story,
altering it as it moves through time."

Greene, 1995, p. 167

I tell my stories. Through textured layers of memory, research, and dialogue, many voices speak. I return to the stoop at the back of my mother's kitchen and dwell in the significance of those Friday mornings so long ago. The smells, the tastes, the sounds and the sights sit within me as I sit within them – the fresh-killed fowl with fluttering feathers, the tiny yellow yolks with untold mysteries of birth, my mother's mellow voice sharing the fine points of plucking and tweezing, the anticipated golden soup with wisps of warmth wafting from the charred old pot on the stove. The voices of home and belonging are sweet in lived memory.

I hear the powerful voices of my family, my ancestors, my classmates, and my teachers. I hear the academic voices of the theorists and educator colleagues. Noisy conversations take place between and among them all, forward and back throughout time. But there are sounds that permeate the dialogic din, notes of a reality that cut through language, theory, reflection and conclusion. It is the voices of the children that I hear. It is their voices that bring the themes of identity and belonging to my heart and mind. It is their voices that compel me as a teacher to answer the call to responsible action.

I re-read the letter from Duke's mother and study the attached photo, the boy's face so serious and troubled. I see him at my classroom door once more – this time I gently brush his tears with my hand, I blend them into his cheeks and gently wipe away the tracks before they dry indelibly.

It is in my own deep listening to the stories of this thesis that I have been able to recognize and accept the elusive and multiple nature of identity, to see

more clearly the often confusing, and sometimes humiliating, experience of difference, and to live in and sit with the insecurity of an unfixed sense of belonging.

Through my stories, I have reflected upon the influences of home, family, school and culture, those authoritative and contextualized voices, sometimes “rigid and determining” (Yon, 2000, p. 122), who tell us who we are and where we belong.

I have considered how difference can be seen as unacceptable, how a sense of marginalization and exclusion can cause deep hurt, confusion and silence, and how, in our strong and human desire to belong, we may appropriate the status quo or even lose some aspects of our own identities as we take on others.

It is through the stories that I recognize a viable response for answering the call to our pedagogical responsibility. Through story, I see an avenue for exploring our own experiences as individuals and teachers and an avenue for inviting the voices of our students and our colleagues. Telling our stories invites the stories of others. What a powerful and human way to take action in a world which demands our deeper understanding of diversity and our significant movement from exclusion to inclusion! As Greene (1995) says: “In this time of interest in narrative and storytelling as a way of knowing ... my hope is that the story disclosed here will move readers to tap their own stories, their experiences in finding projects by which to create identities” (p. 113). I see that Greene’s hope in telling her own story echoes my own desire in telling mine.

Through stories we can discover how children see themselves and how teachers see themselves. Stories are a pathway to reclamation, a resistance to identities assigned in a form that is inherently human, humane, accessible, and connecting. To create schools and classrooms which welcome the real stories of the real participants, which offer a place to share, contemplate, discuss, and interact with our own experiences as lived, is to create a new locus of discourse, one which opens up opportunities for students and teachers to take on more powerful identity positions and possibilities for increased democratic and agentive participation.

As Yon (2000) tells us, discursive spaces can “open or foreclose the different ways people can imagine themselves and the school” (p. 125). He is interested, as I am, in creating a space that will “allow people to explore fluidity rather than rigidity” (p. 126). Or as Greene (1995) puts it: “As I work in a dialogical relation with students ... I want them to make their perspectives available so that both I and they can see from many vantage points, make sense from different sides. I want us to work together to unconceal what is hidden, to contextualize what happens to us, to mediate the dialectic that keeps us on edge, that may be keeping us alive” (p. 115).

The teacher can, even within a fairly normative system, create conditions in the classroom, the staffroom and the auditorium to welcome story. The teacher who sees the value in exploring his/her own and his/her students' experiences, who accepts the responsibility to invite and welcome difference and contradiction with a view to deeper understanding, will be a teacher who nurtures

the process, nurtures the space. Story as lived experience is an easily accessible and natural means for doing so. Of course, there are many other ways to create dialogic spaces that may promote deepening understandings of one another -- dance, visual arts, drama, writing programs dealing with the issues and experiences of identity and belonging, for example. It is possible for one to become an agent for change in any of the diverse ways to which we, as humans, are diversely disposed.

Will opening spaces for story solve all our problems, create inclusive classrooms and schools, and deepen global and intercultural understandings once and for all? Certainly not. But we can initiate ongoing opportunities for dialogue on a real and human level; we can recognize and act upon the complexity and multiple nature of our daily experiences and perceptions.

Regardless of the profound revelations and understandings that I have learned from examining stories of my own experience, I know that I continue and will continue to live in the struggle of complexity and unanswered questions, questions that change and grow, transforming my understandings as I discover new layers, new textures, new strands, and always, new knots on the underside of my life's canvas.

I know, that as humans, we will continue to exclude even as we include. Will we remember to continue looking for those on the outside, those in the margins, when we feel satisfied to have found places and create spaces inside for a few unheard voices? Again, Maxine Greene (1995) reminds me: "Those lying outside history, outside the community "leav[e] an empty space on the

common ground and leav[e] undefined an aspect of reality. It is true that we cannot know all the absent ones; but they must be present somehow in their absence” (p. 159). We must leave a space at the table for them, just as we leave a full glass for Elijah the Prophet at our Passover seder, year after year, the door opened wide in welcome invitation.

My story is not over, and my thesis is not complete. To stay open to learning and my own evolution as a person and teacher is important to me. To move forward and look beyond, to see the next chapter unfolding, my inquiry and narrative will continue, as I do, in wonder.

I am curious about you, the reader. Who are you? How do you identify yourself? In what places and with whom do you sense your own belonging? Where are the places that you live in disconnection or fragmentation? Do you or have you experienced life in the margins? How do my stories impact yours? How do stories of my students impact yours? Reader, do you experience the multiplicity of your own voice? Is there a silent one, hidden deeply, that does not speak? Do some of your voices resonate with mine? In what ways? Do you have voices that clash with mine? I want to hear those voices. How do you tune in to the voices of your students? What stories of theirs and yours intersect and interact with each other? Do you allow that dialogue to include not only the voices of congenial confluence but also those of disturbing dissonance? What are the deeper sounds of the dialogue?

Dear reader, I do not know your experience as lived; I do not know your perceptions. Please, dear reader, speak -- tell me your story.

"The sea accepts all rivers."
So she said. The phrase
had come to her in meditation.
She passed it on to us
not knowing why.

The sea accepts all rivers.
Of course.
Why shouldn't it?

It wouldn't grade and judge
each tributary, choosing some,
rejecting others,
requiring that a stream
follow a different course
before it flows into the sea.

It wouldn't close itself to
that which by the means
of gravity and river banks
flows naturally into its midst.

I guess the sea
has boundaries
but not where
rivers are concerned.
With rivers, it is always open
to the flow,
accepting what comes forth
as if it were
a part of self,
without the possibility
of closing off.

Perhaps the sea has always known
a calm acceptance
of the rivers which
renew, wash,
fill, pollute, enrich
and even rearrange it.

Judy Brown (2001)
By permission

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