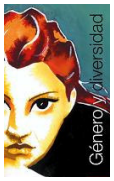

MÁSTER ERASMUS MUNDUS

EN ESTUDIOS DE LAS MUJERES Y DEL GÉNERO.

Gemma

ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Cuestión de Diversidad

El Problema de la Diferencia en la Pedagogía Canadiense

Tesis de Máster

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Vº Bº:

Oviedo, July 2010

ERASMUS MUNDUS MASTER

IN WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

DIVERSITY MATTERS

Canadian Pedagogy and the Problem with Being Different

M.A. Thesis

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Oviedo, July 2010

Author - Rose Lipton

Title – Diversity Matters: Canadian Pedagogy and the Problem with Being Different

Keywords – Education; Canada; Afrocentrism; Deconstruction; Feminist Poststructuralism

Resumen (Español)

Título: Cuestión de diversidad. El problema de la diferencia en la pedagogía canadiense.

Durante las últimas tres décadas en Canadá, las políticas educativas han buscado integrar gradualmente, y de forma transversal, los discursos feministas y antirracistas. Estas políticas tienden a centrarse exclusivamente en la educación como inclusión social y como medio para alcanzar la equidad, sin atención a las causas estructurales de la opresión. Aunque exigente y económicamente viable, esta insistencia en la integración e inclusión frente a la diferencia, que se nutre de los principios del feminismo liberal y del multiculturalismo, excluye una crítica más sostenida a las prácticas de exclusión de los contenidos educativos. Esta tesis utilizará la deconstrucción y los modos de pensamiento postestructuralista con el fin de analizar críticamente el tratamiento del género y la racialización en el currículo, la pedagogía y las políticas educativas de Ontario, Canadá. La pregunta crítica en este análisis es si, al promover la inclusión y la equidad dentro de las escuelas públicas de Ontario, sin reconocimiento de la diferencia, las políticas educativas no pueden estar, de hecho, reforzando las jerarquías sociales que pretenden eliminar.

Document Abstract (English)

Over the last three decades policy makers in Ontario, Canada have sought to integrate the feminist and antiracist discourses into public education policies through a gradual process of mainstreaming. These reformulated policies tend to focus on the broad concept of education as means of eliminating social inequality, with an emphasis on issues of access and inclusion. While this approach may be exigent and economically viable in the short-term, it has undermined a more substantive and long-term approach to critiquing the exclusionary aspects of curricular content itself. This project will explore the ways in which integration and inclusion have been privileged over a more comprehensive approach to reform in Ontario's education policies. This focus on equality over difference has its roots in liberal feminist and multiculturalist discourses of the 1970s and early 1980s and even the most recent policies disregard contemporary criticisms of these positions.

Bringing together contemporary poststructuralist critique and recent public policy from the province of Ontario, this examination seeks to challenge and enliven the debates surrounding the province's position on diversity and equity in education. Deconstructive methodologies will underscore my analysis of these policy documents with consideration for their social and historical significance displaying an overarching concern for the ways that curriculum, pedagogy and policy are gendered and racialized. The critical question that underscores this analysis is whether, in the process of promoting inclusivity and equity within Ontario's public schools, educational policy makers are in fact reinforcing the social hierarchies they claim to oppose by promoting an agenda of "equality" over "difference."

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by gratefully acknowledging the enthusiastic supervision of my primary advisor at the University of Oviedo, Professor Isabel Carrera Suárez. Her constant support kept me on track throughout my research and writing process and what follows simply would not exist without her. I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Rosi Braidotti, my secondary advisor from Utrecht University. I am thankful not only for the direct assistance she provided in this project, but because her ground-breaking research and vibrant pedagogical style challenged me to *think differently* in the first place. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Humberstone, Lisa Rebert, Marijana Mitrovic, Yi Xing Hwa, Nancy Sah and all my friends and colleagues at the universities of Oviedo and Utrecht. Their meticulous research and innovative ideas in the classroom pushed me to hold my own work up to standard of graduate achievement I had not thought possible. It is my pleasure to also acknowledge the work of my sister, confident and tireless editor Shawna Lipton. Her keen eye and words of encouragement ultimately allowed me to see this project through to its end and meet my final deadline. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Lindsay Lipton and Tricia Bain, for never once doubted my decision to move across an ocean to become a full-time feminist, researcher and nomad. The encouragement, strength and resolve of all these individuals allowed me to produce the work that follows, so I would once again like to convey my sincerest thanks.

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Introduction

"Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power."

--Michel Foucault in Power/Knowledge

Many questions circulate in contemporary discourses of classroom equity. What defines an equitable classroom? Is it merely freedom from discrimination or something more? Does equity extend into pedagogical practice, curricular content and the administrative structures of the school itself? Perhaps the most pressing question of all is not *what* but *who* has the power to formulate this definition?

In the past several decades, educators and policy makers in Ontario, Canada have sought to respond to these questions by incorporating the discourses of feminism and antiracism into mainstream educational policies. However, many of these attempts have focused on education as an end-in-itself for achieving social equality. The effect of this approach has often been the conflation of educational equity with *access to* education or *inclusion.* These issues cannot be disregarded or ignored in the short-term, however the sole emphasis on these concerns has undermined a more substantive and long-term approach to assessing the exclusionary aspects of curricular content and assessment practices. This project will explore the ways in which integration and inclusion have been privileged over a more transformational approach to reform within the public education system in Ontario, Canada. By incorporating poststructural feminist and critical antiracist discourses into the discussion, I hope to challenge the status quo of the

current normative discourse surrounding the province's diversity and equity policies. By carefully reading and responding to a range of Canadian educational policy documents within their social and historical contexts using deconstructive methods of analysis, I will ask the overarching question: In the process of promoting inclusivity and equity within Ontario's public schools, some of the most diverse in Canada, are educational policy makers reinforcing the social inequalities and hierarchies they seek to break down by too fervently asserting "equality" over "difference"?

In the next chapter of this examination I will provide a brief introduction to some theoretical texts that situate this discussion within a much broader discourse on the subject of difference. While many of these texts focus primarily on feminist phenomenology and epistemology as opposed to education, this is a body of literature that has historically committed itself to studying and understanding the concept of difference. I hope to bring an interdisciplinary perspective to Canadian educational policy making by using these key feminist texts as the theoretical basis of my research. In Chapter 3, I will outline my methodological approach for this analysis. I will my elaborate on deconstruction as a methodology by examining a few key theorists and practitioners of deconstruction. I will then go on to examine some specific reasons why this approach is both useful and necessary tool for the reading of educational policy documents. In the fourth chapter of this discussion I will begin to examine, in greater depth, how the concept of difference has factored into the localized dialogue on multiculturalism in Canada. I will discuss the centrality of difference and diversity discourses to the construction of the Canadian national identity and I will outline some of the ways in which these terms have been contested. Building on this historical context, Chapters 5 and 6 are both comprised of policy-based case studies from the province of Ontario. I will focus my study of diversity and equity specifically on these examples because, as I will illustrate, the classroom represents a microcosmic perspective on the treatment of Canadian minority groups. In Chapter 5 I will address a particular piece of education policy, passed in April 2009 entitled "Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy." This chapter will hone in specifically on the contradictions that exist within the Canadian discourse on diversity and

multiculturalism. Chapter 6 will then expand this discussion to include a new and unique approach to dealing with equity in Ontario's schools that has emerged within the province of Ontario only recently: the formation of Ontario's first publicly funded Afrocentric school. In this chapter I will utilize a multifaceted approach, incorporating examples from the Afrocentric curriculum itself, a comparison between this approach and the mainstream Ontario curriculum and an analysis of the public response to the school in the media to demonstrate the degree to which Afrocentric schooling demonstrates an important shift in the treatment of difference in Canadian public education. I will follow this discussion in Chapter 7 with some conclusions that can be drawn from both the case studies I have analyzed, as well as some of the overarching themes addressed throughout my analysis.

Ultimately I hope to demonstrate that while the narrative of Canadian tolerance and acceptance of difference plays well into the overarching theme of multiculturalism and diversity in the country, the goals of "diversity" and "difference" are not always the same. While a discourse of diversity seeks to integrate those who are different into an unaltered Canada, recognizing difference could lead to a redefinition of what it means to be Canadian. As long as these two terms are used interchangeably for political purposes, the policy and political solutions offered to the minority groups in question will continue to be insufficient.

Entering the Dialogue on Theories of Difference

One of the fundamental premises of this analysis on educational equity policies in the province of Ontario is that in order to define "equity" we must first understand how "difference" is categorized. Initially, the concept of difference may seem too vague and all-encompassing to theorize. However, it is precisely this ambiguity that makes the term so dynamic and theoretically useful. Like de Beauvoir's "Other," the notion of difference is characterized by its alterity, shifting meaning depending on the normative conventions of a given place or period. In this chapter I do not seek to provide a complete genealogy of theories of difference but instead, to examine a few discussions that contextualize my discussion of Canadian education policy. This will provide a small sample of how the concept of "difference" has been theorized by some and, perhaps more importantly, how a concentrated study of difference provides a set of analytical tools that can be practically applied to issues of educational equity.

It is helpful to begin this discussion with some of the early distinctions made between feminist theorists of equality and feminist theories of difference. In Ann Oakley's feminist genealogy, she traces this debate to definition of gender itself in the second wave feminist movement. At this point, she argues, the notion that "gender differences were/are not 'true' differences" was central to the movement, typified in the assertion that 'no 'essence' is involved' in that category we call Woman."[1] Denying any natural or biological essences allowed second wave feminists to form a cohesive argument against women's inherent natural or biological

[1] Ann Oakley, "A Brief History of Gender". In: *Who's Afraid of Feminism? Seeing through the Backlash*. (London: Penguin Books, 1997): 49.

inferiority. According to this logic, it followed that if women were given the same *opportunities* (educational, professional, legal, political, etc.) as individuals in dominant positions, they would be able to achieve the same *outcomes.* This social constructionist argument for gender underscores much of the liberal feminist movement which is indeed predicated on notions of equality and sameness.

Considering the success and widespread applicability of the equality argument, it is evident why the notion of affirming women's sexual difference would prove so controversial within feminist research. A prototypical equality feminist response to the difference argument is Rosalind Coward's contention that, "if inequalities between men and women are returned to the domain of the apparently 'natural', a *political* response is ruled out."[2] Oakley offers up a range of other prototypical criticisms of difference-based feminism including the valorization of women's particular biological or social strengths, the appropriation of differences by those who wish to defend the intrinsically patriarchal institution of the family and the perpetuation of a gendered division of labour that invariably favours men.[3]

However dominant the equality argument has been in the past, feminists who favour the difference approach have not shied away from directly responding to these types of criticisms. Donna Haraway offers up a simple yet convincing response to the types of arguments I just discussed by actually reinterpreting the foundational feminist concept of gender. Using its grammatical, rather than its political roots, she notes that "alterity" and "difference" are terms that define gender linguistically, so they ought to lie at the heart of feminist interpretations of gender as well. She advocates for the emergence of a politics of difference *as opposed to* sameness or equality because she asserts that gender theorizing must encompass "the breakup of

[2] Ibid., 44.
[3] Ibid., 43.

masterful subjectivity and the emergence of inappropriate/d others."[4] In practical terms, this means problematizing the aspects of the category of Woman that were previously taken for granted and repeatedly refusing master theories.[5] In the context of an analysis of equity in education, this type of argument is significant if it encourages politicians and policy to continually examine the root causes of oppression in schools as opposed to particular instances of discrimination and exclusion. Nevertheless, after examining both the arguments of equality and difference feminists it is clear why the equality position has been readily adopted in public policy. It is theoretically straightforward and practically useful. Yet several alternative, difference-based gender paradigms have been put forth that offer up new possibilities in educational policy making. I will examine these possibilities in the next sections this analysis by focusing on a few key feminist phenomenological and epistemological thinkers.

In light of the opposition between the difference and equality positions in feminism, I will now discuss the ways theorists have actively constructed a framework for a new politics of difference. One important figure from this group is French feminist Luce Irigaray. Trained as a psychoanalyst and known for "theorizing identity as sexual" Irigaray in many ways represents a considerable alternative to the equality-based conceptions of womanhood.[6] In her canonical *Speculum of the Other Woman*, she asked many of the same questions as equality feminists and challenged "the exclusive right of the use(s), exchange(s), representations(s) of one sex by the other." However, alongside this critique, she also began to construct "the beginnings of a woman's phenomenological elaboration of the auto-affection and auto-representation of her

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[4] Donna Haraway, '''Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary: The Sexual Politics of a Word". In: *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (London: Free associations books, 1991): 147.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Luce Irigaray, *Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference,* Trans. Alison Martin (New York: Routledge, 1993): 11.

body."[7] In her later works she applies this theoretical framework to social justice activism and lawmaking, supporting an embodied subjectivity that valorizes difference. While Irigaray's approach does not completely break from the goals of equality-based activism, she argues that striving for equality as an end result of political activism is the "mistaken expression of a real objective." For Irigaray, this objective takes the form of "equivalent (but necessarily different) sexed rights being written into law."[8]

While Irigaray helped lay the groundwork for a position on difference in feminism that was also politically viable, Moira Gatens enriched and expanded the arguments for such an approach. Gatens begins by challenging two major assumptions made by feminists she feels have a stake in 'degendering' women. Firstly, she argues against the rationalist view that the body is neutral and passive while the mind is primary and determinant. Secondly, she questions whether or not changing the material practices of a given culture can definitively alter the historical and cultural specificity of lived experiences.[9] In other words, she seeks to uncover the ways that arguments for equality actually reinforce the same logocentric order that has actively excluded women from participating in cultural production. Moreover, she argues that by choosing to criticize/reform/revolutionize "gender" by defining it purely as a social construct, the notion of the sexually specific subject, that is, the male or female subject, is completely overshadowed.[10] For Gatens, this is a fundamental flaw. She provides multiple accounts of the ways identical social 'training', attitudes or conditioning, acquire different significances when applied to male and female subjects.[11] These key criticisms of social constructionism and its importance to

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[7] Ibid., 59.
[8] Ibid., 12.
[9] Moira Gatens, "A critique of the sex/gender distinction," In: *Imaginary Bodies.* (London, Routledge, 1996): 147.
[10] Ibid., 148.
[11] Ibid.

equality feminism provide the crux of Gatens' argument that "to treat gender, the 'symptom' as the problem is to misrecognise its genesis."[12] Once again we see an example of feminists shifting the focus away from specific instances of women's exclusion and onto the root causes of these exclusionary practices.

Another theorist known for challenging the materiality of gender constructs is Elizabeth Grosz. By focusing on the *epistemological* implications of bodily and sexual differences, Grosz defines knowledge itself as "sexed" and refers to the "sexualization of knowledge." Choosing the language of sex as opposed to gender positions her rejection of the assumption that bodies are neutral or that gender is purely a social construct. In her own words she argues that "the differences between subjects must in some way be inscribed on and experienced by and through the body. Sexual differences, like class and race difference *are* bodily differences."[13]

Grosz presents an epistemological alternative to those who have sought to include women's knowledge or feminine ways of knowing into systems of knowledge as they currently exist. She does not focus on women or femininity as *knowable objects* or as *objects worthy of knowing* without engaging in the simultaneous task of "submitting the position of knower or the subject of knowledge to a reorganization as well."[14] While for Grosz it is specifically women's sexed experiences that are excluded from dominant systems of knowledge production, her overarching critique of the exclusionary practices of logocentrism is also applicable to a broader study of the racial, ethnic, class and sexed dimensions of classroom equity.

Grosz asserts that the subjective position of knower (the individual producing knowledge) must be considered when assessing the "accuracy" of any given knowledge claim.

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[12] Ibid., 153.
[13] Elizabeth Grosz. "Bodies and Knowledges: Feminism and the Crisis of Reason." In: *Feminist Epistemologies*. Eds. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter. (London: Routledge, 1993): 195.
[14] Ibid., 207.

As such, she challenges rationalist and empiricist positions on knowledge as something impersonal, objective, ahistorical and singular. In order to develop this epistemological argument, Grosz provides various articulations of the "crisis of reason" which she loosely defines as reason's inability to rationally know itself. Using examples ranging from Descartes to Derrida, she challenges the very legitimacy of dominant systems of knowledge rooted in logocentrism. Her critique focuses on, but is not limited to: the assumption that methods, procedures and techniques are themselves neutral, the division of knowledge into distinct disciplines, and the presumption that knowledge is perspectiveless, atemporal and transgeographic. She employs Foucault's criticism that there can be no "pure" knowledge untainted by external impingements and that in fact relations between power and knowledge must be considered internal to knowledges.[15] She expands upon his argument, however, by positing that while theorists like Foucault present an important framework for understanding the interaction between power and bodies, we must also recognize that those interacting bodies are *sexually specific* and thus require different techniques of power.[16] This argument is significant not only to those who formulate knowledge claims but also to the educators who disseminate knowledge claims. If power and knowledge are indeed intertwined then an equitable approach to knowledge transmission must incorporate a critique of these power relations, or risk reinforcing them.

Using a broad theoretical vocabulary that pays homage to Nietzche, Foucault, Freud and Lacan, Grosz discusses both the psychic and the social meanings of sexed bodies and sexual differences as well as the impact of these meanings on the way individuals understand and produce knowledge. In doing so she provides the theoretical tools necessary for deconstructing

[15] Ibid., 192-193.
[16] Ibid., 196.

knowledge systems that obscure sexual specificity and present knowledge as if it were universal.[17]

Accepting Elizabeth Grosz's reconceived vision of the sex/gender binary means recognizing that while bodies may have differences, those differences ought to be understood as autonomous rather than relational.[18] I will posit alongside Grosz that any attempt to structurally reorganize systems of knowledge must begin with this acknowledgement and a corresponding rejection of universality in order to allow for the creation of new minority subject positions. This *perspectival approach* that emerges from feminist theories of difference underscores the whole of this analysis.

Critiquing objectivity is not an exclusively feminist endeavor, yet when it comes to challenging dominant knowledge systems feminists have adopted the task with unparalleled fervor. In the chapters that follow I will discuss how the Ontario government has refused to acknowledge the impact of subjective knowing on the creation of public school curricula. I will also discuss how one of the most promising attempts at curricular reform in the province has in fact emerged from educators and policy makers who subscribe to precisely the kind of perspectival approach that Grosz advances in her critique of logocentrism. Despite focusing on the specific geographic and policy context of educational policy making in Ontario, my analysis will remain grounded in the theories of difference put forth by contemporary feminist theorists Irigaray, Haraway and Grosz. I contend that these theorists not only provide the greatest set of tools for dismantling the master's house or the "master theories" on equity and difference I will explore throughout this analysis, they also provide the best set of materials for constructing a whole new approach.

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[17] Ibid., 188.
[18] Ibid., 203.

Why Pragmatism and Post-Structuralism Are Not Mutually Exclusive:
Deconstruction as a Methodology for Educational Research

In this chapter I will illustrate my methodological approach by focusing on how a select few theorists of deconstruction have formulated their ideas about reading, writing, truth and interpretation. While the texts I will discuss were not written with the explicit intention of formulating a methodological framework, it is my contention that the reading strategies pioneered by literary critics and theorists of language and discourse have both practical and necessary uses within the field of educational research. The potential benefits of utilizing a critical deconstructive methodology are manifold and trenchant. I hope to illustrate the ways in which a dialogue between contemporary theorists of deconstruction and educational researchers and practitioners can aid in the process of reformulating pedagogical practice by transforming the way in which we read and understand educational policies. By recognizing the way in which policy documents function as texts – by using narrative conventions and producing intertextual identifications – we can produce more material and manageable images of how these documents are constructed. This in turn provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of how these policies can be reformed. Recognizing the materiality of the text itself and how its ideologies are put forth in language opens up discussions on educational policy allowing for less conventional critique.

In this chapter I will distinguish my particular style of deconstructive analysis from others who have utilized deconstruction within the field of education studies and in doing so I hope to address some of the challenges and criticisms these scholars subsequently encountered. In this discussion I hope to demonstrate how disparate authors Toni Morrison, Shoshana Felman and Jacques Derrida address similar issues of intention, interpretation, reception and truth formation. More pointedly, I will discuss the ways in which each author presents a unique understanding of how a text functions and who is responsible for how it behaves. Morrison, Felman and Derrida, while not typically applied to mainstream educational research and practice, provide insight into a new way of reading and interpreting policy. It is for this reason that I have chosen to adopt this somewhat unconventional deconstructive methodology for this project.

I will use the term "deconstruction" in a specific capacity in this discussion, focusing on the way it is utilized by the three specific theorists I have discussed. I define deconstruction broadly as a literary strategy that attempts to displace traditional conceptions of mastery, hierarchy and authorship within the text. I have chosen the work of Felman, Morrison and Derrida not only because of their widespread influence within the field of literary criticism, but because they each bring a unique perspective to understanding deconstruction as a methodology. In the first section of this analysis I will examine the work of these theorists by honing in on the most relevant and applicable aspects of their work for the field of educational policy making. In the second section I will review the work of educational theorist David Scott, one of the few educational researchers who has incorporated a deconstructive methodology into his analyses, as well as some of the theoretical responses to this type of work within the field of education studies.

Every day educators are expected to adopt the prescriptions of curriculum policy and apply these strategies to their classroom lesson planning as if it were an instruction manual. Shoshana Felman's "Turning the Screw of Interpretation" problematizes the assumption that there is direct connection between the "meaning" of a text and the ways it will be interpreted which complicates the process of pedagogical application when we think of policies as texts. In her analysis, Felman demonstrates how deconstruction can be utilized to transcend a text's literal or even symbolic meaning, and she does this by engaging in a two-level reading of *The Turn of the Screw* that focuses on both its actual content and critical reception.[19] By treating both of these facets as connected and equally significant to her analysis, Felman helps to expand textual analysis beyond the margins of the book, acknowledging the relationship between author, critics and the public. This technique, while not exclusive to Felman, helps to define deconstruction as a methodology.

Felman's study of the novel's critical reception is particularly significant as it urges readers to question the intrinsic meaning of a text; since this meaning can be altered so easily by the interpretation of critics, perhaps it never existed. Focusing on the ways in which Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* invites and resists contradictory readings, in this case psychoanalytic ones, Felman is able to explore the extent to which notions of "singular truth" and "meaning" in a text can be challenged by the interpretive process. One of her arguments is that critics have been so preoccupied attempting to define the Henry James' novel as either "Freudian" or "Anti Freudian," that they have reduced both Freud's psychoanalytic theories and the text itself to oversimplified caricatures of their former complex and ambiguous selves. She posits that each side of the "Freudian"/"Anti-Freudian" interpretations is founded on the

[19] Shoshana Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation," Yale French Studies 55-56 (1977): 102.

misguided assumption that there can be a true meaning concealed deep within the text. In the case of those who have sought to define the text as "Freudian," sexuality is "valorized as both the foundation and guidepost of the critical interpretation, thus taking on the status of an *answer* to the *question* of the text."[20] Felman counters with an argument that while there is indeed a component of sexuality to the text, it is sexuality defined broadly and evidenced through the text's incessant ambiguity, complexity and at times meaninglessness.[21] She distinguishes her own more nuanced reading of psychoanalysis from a literal interpretation of the book that seeks to explain away the "questions" of the text by positing that the governess in the story must suffer from a lack of sexual satisfaction.

In a similar vein, Felman argues that the very impulse to "answer" the ambiguities present in the text is fundamentally misguided because, in light of her understanding of deconstruction, the text is open to multiple interpretations and possesses multiple meanings. As such, "the critical debate, in its intentions and contentions, itself partakes of the textual *action*…The *actors,* or agents of this textual action, are indeed the readers and the critics no less than the characters."[22] Reading, understood in this sense, becomes a performative act, as closely connected to the meaning(s) of the text as the act of writing itself. Felman's exhaustive analysis in *Turning the Screw of Interpretation* demonstrates the ways in which deconstruction, as a methodology, reaches far beyond the margins of a book, often telling us more about ourselves as readers and interpreters than the text itself. In the field of education studies, Felman's comprehensive approach to textual analysis can be employed to study the broad range of texts that contribute to our understanding of policy - newspaper articles, government publications as

[20] Ibid., 105.
[21] Ibid., 112.
[22] Ibid., 114.

well as primary teaching materials. I will employ this strategy throughout this analysis in order to promote this more flexible understanding of where the text ends and where interpretation begins.

In this next section I will examine the work of Jacques Derrida as it relates to deconstruction as a methodology and then apply it to educational practice. Prior to this discussion I will pause to note that Derrida's career is both varied and expansive. His applications of deconstruction as a methodology are as multivalent as Michel Foucault's analyses of power or Louis Althusser's critiques of ideology. As such, rather than providing a general summary of his work, I focus on just one critical concept – his attack on logocentrism – as it is outlined in the first chapter of his seminal work *Of Grammatology*. In the chapter, "The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing," Derrida discusses his disillusionment with the prevailing belief within Western culture and philosophy that truth and meaning can be discerned only through the discovery of an "originary" centre or source. For Derrida, this search is a lazy and fundamentally misguided one, allowing the reader to sidestep their own task of critical interpretation while falsely bestowing upon the author the singular and express ability to produce meaning. In asking these types of questions about the meaning of a given text, where it begins and how it functions, he paved the way for theorists like Felman and Morrison, as well as countless scholars writing in his wake.

Derrida uses his criticism of logocentrism to explore the concept of language in this first chapter of *Grammatology*, focusing on the ways that speech has been privileged over writing because it has been situated closer to the original source of thought or ideas within the mind of a given individual. As such, within the "logocentric order", writing has served "a secondary and instrumental function," acting merely as "*spokesman*, interpreter of an originary speech itself

shielded from interpretation."[23] However, Derrida argues that we must be critical of the distinction between what we perceive as authentic and what we dismiss as inauthentic. In fact, he is critical of all similar binaries – centre/periphery, outside/inside, transcendental/empirical, etc. – that take for granted the a priori existence of an unambiguous, noncontingent concept of truth.[24] His proposed solution is "the destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the de-construction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos."[25] If we accept this fundamental Derridian claim, then the so-called "authenticity" of speech over writing is illusory. Within a system that lacks any unequivocal truth, it is impossible to ever shield oneself from an endless cycle of interpretation. While this might sound like a nihilistic prospect, and many critics have challenged Derrida with just such an argument, he conceives of it, as I do in this analysis, very much as a starting point. [26]

Deconstruction allows for a more realistic representation of the interpretative process – which is marked by ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty, rather than searching for a single explanatory meaning within a text. Understood in this way, deconstruction is not a destructive or an antagonistic process, seeking actively to misread texts or reverse their intended meanings, but instead a creative and generative one. Deconstruction as a methodology operates "necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure" in order to challenge and complicate the reading process rather than simplifying it or dumbing it down.[27] It is an interminable process of excavating the text from the inside out. It is my contention that the field of educational policy analysis has failed to accept Derrida's

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[23] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1976): 8.
[24] Ibid., 8.
[25] Ibid., 10.
[26] For one such critique from perhaps one of Derrida's most persistent critics see: Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[27] Derrida., 24.

challenge to logocentrism. As such, the processes of policy reform are at once too naïve and too ambitious, limited by a logocentric assumption that new education policies can be improved by language alone with enough control and regulation. Put simply, educators faced with the task of reforming policy often fail to substantially challenge their own readings of the texts. Instead they take for granted that policy documents have intrinsic meanings, and interpretation does not play a role in their implementation.

Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* poses the same kinds of questions as Derrida and Felman regarding the function of a text and the role of the author, but specifically focuses on the issue of race. Her analysis lays the groundwork for an exploration of race and ethnicity within "classic" or "canonical" literature that does not deal explicitly with those issues. She begins her discussion with an introduction in which she, like Derrida and Felman, focuses on the complicated interplay between the text and its reception, between authorial intention and meaning. She describes her perception of a literary landscape in which "readers and writers both struggle to interpret and perform within a common language shareable imaginative worlds."[28] She then begins to transform these conceptions of authorship and interpretation into a more focused inquiry, interrogating how these ideas relate to the construction of what she deems 'literary whiteness' and 'literary blackness' and examining the consequences of these constructions.[29] Her primary concern lies with those classic works of American fiction that have mainly been "the preserve of white male views, genius, and power, those views, genius, and

[28] Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992): xii.
[29] Ibid.

power" that have therefore been understood, by literary scholars, as "without relationship to and removed from the overwhelming presence of black people in the United States."[30]

In order to develop the argument that there was indeed an Africanist presence in these works, Morrison uses a variety of deconstructive methods. She describes how literature utilizes a range of "coded language," and "purposeful restriction to deal with the racial disingenuousness and moral frailty at its heart."[31] Her reinterpretation of the use of colour and light within these canonical texts is perhaps the most striking and influential component of this discussion. She explains how, "[t]hrough the simple expedient of demonizing and reifying the range of color on a palette, American Africanism makes it possible to say and not say, to inscribe and erase, to escape and engage, to act out and act on, to historicize and render timeless. It provides a way of contemplating chaos and civilization, desire and fear."[32] By rereading the images, symbols and metaphors employed by white, male American writers, such as colour or light, in ways that may not have been intended but are no less real, Morrison demonstrates a very significant element of deconstruction. Not only does she participate in destabilizing the notion of the all-knowing author, but she engages in a process of reinterpretation to produce new meanings within old texts that were previously reified within the literary canon. Within the context of my educational policy analysis this component of deconstruction allows me to shift the discussion away from the notion of "intentionality," which could result in a crude and misguided search for explicit moments of sexism, classism or racism in public policy. Instead, I choose to adopt Morrison's more nuanced approach. This will allow me to emphasize narrative strategies, images and

[30] Ibid., 5.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 7.

language in the text that may not overtly promote discrimination, but (re)produce conceptions of Otherness.

I will now briefly discuss one example of an educational researcher who has used deconstruction as a tool for analysis, identifying some of the strengths and weaknesses of his approach. I will focus on the degree to which he succeeds in actualizing the three (closely connected) elements of deconstruction pioneered by Felman, Derrida and Morrison. These are namely: the expanded conception of the text to include reception as well as authorial intention, the critique of logocentrism and attentiveness to the multiple interpretations that emerge from reading coded language. By discussing both the pitfalls and potential benefits of utilizing deconstruction as a methodology within the field of educational policy making, I hope to provide a more thorough explanation for my own methodological approach.

The handbook *Reading Educational Research and Policy*, designed explicitly for teachers, researchers and policy makers new to the field, provides an ideal basis for understanding the usefulness of deconstruction. In order to promote what he describes as "educational literacy" in teachers, author David Scott seeks to demystify the processes of knowledge development and dissemination, thereby putting teachers in a better position to make judgments for themselves about policy issues.[33] On the issue of reading, Scott argues that an educationally literate teacher "understands educational texts…as constructed and ideologically embedded artifacts."[34] Moreover, "[r]eading educational texts in a critical way," for Scott, "allows the reader to reposition themselves in relation to arguments, policy prescriptions and directives in ways which are not intended by the writers of these texts."[35] The term "scientistic,"

[33] David Scott, *Reading Educational Research and Policy*. New York: Routledge (2000): 2.
[34] Ibid., 4.
[35] Ibid.

coined by Habermas, is used frequently throughout the handbook to describe the way in which researchers and policy-makers position their own knowledge as objective, value-free and authoritative, based on the underlying assumption that this is the only way to produce and distribute knowledge.[36] Scott, however, questions the legitimacy of this assumption and provides a comprehensive set of deconstructive tools designed to demonstrate that while policy texts may appear straightforward, they must not be read as such. One of the central elements of Scott's text is a set of guidelines for teachers to use when deconstructing policy documents. These guidelines urge readers to consider, for instance, whether the text is prescriptive or non-prescriptive, open or concealed, specific or vague. One of the most interesting sections of this deconstructive framework is on the author's use of referencing. He explains:

> Policy texts may imply knowledge of other policy texts, educational activities or discourses or the assumption is made that the reader has little awareness of these matters. Policy texts are written for particular audiences and are distinguished by the devices they use to allow specific types of readers to gain access to their meanings. Writers of texts which eschew citation are also suggesting that the truth of the matter resides wholly within the document itself.[37]

As Scott points out in this passage, the decision to exclude citation is a particularly literal way of asserting that there is a "true" meaning to the text that can then be followed and implemented by educational practitioners, and that this meaning is exclusively known and determined by the author.

Including a section on the textual elements of deconstruction allows Scott to emphasize the need for readers to be wary of prescriptive policy making. This type of argument is mirrored in the work of literary critics like Felman, for example, as she urges readers to consider the literary context and reception of a particular text, rather than accepting that it can be understood

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 18.

in and of itself. Ultimately, Scott summarizes his argument for the usefulness of deconstruction using a parallel to Foucault's description of the examination in his work *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault suggests that while the examination may seem like a neutral device, in fact it places the person being examined into a discourse of normality, so that for them to understand themselves in any other way is to understand themselves as abnormal and even as unnatural. He explains that policy texts work in much the same way: "The reader is not just presented with an argument and then asked to make up their mind about its merits or demerits, but positioned within a discourse – a way of understanding relations within the world – which, if it is successful, restricts and constrains the reader from understanding the world in any other way."[38] In this straightforward argument about the way that policy texts actually *function,* Scott presents an ideal argument in support of deconstruction as a necessary methodology for educational researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

While Scott certainly promotes some of the elements of deconstruction discussed in this analysis, the overall argument of his handbook fails to entirely break away from what Derrida is so critical of: logocentrism. Patti Lather, however, argues that this tendency to misread Derrida on the issue of logocentrism is common among educational researchers. She explains that educational researchers have a tendency to conflate a critique of ideology with deconstruction.[39] Throughout *Reading Educational Research and Policy*, Scott demonstrates precisely this tendency, as he frequently utilizes deconstructive methodologies to search for the deep-seated ideologies at work within educational texts. While his insights are often very astute, there is the implicit assumption throughout his work that these ideologies indeed represent the "hidden

[38] Ibid., 27.
[39] Patti Lather. "Applied Derrida: (Mis)Reading the Work of Mourning In Educational Research." In: *Derrida, Deconstruction and Education: Ethics of Pedagogy and Research*. Eds. Peter Pericles Trifonas, and Michael A. Peters. (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2004): 4.

meaning" or "hidden truth" of the text. Scott's focus on ideological critique is evident in many instances throughout the text, particularly when he goes into depth about the ultimate purpose of deconstruction (which is, in and of itself, a contradiction). He asserts that, "educational texts attempt at every opportunity to disguise their real nature and deceive the reader into thinking that the knowledge within the text they are reading has a special authoritative character."[40] It is evident that Scott's reference to the "real nature" of texts and the notion that they are capable of "deception" indicates an inherent logocentric assumption that there exists a deep seated truth within the text, although it is a truth which sometimes lies far beyond the surface.

This assumption is developed further through his discussion of educational practice. In this section he illustrates how in the end authorial intent *does* determine the ultimate meaning of a given text because, he argues, "texts influence…practices both at the level of the classroom and at the level of the school, and this is why it is important for teachers to develop strategies for reading these various texts."[41] It is clear from this passage that Scott is arguing against the blind acceptance of policy texts as true and objective. However, because he apparently assumes a causal relationship between the words on the page of policy documents and classroom practices, he actually leaves very little room for the layers of interpretation that already exist within pedagogical practice. Ultimately, as Scott concludes his handbook with a series of questions for the educationally literate teacher to consider, the subtle references to ideology that permeate his text become explicit.

> What are the intentions of the writers of the policy text? What devices are being used by the writers of these policy texts to suggest that their version of the truth of the matter is the only one worth considering? How has the evidence base of the policy text been constructed? What are the ideological underpinnings of the text and are these consistently deployed throughout the report? How does the policy

[40] Scott, 2.
[41] Ibid.

> text seek to position the reader or practitioner in relation to the policy agenda being argued for? Is the policy agenda being argued for relevant and useful for the practitioner?[42]

These questions demonstrate a clear interest in the "true intentions" of the author when it comes to policy analysis and the desire to either comply with or rebel against these intentions. Areas that are of very little concern to Scott are how the policy has actually been received by teachers and students and whether it has had unintended consequences (positive or negative). These types of questions become significant when we begin to consider how to take the next step in process of educational reform.

Utilizing a method of deconstruction that distances itself from notions of authorial intention and truth, more room exists to examine the multiple levels of interpretation and reinterpretation of policy that occur in classroom, rather than assuming a direct connection between policy and practice. From this vantage point, it becomes possible to gain a more complex understanding of the impacts of a piece of policy and to base decisions about reform on these more comprehensive assessments. As one British educational researcher, Christine Winter, has phrased it: "deconstruction rests on the ethics and politics of the limiting structures of signification to reveal what or who has been excluded marginalized, disrupted, outlawed, reversed and displaced."[43] She then goes on to posit that it is not enough to read policy critically if one does not also critique our "presuppositions about fixed meanings and universal laws."[44] Ultimately, by utilizing a deconstructive approach that challenges the conventions of logocentrism, we allow room for a multiplicity of interpretations and in the end this provides us with the best opportunity for creating new knowledge and meaningful policy reform.

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[42] Ibid., 40.
[43] Christine Winter, "Just Maps: The Geography Curriculum in English Schools," Oxford Review of Education. Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 2007): 355.
[44] Ibid.

Utilizing deconstruction as a methodological tool for educational research can be incredibly useful for learning more about the multiple layers of meaning that exist within texts that may otherwise be perceived as straightforward or value-free. However, as I have sought to demonstrate in this section, it is important not to conflate deconstruction with a critique of ideology. As Scott's supposed handbook on the subject demonstrates, educational researchers must recognize that, regardless of the intended ideological message, the actual processes of writing, reading and reception are constitutive of a text's meanings. In my own deconstructive analysis of both policy documents and subsequent discussions about these policies, I hope to escape this cycle. In doing so I will also circumvent some of the infighting and preoccupation with horizontal forms of oppression that have occurred in, for example, debates on the subject of Canadian multiculturalism. As Felman, Derrida and Morrison demonstrate, a multiplicity of interpretations can exist within the processes of writing, reading and interpreting a single text. As such, educational researchers, policy makers and practitioners ought to be more aware of this potential to allow for a more flexible and open-ended approach to educational policy reform.

Desperately Seeking Solidarity:

The Contested Past of Multiculturalism and Equal Rights in Canada

Historicizing Multiculturalism and Equity Policy Making in Canada

Tensions surrounding identity and difference have marked the social and political history of Canada throughout the modern period. The British North America Act formally united the country under Confederation in 1867, but the populations of the nation remained divided. The French posed a significant challenge to British authority in the years prior to 1867, possessing distinct linguistic, cultural and religious traditions that created a fissure among the peoples of the fledgling nation.[45] To address this growing divide, the British adopted a strategy of assimilation - under the advisement of leading politician Lord Durham - assigned to cope with difference and dissent among the Canadian colonies.[46] The opposition to assimilation was represented by the "moderate reformers," a group of politicians of both English and French descent, who argued that the French could never be absorbed into English society and supported proto-bilingual policies and a shared approach to power in government.[47] By the time of Confederation the notion of 'assimilation' had fallen out of fashion in favour of a more conscientious approach to French-English relations that continues in Canadian politics today.

[45] Hugh Donald Forbes, "Canada: From Bilingualism to Multiculturalism." *Journal of Democracy* (Vol.4, Iss.4, October 1993): 70.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

Despite the tensions between English and French Canada, politicians treated the two 'races' as permanent fixtures in Canada "like the sun and the moon" to borrow a phrase from Canadian political historian Hugh Donald Forbes."[48] However, the absolute heterogeneity of Canada's population extends far beyond these two self-proclaimed "founding races."[49] Approximately 300 000 aboriginal peoples inhabited the land prior to the arrival of the Europeans and they represent a distinct cultural tradition with extensive social and linguistic complexity.[50] European settlement resulted in more diversity amongst aboriginal populations, as children born of both European and aboriginal parents represented a new level of ethnic ambiguity. The Acadian and Métis peoples, for instance, were born from a mix of French and Native Canadian lineages but sought to be politically recognized as distinct from both social groups. The politicization of the Acadians and Métis challenged the conventional approach to issues of fixed identity in Canada, failing adhere to the kind of "sun and moon" dualism that the French and English had adopted. The expulsion of the Acadian population from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1755, historicized as one of Canada's great injustices, suggests Canada's longstanding discomfort with complex forms of identification and failure to politically accommodate peoples who choose to identify as such.[51]

In more contemporary Canadian history, the struggle for identity among Canada's minority population has been further complicated by a massive rise in immigration. The so-called "Third Force", comprised of non-British, non-French and non-aboriginal Canadians who

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[48] Ibid., 72.
[49] This somewhat problematic terminology for French and English Canadians is taken directly from the Canadian Multiculturalism Within A Bilingual Framework that I will discuss later in this analysis. Michael Dewing and Marc Leman, "Canadian Multiculturalism." Political and Social Affairs Division. Canadian Parliamentary Information and Research Service, 2006.
[50] Jean Burnet, "Myths and Multiculturalism." *Canadian Journal of Education*. (Vol. 4, No. 4, 1979): 43.
[51] Faragher, John M. A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from Their American Homeland. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005,

immigrated to the country in the postwar period, drastically altered Canadian demographic, social and political landscapes.[52] In the years following the Second World War, Europeans represented approximately 6 out of every 10 immigrants living in Canada.[53] These demographics were the result of immigration policies that clearly placed the odds in favour of those from European descent. Canadian immigration policy was guilty of "overt and covert exclusionary measures…against Chinese, Japanese, South Asians, and blacks," or as Jean Burnet pointedly phrases it, "those peoples who were considered unassimilable."[54] These demographics began to shift in the late 1960s when, as a result of Canada's growing economy, immigration policies were altered to reflect a purportedly 'race blind' approach that had the dual effect of increasing the country's labour force.[55]

The federal point system implemented in 1967 was successful in revising those policies that had once focused on national preference as the basis for immigration by instead placing a greater emphasis on professional and educational qualifications.[56] This was successful in leveling the playing field for many immigrants, resulting in a notable increase in visible minority populations from Asian, African, South American and Caribbean nations particularly in Canadian cities. However, once these individuals arrived in Canada they did not always experience equal opportunities. Due to a wide range of factors including a lack of (transferable) education and language skills, "ethnicity continued to work as a crucial mechanism for sorting social groups along class lines."[57] Nevertheless, it has been argued that the immigration reforms

[52] It is important to note that precise statistics on ethnicity in Canada are difficult to compile due to the complex issues surrounding ethnicity and identification that I have been discussing.
[53] Forbes 76
[54] Burnet 44
[55] Elke Winter, "National Unity Versus Multiculturalism? Rethinking the logic of Inclusion in Germany and Canada,"*International Journal of Canadian Studies*. (Vol. 24, Fall, 2001): 176.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

of 1967 were early incarnations of Canada's multicultural policies because they helped to foster ethnic heterogeneity in the country which, "in turn led to demands for more inclusive policies and symbolic representation of an increasingly diverse population."[58]

In the history of the Canadian nation-state there have been moments when the fragmentation of the Canadian population and the lack of a cohesive national identity have led to political instability. In many instances, Canadian governmental authority was challenged by ethnic groups not simply because they were "different" but because they possessed unstable, polyethnic or migrant identities that were completely excluded from the nation's self-proclaimed two "race" structure. As I move on to discuss the development and eventual adoption of official multiculturalism in Canada, I will address how these policies reflect Canada's last and greatest effort to characterize and absorb this cultural and ethnic ambiguity.

Accident and Incident: The Birth of Canadian Multiculturalism

From the 1960s to the mid 1980s ethnic tensions intensified in Canada to such a degree that the stability of the Canadian nation-state was threatened. I have already mentioned very briefly the "Third Force" of Canadian immigration, and it is in this period that this group becomes increasingly significant. New immigrant populations coming from Africa, Latin America and Asia, as opposed to Europe, served to complicate the already faltering vision of Canada as a nation of just two central "races."[59] The impact of these changing demographics had a considerable impact on French Canadians, as they saw themselves becoming just one of a wide

[58] Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Daiva Stasiulis, "Ethnic Pluralism under Siege: Popular and Partisan Opposition to Multiculturalism." *Canadian Public Policy* (Vol. 18, No. 4, December 1992): 366.
[59] Forbes, 76.

range of minority groups in the country. Concurrently, the global trend towards decolonization and the defense of universal human rights offered the French or, as they were increasingly choosing to identify, the *Quebecois*, a viable alternative to life in the minority. Separatism unified many French Canadians while offering a solution to their seemingly devalued position in Canadian politics. Direct political action from the French separatist movement challenged Canadian national governmental authority continually between the years of 1963 and 1970. From the expansion and bureaucratization of the Quebec State apparatus to localized terrorist activities, these years comprised what would later be referred to as the 'Quiet Revolution' in Canada.[60] Unquestionably it was the growing threat of this Quebecois nationalist movement that prompted *The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*, a piece of policy that sought to reestablish the bonds between the English and French.[61] What this document became, however, was the first step toward official multiculturalism in Canada.

Initially the *Royal Commission* did not address other ethnic groups at all except for the impact that their presence had on French-English relations. The Canadian government received enough public pressure from ethnic interest groups to devote Book 4 of the report to "presenting an account based on a small amount of research devoted to them, data accumulated as a by-product of the examination of the status of the English and French, and other miscellaneous materials."[62] The suggestions put forward on the basis of this very limited data were adopted by the federal government in 1971, establishing what became known as "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework." The emphasis of these policies was essentially on government assistance for minority groups who demonstrated a desire to "fully participate in Canadian society" and

[60] Winter, 176.
[61] Ibid., 177.
[62] Burnet, 46.

promote cultural exchange with these groups "in the interests of national unity."[63] As I begin to explore the legacies of these multicultural policies in the classrooms of Ontario's public schools, it is important to recall this terminology. Despite contemporary claims which often state the contrary, the roots of these multicultural policies were indeed inclusion and national cohesion as opposed to diversity and difference.

The significant developments in the history of multiculturalism in Canada arise from a series of compounding social pressures combined with government interventions that often unintentionally moved the multicultural policy agenda forward. All of the social factors leading to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963 also led to official policies adopted in 1971, culminating in 1988 with the entrenchment of the Canadian Multicultural Act. Social inequalities among the Canadian population combined with a resurgence of ethnic consciousness after World War II, the establishment of the United Nations Charter of Human Rights, the growing economic and political clout of French Canadians, ethnic minorities and recent immigrants must all be taken into consideration.[64] The following is an excerpt from a speech given by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau over ten years before this Act was ultimately passed in 1988, but in which he develops a language for discussing Canadian cultural diversity that continues to permeate the Canadian discourse on multiculturalism:

> A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians. Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies. National unity if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create

[63] "Announcement of Implementation of Policy of Multiculturalism Within Bilingual Framwork," Pierre Elliott Trudeau. House of Commons Debates, October 8, 1971.
[64] Helen Harper, "Difference and Diversity in Ontario Schooling," (*Canadian Journal of Education*. 22: 2, 1997): 199.

> this initial confidence. It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all.[65]

From Trudeau's address it is clear that the Canadian Multiculturalism Act sought to provide the country not only with a legislated commitment to equal rights and opportunities, but also with a new cohesive identity for the nation that would be routed in equality. The irony was that while Canadian public policy was being used to forge the image of a stronger and more unified Canada, Canadians at this time were witnessing their country being reshaped by massive demographic fluctuations, tensions among French and English Canadians and the social fragmentation that was taking place. In the next section of this analysis I will explore some of the scholarly responses to Canadian multicultural policies, and in doing so it will become clear that the schism between government policies and the lived experiences of Canadians is a recurring theme throughout these debates.

Multiculturalism Contested

While official multiculturalism may have been a symbolic victory for the rising numbers of minority groups in Canada, the policies themselves contain many contradictions and have faced widespread criticism since their inception. By providing a brief overview of the academic debates that have arisen as a result of Canada's multiculturalist policies, I hope to provide context for a subsequent discussion of their legacies in the educational equity policies currently being implemented in Ontario. Given the vast body of literature on this topic I will explore a few key themes that emerged out of these debates as they pertain to constructions of identity and difference in educational policies. While I will not explicitly draw connections between these

[65] Trudeau, 1971.

debates and the feminist theories on difference I have already discussed, these two bodies of literature address many of the same concerns. As I move into my subsequent discussions focusing on specific examples of educational equity policy making in Ontario I will address and elaborate on these intersections.

Representing both a chronological and theoretical starting point for a discussion of Canadian multicultural theory and critique is Howard Brotz's article entitled "Multiculturalism in Canada: A Muddle." Published in 1980, Brotz's article represents a simple yet scathing position on multicultural policies. The crux of his argument, viewed at the time to be "refreshing" and a "welcome contrast" to the usual articles extolling the virtues of multiculturalism, is that the homogeneity of Canadian society actually overshadows the differences among Canadians.[66] He argues that "Canadians of all ethnic groups, as in the United States, stand for exactly the same thing" and he goes on to describe this as a tolerant and democratic way of life.[67] He critiques the notion of the Canadian multicultural mosaic for "projecting the ideal of Canada as some kind of ethnic zoo where the function of the zoo keeper is to collect as many varieties as possible and exhibit them once a year in some carnival where one can go from booth to booth sampling pizzas, wonton soup and kosher pastrami."[68] In other words, he views the multicultural ideal as something irrelevant and at odds with the realities of modern Canadian life because it is rooted in stagnant conceptions of culture. While his assertions about "Canadians of all ethnic groups" are overreaching and dated, Brotz's argument that multiculturalism fails to accurately represent the complexity of Canadian identities is well-

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[66] Lance Roberts and Rodney Clifton, "Exploring the Ideology of Canadian Multiculturalism," *Canadian Public Policy* (Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter 1982): 88.
[67] Howard Brotz, "Multiculturalism in Canada: A Muddle," *Canadian Public Policy* (Vol. 6, No. 1., Winter, 1980): 43.
[68] Ibid., 44.

supported and highly relevant today. Jean Burnet, who published comprehensive work on the bureaucratic infrastructure of Canadian multicultural policies in approximately the same period as Brotz, reinforces his conclusions. She explains that "no ethnic group brings a total culture to Canada, and none can maintain intact what it brings under the impact of the new environment, social as well as geographical."[69] This idea - that multiculturalism fails to accurately reflect the lived experiences of Canadians or the complexities of their identities - is undoubtedly one of the most significant criticisms to emerge from Canadian multicultural debate in the early 1980s.

More recently discussions of Canadian multicultural policies have expanded within the academic community to incorporate a wider range of post-structural theories of identity and analyses of power. One such intervention has been the critique of canonical texts that, until recently, remained unquestioned within Canadian multicultural theorizing. One example of a text that has recently come under scrutiny is John Porter's *Vertical Mosaic*. In this book, Porter focuses on the relationship between class and ethnicity in Canada, using empirical evidence to demonstrate how the Canadian class structure reproduces itself through exclusion. He summarizes the way in which 'common educational backgrounds, kinship links, present and former partnerships, common membership in clubs, track associations, positions on advisory bodies and philanthropic groups, all help to produce a social homogeneity of men in positions of power."[70] Since the publication of this book in 1965, some critics have questioned the accuracy of his primary data and perhaps more importantly the usefulness of a study that focuses solely on these two axes of differentiation. Reza Nakhaie and Edwin Black have both drawn attention to the fact that while this work was significant and important in the 1960s, we must now adopt an

[69] Burnet, 48.
[70] John Porter, *Vertical Mosaic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965): 230.

expanded conception of identity in order to reflect the more complex and multidimensional forms of oppression experienced by Canadians today.[71]

Russell Ferguson is another critic who has utilized poststructuralist criticisms to shift discussions on multicultural policy, in this case focusing on the issue of language. His discussion centres around how the quest for a multicultural ideal in Canada has had the adverse effect of limiting and even negating the nation's demographic complexity. He articulates the dual set of challenges that marginalized groups face when attempting to define themselves within the boundaries of multicultural discourse:

> As we enter into language we must simultaneously negotiate the crude classifications which are imposed upon us and create our own identities out of the twisted skeins of our backgrounds, families and environments. We must do this in the face of the omnipresent center, the invisible center which claims universality without ever defining itself, and which exiles to its margins those who cannot or will not pay allegiance not the standards which it sets or the limits which it imposes.[72]

In the same way feminists have problematized the Self/Other dualism, Ferguson calls into question the way in which the "omnipresent centre" has the capacity to define others relationally without ever accepting the task of defining itself.

In Kamboureli's collection of writing from the Canadian minority, she elaborates on the centre/periphery dualism within Canadian multicultural policy making. She specifically identifies that while "the contributors [to the collection] by virtue of their race and ethnicity, belong to the manifold 'margins'…'marginalization', from an individual as well as a collective perspective, is impossible to define in any stable way."[73] She goes on to explain that, while the

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[71] Reza Nakhaie, "Ownership and Management of Ethnic Groups in 1973-1989" (Vol. 20, No. 2, Spring 1995); "The Fractured Mosaic: John Porter Revisited" *Canadian Public Administration (*Volume 17 Issue 4, January 2008).
[72] Russell Ferguson, *Out there: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990): 13.
[73] Smaro Kamboureli, "Introduction," *Making a Difference: An Anthology of Canadian Multicultural Literature* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996): 2.

goal of multiculturalism in Canada may be social cohesion, "the unified image of Canadian identity has always exhibited fissures and shown itself to be fragile, full of anxiety to maintain, and redefine, its tenuous hold on power."[74] If we return for a moment to Ferguson's critique, he accuses diversity policy makers of engaging in a "crude classification" of Canadian populations, dividing them on what can be most easily understood and codified. For both Ferguson and Kamboureli this process of classification is problematic both because it is imposed and because these categorizations cannot help but oversimplify the many layers of identity that people experience in their own lives.

In addition to the comprehensive critiques of multicultural discourses and policies put forward by theorists like Ferguson and Kamboureli there are also theorists who have sought to move beyond this critical realm by actually creating new paradigms for studying ethnicity in Canada. The concept of 'symbolic ethnicity,' as it is developed by Roberts and Clifton, is an example of one such paradigm. Unlike the stagnant conception of ethnic groups that has traditionally been employed by Canadian policies of multiculturalism, 'symbolic ethnicities' are described as being "voluntary, transitory and negotiated."[75] Of these characteristics, "[t]he important feature of symbolic ethnicity is its voluntary quality; it can be donned or discarded as preference dictates. This adaptability, which exists because the identity it fosters is not firmly grounded in a social structure, distinguishes the 'new' symbolic ethnicity from the 'old fashioned,' traditional type of associations individuals had to an ethnic group."[76] This alternative paradigm of "symbolic ethnicity" is not without its flaws. For instance, by focusing so exclusively on ethnicity as something that can be "donned or discarded," there is a failure to

[74] Ibid., 9.
[75] Roberts and Clifton, 91.
[76] Ibid., 90.

recognize the lived experiences of those who cannot discard their identity so easily because of their race, gender or religious clothing. However, it is important to recognize how this post-structural position in the debates over cultural identity in Canada can actually be translated through new paradigms such as this one into a new and practical approach to policy making.

Both the critique of language and the construction of new theoretical paradigms represent attempts to challenge the current approach to multicultural policy making in Canada. However, there are some who would argue that these discussions are too abstruse and who would rather address the negative impact of multiculturalism directly. Often labeled the anti-racist position in these debates, these arguments are characterized by a critical stance on equal-opportunity discourse because of its tendency to reproduce the status quo, suppress minority resistance movements and further entrench social hierarchies.[77] Himani Bannerji argues in *The Dark Side of the Nation* that diversity, for instance, is a misleading concept. Rather than being characterized by notions of equality and tolerance, Bannerji asserts that that it is employed tactically by governing bodies in an attempt to depoliticize or "neutralize" the solidarity of ethnic and racial minorities on the basis of their shared experiences. Bannerji explains how, during the early period of multicultural policy making in Canada, "a political and administrative framework came into being where structural inequalities could be less and less seen or spoken about."[78] In other words, it is being argued that the focus on diversity actually shifted attention away from those feminist, antiracist and class-based political movements that address unequal relationships of power. Elaborating on this issue using specific examples, Bannerji expands upon one of the central arguments against multiculturalism:

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[77]Earl Mansfield and John Kehoe, "A Critical Examination of Anti-Racist Education," *Canadian Journal of Education* (Vol. 19, No. 4, 1994): 418.
[78] Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2000): 45.

> Official multiculturalism represents its polity in cultural terms, setting apart the so-called immigrants of colour from francophones and the aboriginal peoples. This organization brings into clearer focus the primary national imaginary of "Canada," to echo Benedict Anderson. It rests on posing "Canadian culture" against "multicultures." An element of whiteness quietly enters into cultural definitions, marking the difference between a core cultural group and other groups who are represented as cultural fragments.[79]

This passage clearly explains that while multiculturalism is successful in acknowledging (specific types of) difference, these differences are not truly accepted as part of the Canadian identity, let alone valorized in the way that feminist theorists like Irigaray suggest. John Edwards has said that, "multiculturalism as a symbol is what appeals, not as a reality which might actually alter things," and I would argue that this is precisely the problematic addressed by Bannerji and other thinkers arguing from this position.[80] They seek substantive, not symbolic, change to improve the lives of minority groups in Canada.

The Legacies of Multiculturalism: An In-Depth Analysis

To close this discussion I will apply the various theoretical positions I have already discussed to my own deconstructive analysis of a text by Rhoda Howard-Hassmann on the identity of what she refers to as "ethnic Canadians" (defined as English-speaking, non-aboriginal Canadians). This article is useful because it outlines in clear terms the *logic* of Canadian multiculturalism from the position of someone who supports these policies. This is crucial for understanding the types of criticisms that are lodged against multiculturalism, and to assess the strengths in both arguments. Additionally, while many of the critical examinations of

[79] Bannerji, 10.
[80] John Edwards, "Multiculturalism and multicultural education in contemporary context," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* (Vol. 24, Iss. 3, 1992).

multiculturalism that I have been discussing were published over a decade ago, this particular article is much more recent and therefore illustrates a more contemporary position on the subject. I hope that by focusing on just one piece of scholarship in detail, I can both clarify and elaborate on the critiques of multiculturalism I have explored throughout this chapter.

Howard-Hassmann posits in her article that "Citizenship in Canada, as in any other country, must have more meaning than merely legal rights; it must imply shared ways of living, shared values, and loyalty to the country."[81] However, she recognizes that this shared experience can be a challenge in Canada where "there are fewer and fewer commonalities of historic and ancestral origin."[82] Within this context, she describes a phenomenon which others have referred to as 'glocalization,' wherein "many individuals are returning to their religious, national, and ancestral 'roots,' frequently several generations removed" as opposed to identifying with their identity as an ethnic Canadian, which for her would ensure both national unity and social cohesion.[83] So, if this is the problem posed by Howard-Hassmann, then she also sees multiculturalist policies as the solution. In this passage Howard-Hassmann presents a lucid defense of the Canadian status quo when it comes to multicultural public policy.

> Multiculturalism 'normalizes' a wide range of customs and makes the enjoyment of such customs part of what it means to be Canadian. It paradoxically universalizes specificity; all Canadians are expected to have and enjoy a specific ethno-cultural ancestral identity as well as their universal Canadian identity. To be Canadian now, in the dominant ideology, is to revel in the exciting international flavor of the society. Far from threatening it, as they might have perceived to do in the past, recent immigrants vivify Canadian culture.[84]

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[81] Rhoda Howard-Hassmann, "'Canadian' as an Ethnic Category: Implications for Multiculturalism and National Unity." (Vol. 25, No. 4, 1999): 527.
[82] Ibid., 528.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., 533.

One would be hard-pressed to find a *critic* of multiculturalist policies who would not agree with Howard-Hassman's entire line of argumentation, though they may draw considerably different conclusions. I will explain why this is the case by examining, as some critics phrased it, the "significant silences in Howard-Hassmann's discussion."[85] More specifically I will focus on the way in which she excludes certain types of information to provide support for her positive position on multicultural policies while completely overlooking issues that may complicate her vision of the "ethnic Canadian."

Throughout her article Rhoda Howard-Hassmann asserts that "Canadian," or more specifically "English Canadian," ought to be recognized as an ethnic category. For her, policies of multiculturalism support this end by permitting both those who are born in and emigrate to Canada to retain aspects of their ancestral ethnic heritage while simultaneously reinforcing a unified notion of what it means to "become ethnic Canadians."[86] She stresses, throughout the article, that ancestry is irrelevant in the construction of "ethnic Canadians" because any English speaking person who lives in Canada can become one.[87] She also argues, somewhat convincingly, that a concept of ethnicity based solely on historical ancestry fails to account for more complex modern forms of identification. She argues that within her vision of Canadian ethnicity, these more flexible conceptions of identity can be accounted for. Critics Abu-Labon and Stasiulis have been skeptical of this claim, however, arguing that Howard-Hassman overemphasizes the role of Canadian *nationality* in the formulation of identity and completely overlooks "the complex and hybrid ethnicities, and multiple subjectivities formed out of

[85] Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Daiva Stasiulis, "Constructing "Ethnic Canadians": The Implications for Public Policy and Inclusive Citizenship: Rejoinder to Rhoda Howard-Hassmann," *Canadian Public Policy* (Vol. 26, No. 4, 2000): 480.
[86] Howard-Hassmann, 524.
[87] Ibid., 529.

processes of globalization of communication, information technology and migration, and intermarriage."[88]

The key criticism put forth by Abu-Laban and Stasiulis is that, much like Canadian multicultural policies themselves, Howard-Hassmann has a tendency to affirm the very same principles she claims to oppose. I will elaborate on this by positing that her use of language as well as the fundamental structure of her arguments also contradicts her overarching claim for national unity forged through multiculturalism. For instance, when she argues that "non-European and/or non-Christian immigrants receive a strong message that they are welcome in this predominantly white, predominantly Christian country" through policies of multiculturalism, she is in fact reinforcing cultural dualisms. By placing the "non-European and/or non-Christian immigrants" in opposition with the Christian white majority she is clearly identifying who is the Other in the Canadian demographic landscape. Far from presenting a feeling of inclusivity, this passage – particularly through its repetition of the "predominant" categories of identification – strongly asserts the dominance of Christianity and European descendents. [89]

Howard-Hassmann does not shy away from identifying who the "real" Canadians are. We saw this in the previous passage that focused on the distinctions between modern day immigrants and dominant Canadian society, but we also see how she perpetuates this division in the way she constructs Canadian immigration history. She begins by recounting the way in which, generally, almost all European immigrant groups during Canada's long period of settlement have experienced upward mobility.[90] While there is no doubt truth to this statement, she goes on to describe the period after "high European immigration" to examine the history of

[88] Abu-Laban and Stasiulis, 482.
[89] Howard-Hassmann, 525.
[90] Ibid., 530.

"more recent immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Central and South America" in a very different way. Unlike the booming economic expansion that occurred during the European immigration flux, this second group of racialized immigrants are described as merely "finding" economic opportunities for themselves and their children, implying that these opportunities were already forged by the more foundational groups of immigrants. She then quickly moves on to discuss how:

> Many also enjoy political democracy for the first time in their lives. In Canada, an orderly, hard-working, law-abiding life can bring security and comfort; this is a luxury in many other parts of the world where property can be arbitrarily confiscated, unemployment rates reach 30 or 40 percent, and political police can incarcerate and torture citizens at will.[91]

Clearly Howard-Hassmann is making a distinction between the way of life in Canada, as it was established by European immigrants, and the way of life in "other parts of the world," namely those parts which house visible minority groups such as Asians, Africans and Central and South Americans. With this in mind it becomes exceedingly problematic to describe Canada (aka. White Canada) as being orderly, hard-working and law-abiding, because it establishes an opposition to a racialized other who fails to possess these characteristics. Not to mention the fact that many of the European immigrants who found their way to Canada during the Second World War were fleeing fascist and communist dictatorships wherein many of the undemocratic practices she describes were also employed.

Later on in the article when Rhoda Howard-Hassmann acknowledges race and whiteness, as opposed to ethnicity and European descent, for the first time we see one last example of the subtle opposition between "Canadians" and racialized "Others":

> The official multiculturalism policy in Canada to date is liberal, and as such, it promotes the integration of immigrants into the dominant society. It does not

[91] Ibid., 530.

> promote multi-nationalism; rather, by incorporating immigrants and non-whites into the Canadian mainstream as equals whose ancestral cultures are symbolically valued, it promotes Canadianness.[92]

Here Rhoda Howard-Hassmann seems to almost accidentally transition between her previously neutral terminology into a more explicit dualism between the "Canadian mainstream" and "non-whites." While her argument maintains that multiculturalism indeed supports equality and the construction of a unified Canadian identity, she is inadvertently undermining herself by constantly reinforcing differences.

My examination of Rhoda Howard-Hassmann's article has not been intended to expose her as a kind of covert racist, but rather to demonstrate the ways in which this prototypical pro-equality, pro-multiculturalism position can present some inconsistencies. The fact that even while arguing for the unification and equality of Canadians, Howard-Hassmann is unable to overcome reconstructing racialized and ethnicized dualisms is significant. It speaks to same set of inconsistencies lying at the core of equity and multiculturalist policy making. With this in mind I would like to return once again to the description of Canadian multiculturalism described by Howard-Hassmann: "Multiculturalism 'normalizes' a wide range of customs and makes the enjoyment of such customs part of what it means to be Canadian."[93]

The critique of multiculturalism as a normalizing process provides a common thread through the various critiques I have discussed in this chapter. When culture and ethnicity are normalized through policy, that influences our individual, social and political identifications. We reposition ourselves as belonging to a particular group, though we had no hand in defining it. Nevertheless, any discussion about the normalizing influence of multiculturalism must be countered with another discussion about the practical uses of these policies and what alternatives

[92] Ibid., 532-533.
[93] Ibid., 533.

may exist. In the next chapters I will discuss a specific piece of educational policy making that has formally entrenched equity into the Ontario curriculum as well as a new publicly funded Afrocentric school project that has been designed to cope with issues of difference. These chapters will help elucidate why an "alternative" to multiculturalism is necessary, what this could look like and how such an alternative paradigm can be put into practice.

Breaking the Promise of Diversity:
A Closer Look at Ontario's Inclusive Education Strategy

Reading public policy through a deconstructive lens has the potential to produce a more comprehensive and holistic approach to educational reform. This is because, despite a tone of authority and infallibility, policy texts occupy an ambiguous legislative space somewhere between declarative power and cultural narration. Policy texts both enact *and* mandate social norms. In this first of two studies focusing on educational policies in the province of Ontario, Canada I will assess both the regulatory and performative functions of policy in order to understand how a particular vision of Canadian national identity is being represented and reinforced. This example will serve to underscore some of the problematic elements of the Canadian multicultural ideal I discussed in Chapter 4. However I will also expand this discussion to incorporate the specific ways the production of a coherent national identity often runs counter to the practical needs of Canadian students.

The policy that I will be discussing in this chapter is entitled "Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy" and it was published in April 2009 by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The strategy represents one of the broadest and most multi-faceted educational policies to come out in Ontario in years and, as this is the province housing more than 1/3 of Canada's total population, such changes have a far-reaching impact for

the country as a whole. [94] The fact that this policy is so new is an integral component of my investigation, as this analysis can focus solely on the content of the document itself, in its ideal form, rather than on the results of its implementation. For this reason I have chosen to examine the document as it was originally published as opposed to any of its subsequent memoranda or suggested methods of implementation, though these texts certainly warrant further examination. By limiting this discussion to the *goals* of the current Equity Strategy rather than the policy *outcomes* I am interrogating the provincial government's core assumptions about equity and diversity. I will focus on a few closely connected questions: I will ask how representations of Canadian students in this document create an image of the "Canadians student body." I will also question whether the Canadian nationalist narrative of multiculturalism plays a role in this process, and how it is simultaneously reinvented and reinforced within the medium of educational policy. And finally I will examine the ways the representations and constructions of "minority groups" or anyone considered "different" correlate with normative social stereotypes in Canada regarding the sexual, racial and gender identities of the population. These types of questions will ultimately allow me to draw broader conclusions about the role of policy in constructing and perpetuating problematic issues of identity in Canadian society.

The Inclusive Education Strategy emerged from a complex and highly politicized context in Canadian policy making history. Although continuities exist between educational policies in the 1980s and 1990s in Ontario, the latter period witnessed a dramatic rise in the politicization of these policies and correspondingly even the most seemingly benign legislation was subjected to public scrutiny. This situation began when the New Democratic Party (NDP) took power in the early 1990s using education as a platform issue. In 1994, the NDP government published *The*

[94] Statistics Canada. 2001. "A National Overview - Population and Dwelling Counts, 2001 Census." Catalogue no. 93-360-XPB. (Ottawa, May 2002).

Royal Commission on Learning, a document containing 167 specific policy-linked recommendations covering all the programmatic, organizational and resource dimensions of elementary and secondary education in the public sector and this document acted as a catalyst for a decade of sweeping changes in the province. This publication set in motion a decade of sweeping educational reforms. When the Conservative party took power in 1995 under the leadership of Mike Harris under the now infamous slogan of the "Common Sense Revolution," the reforms suggested in the Royal Commission were put into practice.[95]

In my analysis I will focus on some of the overarching patterns in the policies that occurred during the mid to late 1990s, leading towards an increasingly regulated and standardized public school model. Assessment practices in the province of Ontario have increasingly enforced provincial 'standards' for acceptable and non-acceptable student achievement. These standards are subsequently managed and monitored through large-scale standardized testing like the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test as well as the provincially mandated report card system. The actual curricular content has also become increasingly regulated with the implementation of the "Common Curriculum" in elementary schools across the province. Curricular changes also took place at a high school level through the mandatory streaming of school subjects into the so-called Academic (or university-bound) and the more occupation focused Applied program. Ontario school boards have followed much the same pattern in school governance. Massive school board amalgamations in 1997 required the consolidation of the six Toronto public boards into one district board serving over 300 000 students, making Toronto public the fourth largest school district in North America. Consolidation of school boards was supposed to reduce administrative costs, however it also

[95] Robert Gidney, *From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario's Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999): 142.

eroded the power of local communities to participate in the governance of *their* schools and reduced the ability of individual teachers and administrators to deal with the needs of specific needs of students in their district. The centralization, standardization and regulation of education funding, in Bill 160, ultimately caused the greatest public response to the education reforms that resulted in massive teachers' strikes and work-to-rule campaigns. However, as I have argued here, these changes occurred in virtually all elements of the educational system, not only in teacher's pockets, and while the government ultimately capitulated to the teachers' unions, students at the end of the 1990s were attending a school system that was forever altered. Normalization and the elimination of variances within the public school system was what defined education policy throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s.[96]

The title "Realizing the Promise of Diversity," portrays social and cultural diversity as an essential feature of Ontario public schools, rife with potentiality waiting to be properly accessed, a promise the policy itself purports to deliver on. However, this claim appears incongruous with the decades of educational reforms targeted towards centralization, consolidation and conformity within the administrative and bureaucratic framework of Ontario's schools. The explanation for these inconsistencies is difficult to determine. However, some perspective can be gained by examining the approaches to equity policy that preceded the Inclusive Education Strategy. Prior to the publication of this document, educational equity standards in Ontario could be found in a piece of policy published in 1993 entitled "Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards." This much shorter document was limited in scope, unlike the multi-tiered educational strategy currently being undertaken (and notably vague about the steps that would be necessary for achieving equity in schools). Weak policy language permeated virtually all of the stated

[96]Stephen E. Anderson and Sonia Ben Jaafar,"Policy Trends in Ontario Education 1990-2003," (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, September 2003): 43.

objectives in the 1993 equity program, with passive? and generic words such as "involve," "request," "consult" and "assess" taking the place of more active and goal-oriented language.[97] Nevertheless, this publication marked the first time equity became an officially mandated component of Ontario school policies. It is important to note, however, that once Mike Harris took power the provincial government did little to bolster these policies. By and large this new leadership adopted the ideology that if all students were expected to achieve according to the same standards, equity would simply follow. Flexibility and variation in programming and instruction were not to be based on evidence of student performance against the standards, despite what the Antiracism and Ethnocultural equity policies "requested" and student membership in particular sub-groups defined by gender, racial cultural or socio-economic characteristics was perceived to be irrelevant. These terms were often removed from educational policies and documents emerging in the Conservative era.[98]

While the mid-1990s shifted public discourse away from the equity policies of the NDP, the Inclusive Education Strategy currently being implemented by Ontario's Liberal government and Premiere Dalton McGuinty has not only renewed the discussion of identity and difference but intensified it. The introduction entitled "Equity and Excellence," asserts that "Ontario's diversity can be one of its greatest assets."[99] However it claims that "to realize the promise of diversity, we must ensure that we respect and value the full range of our differences. Equitable, inclusive education is also central to creating a cohesive society and a strong economy that will secure Ontario's future prosperity."[100] In this introductory passage a few key words clearly

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[97] "Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation," Ontario Ministry of Education. (1993).
[98] Ibid., 14.
[99] "Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy," Ontario Ministry of Education. (April, 2009): 5.
[100] Ibid.

inform the ethos of the rest of the document: "diversity," "difference," "cohesion" and "prosperity." The confluence of these terms in this context is significant because it suggests that through greater awareness of *differences* and increased acceptance of *diversity*, Ontario's educational system can become more *cohesive* and Canada more *prosperous*. These claims are bold and specific, depicting differences among students as something that can and must be accounted for in order to ensure the success of the province and nation.

My analysis of this text is broken down into three components. First I will discuss the way in which students who are deemed "different" or "diverse" are classified and divided within the text. Then I will move on to examine the way in which these students are subsequently placed into opposition with another group students, those deemed "normal" or part of the majority. Both of these first sections focus mainly on issues of representation, examining the characterization of difference in the discursive construction of the text itself. My final section will address the actual policy guidelines of the Education Strategy in order to understand whether or not these particular policy prescriptions are sufficient for achieving the degree of equity that the Strategy claims to establish.

Within the Equity Strategy the terms "equity," "diversity" and "inclusive education" do not function as complex, shifting or multi-dimensional concepts. Rather, they are defined in terms that can be easily codified and organized within a policy context. Diversity, for instance, is defined as being: "the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes *within* a group, organization, or society," (italics mine).[101] These qualities are further specified as "ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race,

[101] Ibid., 6.

religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status."[102] While this range of identifying factors is broad, and obviously informed by contemporary identity politics, the fact that diversity is immediately associated with predetermined categories of identification speaks volumes about it's the term's usage throughout the document. According to the Equity Strategy, each of these sub-sectors represents one of the "diverse" facets of the student population, which is then associated with a unique set of needs educators can subsequently address. While there are countless examples of this type of categorization, the sections dedicated to "at risk" student communities are especially interesting because they are so general. The Strategy identifies, "recent immigrants, children from low-income families, Aboriginal students, boys, and students with special education needs" as being potential low-achievers.[103] When taken together these groups represent well over the majority of the Ontario public school student body. There is no further extrapolation on why these students are at risk, although the category is so broadly applicable. As such, the identity categories become intrinsically linked with low-achievement levels in document, as opposed to social and structural factors. Once these connections are drawn early on in the text, they are repeated with even less explanation or analysis time and time again throughout the document. In this way, the categories of identity that comprise the term "diversity" within the text come to possess ahistorical and acontextual characteristics that, in this case, limit their ability to learn.

The pedagogical implications of this approach to diversity policy making are reflected in the text through a revival of what is referred to as student-centred learning, which is concisely defined through the assertion that, "every student is a unique individual and learns in different

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 5.

ways."[104] However, based on what we have seen thus far this statement does not really refer to every student *individually*, but to every student group. This is evident in illustrations of "differentiated instruction" such as when the Aboriginal education strategy and the *Aménagement Linguistique* policy for French-language education are touted as being "just a few of the ways in which the ministry is helping educators enhance learning by taking account of students' particular learning styles and circumstances."[105] While teaching different students in different ways to encourage their success in school may appear to be improving educational equity, this strategy of differentiation falls short in some important ways. As I have suggested, there are significant pitfalls to approaching issues of identity on the basis of group-based generalizations. This approach has the potential to do more harm than good by actually imposing supposed limitations to learning on specific groups rather than responding reflexively to the real needs of students. In addition, a group-based approach to thinking about difference fails to recognize that the identities they are describing are not fixed - factors such as immigration and interracial marriage complicate issues of race and ethnicity, while issues such as gender and sexuality are also difficult to characterize in static terms particularly amongst young people.

This close examination of representations of student groupings in the Inclusive Education Strategy reveals the omnipresence of another problematic term and identity category- the "normal" student. Nowhere is the dualism between normalcy and difference more visible than in the section entitled "The Changing Face of Ontario" where those students who fit into an overarching narrative of "difference" are continually placed in opposition to a control group of students who represent the standard of normalcy. Utilizing Census data from 2005, this section tells a straightforward narrative about the shifting composition of Ontario schools. It is divided

[104] Ibid., 14.
[105] Ibid.

into seven different categories: language, aboriginal peoples, families, same-sex couples, newcomers, visible minorities and religion. Within each of these categories, statistical data is cited in order to demonstrate the degree to which those groups that have previously been identified as "different or "diverse" are in fact rapidly increasing, leading to the diversification of Ontario's schools. Under the heading "Families," it states that "between 2001 and 2006, the number of lone-parent families increased by 11.2%."[106] In other sections, current statistical data is used to project changes that have yet to occur within the province. For instance in the section on religion it is projected that by "2017, about one-fifth of our population will be members of diverse faith communities including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism."[107] This type of statistical data is clearly employed to illustrate the dire need for change within the educational system as it currently exists. In this sense, it is surely successful. However, there is an alternate narrative being constructed by portraying the current situation in Ontario as anything new.

By arguing that the face of Ontario is rapidly changing, the text implies that Ontario was, until recently, a province in which white, heterosexual, two-parent households were the norm. In the case of, for instance, Canada's Aboriginal population this is not only a distortion of the truth but an act of historical erasure. In other sections categorized on the basis of identity, such as the one relating to sexual orientation and same-sex families, the increase in statistical data about these groups does not necessarily reflect an increase in their prevalence, but an increase in their desire or ability to self-identify as such without such an admission threatening their personal safety or job security. While this may, in some ways, seem to be a semantic argument rather than a substantive one, the way that narratives of inclusion are constructed in this document is arguably of the utmost importance for how these policies will eventually be implemented. If the

[106] Ibid., 8.
[107] Ibid.

message is that "us" (white, heterosexual, middle-income Canadian two-parent families) are and have always been the norm, but for the sake of our province "we" must learn to accept and account for "them" (anyone who does not fit into this standard) then there continues to be problematic dynamics of power and control at play. Moreover the educational system, within this logic, has admittedly been designed neither by nor for these "diverse" groups, yet they are expected to achieve equally within it as long as they are not discriminated against. The nationalist narrative being perpetuated is that "Canadians embrace multiculturalism, human rights, and diversity as fundamental values" and yet these differences are only being acknowledged on a superficial level. [108] The goal of the Education Strategy, illustrated by the title itself, is inclusion, not difference.

One of the most confounding facets of the Inclusive Education Strategy is the disconnection between the surface level rhetoric on diversity and the practical treatment of difference within the legislative elements of the policy. Despite a meticulous effort to display Canadian diversity as something positive and even enriching within the educational context, an overly tokenistic approach fails to recognize the substantively different lived experiences of Canadians and the impact of these differences on curriculum and pedagogy. Unlike the multicultural school of thought discussed in Chapter 4, which is often criticized for failing to address structural inequality, the Equity Strategy does incorporate a discussion of "systemic barriers" to education. For instance, the overall goal of the Education Strategy is purportedly "to promote inclusive education, as well as to understand, identify, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit our students' prospects for learning, growing, and fully

[108] Ibid., 7.

contributing to society."[109] While these aspirations are innovative and considered, when it comes to the core issue of producing equitable curricula, it is not evident that policy makers have actually adopted this comprehensive approach. The more one examines the actual policy prescriptions the more it becomes evident that the Equity Strategy simply rehashes the standard recipe of add and stir antidiscrimination policy making.

Despite claims that when "students see themselves reflected in their studies, they are more likely to stay engaged and find school relevant," the Education Strategy fails to acknowledge that minority viewpoints may actually alter the core content of the curriculum itself. If the history curriculum, for example, were to seriously incorporate minority subject position it would alter the overarching narrative of Canadian national unity substantively.[110] Instead the Strategy mandates that "revised curriculum documents now contain a section on antidiscrimination education that encourages teachers to recognize the diversity of students' backgrounds, interests and experiences, and to incorporate a variety of viewpoints and perspectives in learning activities."[111] In other words, it is argued that by altering the pedagogical techniques, the curriculum can appear more appealing and relevant to minority students, without altering the content itself. Moreover, it is suggested that the mere inclusion of a paragraph or "section" dedicated to antidiscrimination is enough to counteract the far-reaching legacies of racism, classism, homophobia, sexism, et. al. in the public school curriculum.

In order to develop the connection I am forming between curricular policy making and systems of inclusion and exclusion I will now incorporate the idea of discursive formation, as it was developed by Michel Foucault to conceptualize truth, knowledge and power. For Foucault,

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[109] Ibid., 11.
[110] Ibid., 16.
[111] Ibid., 16.

there is no truth apart from discourse and no discourse apart from power. In this sense, discourse refers to the production of knowledge through language (though language, in this sense, also has practical components). Discursive formation, then, occurs when the same discourse appears across a range of texts during a particular historical moment, each suggesting specific forms of conduct; sharing the same style; and supporting a common institutional, administrative or political strategy.[112] Within this framework, Foucault points out that conceptions of knowledge and truth, no matter how immutable they may seem, are not exempt from discursive formations. In the following passage he suggests why this is the case:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.[113]

Here Foucault stresses the various ways in which the generalized notion of "truth" can in fact be broken down into a complex "politics of truth" that on one level engages in specific acts of inclusion and exclusion (truth versus lies, knowledge versus ignorance) and on another level places these distinctions in a hierarchy (those with access to 'truth' being placed above those who do not have such access, and those with the power to deem what is 'true' situated at the very top). "Just as a discourse 'rules in' certain ways of talking about a topic defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself," Hall summarizes, "so also, by definition,

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[112] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. (London: Sage Publications, 1997): 44.
[113] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, Ed. Colin Gordon, Trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972): 131.

it 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it.[114]

To refocus this discussion back onto forms of knowledge production and transmission, curriculum lies at the very crux of our educational apparatus and has the greatest impact on what and how students learn. Therefore, the acceptable discourses, restrictions and exclusions that Hall refers are what educators must learn to recognize and deconstruct if they hope to avoid merely reinforcing social hierarchies and hegemonic power structures. "Curriculum is one highly significant form of representation", explains one such theorist, "and arguments over the curriculum are also arguments over who we are…[and] how we wish to represent ourselves to our children"[115] While he merely alludes to the stakes of curricular representation in this passage, Pinar is clearly stressing the existence of authorial intention and, perhaps most importantly, discursive formations at work within the construction of curricula.

The approach to curricular reform taken by both the Inclusive Education Strategy as well as the Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity policy is 'add and stir' because it recognizes that issues of gender, race, ethnicity and/or class are significant and need to be addressed, but assumes that their inclusion will not change anything too drastically. This position denies, even as it articulates the structural and epistemological significance of power relations. Taking a more comprehensive critique of epistemology into account would be useful as it would help "shift the curricular debate from preoccupations with equity or multiculturalism to debates regarding the relationship between knowledge and ourselves."[116]

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[114] Hall, 44.
[115] William Pinar, "Notes on Understanding Curriculum as a Racial Text," In: *Race Identity and Representation in Education*. (New York: Routledge, 1993): 60.
[116] Ibid., 62.

The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6; History and Geography, Grades 7and 8 was published by the Ontario Ministry of Education just a few years before the publication of the Equity Strategy and includes a section on ethnocultural equity very similar to the one that has become mandatory within this new legislation. Under the heading of "Antidiscrimination Education," educators are informed of how they ought to cope with issues of plurality, both among their students and within the subject matter of the Social Studies curriculum:

> The social studies, history, and geography curriculum is designed to help students acquire the "habits of mind" essential in a complex democratic society characterized by rapid technological, economic, political, and social change. Students are expected…to show respect, tolerance, and understanding towards individuals, groups, and cultures in the global community and respect and responsibility towards the environment…The learning activities used to teach the curriculum should be inclusive in nature, and should reflect diverse points of view and experiences to enable students to become more sensitive to the experiences and perceptions of others. Students also learn that protecting human rights and taking a stand against racism and other expressions of hatred and discrimination are essential components of responsible citizenship.[117]

This selection illustrates the prototypical approach to curricular reform in contemporary Ontario equity policy making. Firstly, what determines "inclusion" is vague and unspecific. Words such as "individuals", "groups", "cultures" and "diverse points of view" mask the very real faces of black, female, queer, aboriginal, immigrant, physically disabled and impoverished Canadians who lack a defined perspective within mainstream school curricula. While it may seem unfeasible to list every group and how they ought to be included, failing to specifically identify any marginalized individuals or cultures lessens the real *accountability* of educators to address

[117] "The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies Grades 1 to 6 and History and Geography 7 and 8," Ontario Ministry of Education (2004): 17.

these subject positions, rendering this portion of the policy merely suggestive and ideological rather than clear and binding (like other sections that address, for example, grading schema).

The fact that antidiscrimination education is given its own section, approximately one paragraph in length, rather than being integrated throughout is highly problematic. This kind of marginalization of the marginal viewpoint ought to be understood as an explicit choice made by policy makers in order to address the needs of minorities without substantively acknowledging that they may indeed pose a challenge to the dominant approaches to knowledge. It is also telling that "respect and responsibility towards the environment" can also be found within the very same section of the document, even though this point has little to do with discrimination. This disjointed pairing further indicates that this is a catch-all paragraph designed to incorporate new and "trendy" approaches to policy making. This tokenistic approach to antidiscrimination policy indicates that the Ministry of Education fails to recognize the ways in which discrimination can actually manifest itself in curricular representations of history, government and civil society. To draw together the claims I have put forth in this examination of curricular reform within the context of equity policy making, the focus is clearly being placed on the promotion of "tolerance" and "sensitivity". However, committing to these values and to an agenda of antidiscrimination is not the same as incorporating minority subject positions into curricular practice. Emphasizing "tolerance of perspective" indicates that students should understand and respect each other's differences, even as they study material from a textbook that fails to acknowledge that any such difference exists.

So far in this chapter, I have argued that while the Inclusive Educational Strategy aims to increase diversity and improve the Ontario curriculum to better meet the needs of the province's minorities, it also effectively reinforces (and even creates) boundaries between students and

attributes a generalized set of characteristics to those student groups regardless of whether or not they are specifically applicable. As such, the notion of "diversity" is oversimplified and the real lived differences between students are overshadowed by this preset system of categorization. In turn I argue this formulation maintains the already imbalanced set of power relations that exist within the public school system in Ontario and fails to adequately address problems of inclusion and equity. This begs the question, however, of what a more appropriate formulation might entail.

Current research by contemporary feminist theorists on issues of migration and critical whiteness in Europe provides a unique perspective on issues of racial and sexual difference that could offer much needed complexity to the diversity policies being implemented in Ontario. Sandra Ponzanesi, Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti have all wrote extensively on the difficulty with an uncritical valorization of differences among social groups, pointing to the fact that this approach has a tendency of homogenizing, even while it differentiates them. Griffin and Braidotti discuss that while this kind of approach "is often driven by identity politics and a sense that the needs of particular minority group have to be recognized and dealt with…the cost of such homogenization is high."[118] Sandra Ponzanesi expands upon this by noting that recent discourses of multiculturalism, so foundational to the Education Strategy in Ontario, can in fact be used to reproduce and legitimate ethnic boundaries that can ultimately have very detrimental effects on the lived experiences of…those groups.[119] As such, the various social categories that are so readily identified in the Education Strategy as being "at risk" or "part of Ontario's diversity" are in fact being constituted as much as they are being represented within this text.

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[118] Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti, "Whiteness and European Situatedness." In: *Thinking Differently. A Reader in European Women's Studies*. Eds. G. Griffin and R. Braidotti. (London/New York: Zed Books, 2002): 230.
[119]Sandra Ponzanesi, "Diasporic Subjects and Migration." In: *Thinking Differently. A Reader in European Women's Studies*. Eds. G. Griffin and R. Braidotti. (London/New York: Zed Books, 2002): 210.

Griffin and Braidotti go on to examine another way in which the problem of homogenization can negatively impact the lives of everyone, not only the women or the social groups in question. They argue that one of the key problems with "homogenization is the maintenance of the 'them' and 'us' mentality."[120] For them, this kind of dichotomous thinking "promotes a static model of two different homogenized groups…[and] seeks to deny [the] impact and the resultant inevitability of change."[121] This is precisely the concern that I have already voiced in regards to diversity/normalcy binary that is present within Ontario's Inclusive Education Strategy. It is assumed that through the categorization of individuals based on various physical or socio-economic indicators it becomes possible to *know, understand* and ultimately *integrate* them. However, such an argument entirely overlooks the possibility of more complicated identities/identifications that are subject to changes, fluctuations and overlappings. Moreover it is assumed that there is continuity within the dominant identities, those that are considered "normal," even though the lived experiences of the dominant white, heterosexual, upper-middle class demographic are much more complex than that. Ponzanesi utilizes the example of the European fluxes of migration and the complex negotiations of identity/identification that result from them to illustrate this point. In doing so, she demonstrates the illusory nature of seemingly fixed categories like race and ethnicity by complicating what it means to be, in this case, 'white'.[122]

These are just a few of the theorists that I would argue provide alternative ways for educators and politicians to think about the student body in policy in a way that recognizes the significance of their differences without minimizing or negating them. Doing so requires a return

[120] Griffin and Braidotti, 231.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ponzanesi, 206.

to our most fundamental assumptions about identity, a kind of radical *student embodiment*. This term blends the traditional conception of the student body with an understanding of embodiment that is both flexible and responsive, defined as a "complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces: it is not an essence, let alone a biological substance, but a play of forces, a surface of intensities, pure simulacra without originals."[123] If we accept this type of more flexible definition of the student body with attention to *student embodiment* then we are no longer faced with the problem of ascribing fixed identities to particular groups. This allows for what Braidotti refers to as a range of new alternative subjectivities that are "hybrid and in-between categories for whom traditional descriptions in terms of sociological categories such as 'marginals', 'migrants' or 'minorities' are…grossly inadequate."[124] Reimagining how we understand marginality also allows us to criticize our belief in any "neutral" subject position. Ponzanesi addresses this when discussing whiteness as a racialized position. She argues that "by learning to view our subject positions as racialized white people, we can work towards antiracist forms of whiteness" indicating that a more productive path towards accepting social equity would begin with this type of redefinition.[125] Ultimately what I am arguing for in the context of education is the complexification, not the categorization, of the student body.

While the purpose of this analysis has been to critically assess the treatment of the student body in a current piece of equity policy, I have also sought to place the insular logic of Canadian educational policy in dialogue with the ideas of contemporary critical theorists who have addressed similar issues in different ways, despite the relative dissimilarity of the two mediums, with the express intention of challenging the policy makers who claim to be working

[123] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. (Cambridge/Oxford: Polity Press/Blackwell Publishers, 2002): 21.
[124] Ibid., 13.
[125] Ponzanesi, 206.

towards social justice- making them accountable for the theoretical implications of the texts they are producing. Terms like “diversity,” “inclusion” and “equity” carry considerable social weight, and my goal has been to take seriously the means by which policy makers are suggesting we achieve these supposed goals and to question whether this is indeed the most viable direction to move in. The discourses of multiculturalism and diversity permeate the policy documents that dictate how schools in Ontario are being run and, as a result of the Education Strategy this will only become more prevalent. However, left unchecked, this approach lends itself to a superficial understanding of social differences rooted in essentialism that integrates students into a normalizing system that was designed neither by nor for them. A more reflexive understanding of difference in policy could result in a much more thorough investigation of the means by which “inclusion” and “equity” could be achieved.

Redefining Equity Through Difference: Truth, Transgression and Toronto's First Afrocentric School

In previous chapters I have examined the discourses of "multiculturalism" and "diversity" that have played an integral role in the construction of Canadian national identity over the past several decades. I have also outlined some of the ways these narratives can enter into even the most seemingly benign public policy texts, and focused in on these manifestations of nationalism in the representation of difference in Ontario's educational equity policies. In that example, an emphasis on politically palatable terms such as diversity and inclusion was given primacy, despite the fact that the practical policy suggestions based on these goals lack coherence and continuity. This chapter will continue to challenge the inconsistencies of Canadian politicians and policy makers by exploring a very different approach to educational reform.

In the case study that follows I will analyze a strategy developed in the city of Toronto to cope with disproportionally high dropout rates among black students in the city's poorest neighborhoods: the formation of a large-scale publicly funded Afrocentric school. Unlike the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy discussed in the previous chapter, which was developed by the provincial government in the context of increased centralization in the school system, this program emerged from the grassroots efforts of local researchers, educators and policy makers in

the localized Toronto region. Based on the examples I have already discussed, it is clear that policies addressing multiculturalism and equity tend to focus on inclusion as opposed to difference. With its overt emphasis on cultural identity and difference as opposed to national unity and inclusion, the Toronto Afrocentric school represents a notable departure from this conventional approach.

The current chapter will address the curricular structure of the Afrocentric school itself as well as the way the school and its proponents were represented by politicians and journalists in the Canadian news media. Specifically, I will explore how the terms “segregationist” and “black-only” were utilized to describe the Afrocentric curriculum, transforming this single piece of educational policy into a polarizing debate among politicians, educators and the general public on the nature of racialized knowledge production. I will contextualize these debates within discussions in feminism between canonical theorists like Hill Collins, Haraway and Harding on standpoint or situated knowledges. Ultimately I will demonstrate the complex ways in which the case of Afrocentric schooling in Toronto represents a fraught but necessary epistemological shift in educational equity policies towards the acknowledgement of difference, even in a culture as purportedly tolerant, equitable and multicultural as Canada.

To begin, I will briefly outline the circumstances surrounding the formation of the Afrocentric school in Toronto, Ontario, beginning in the autumn of 2007. After years of frustration due to disproportionally high dropout rates among black students in the Toronto area, the Toronto District School Board started lobbying for new solutions. A 156-page paper was written by the Board and reviewed by its trustees, suggesting that an Afrocentric curriculum open to all students in Toronto’s northwest neighbourhoods could assist with the area’s dropouts. The Afrocentric school model was described as one that would use "the sources of knowledge

and experiences of peoples of African descent as an integral feature of the teaching and learning environment."[126] This solution has been employed before in black-focused schools in the United States as well as in particular schools in the city of Toronto itself. For instance, in the summer of 2005, 84 students from Grades 1 to 5 attended Toronto's first Afrocentric Summer Institute, where they emphasized African heritage and literary studies. Also Brookview Middle School, in the ghettoized Jane and Finch area of Toronto, introduced an Afrocentric curriculum in 2006 as a direct response to high dropout rates and it experienced much success.[127] Despite these precedents, the Board's recommendations were quickly coopted by journalists who turned Toronto's first publicly funded Afrocentric school into a hot button issue and a subsequent polarizing debate between politicians, educators and the general public.

Before elaborating on these debates surrounding Toronto's Afrocentric school I will discuss some of the tangible policy and programming suggestions offered within the school's official curriculum documents. Referring back to the previous chapter on the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy in Ontario, one of the key mandates of that document is the compulsory inclusion of paragraphs that explicitly deal with issues of equity into preexisting curricular documents. It is my contention that the Afrocentric school project in Toronto represents precisely the opposite approach to manifesting equity through curricular reform. The Afrocentric curriculum does not adhere to a multicultural approach that addresses diversity through integration. Instead, the Afrocentric curriculum focuses on how structural inequalities are actually reinforced by the mainstream curriculum. Utilizing the Social Studies, History and Geography curriculum of the Afrocentric school project I will explore the ways these issues are addressed by the school's founders and advocates. Understanding the arguments and rhetoric

[126] Melissa Leong, "Board Closer to Afrocentric School; Jan. 30 Vote", *National Post*, 17 January 2008, A1.
[127] Natalie Alcoba, "Trustees Not Keen To Reopen Vote; Afrocentric School," *National Post*, 5 February 2008, A7.

behind the ethos of the Afrocentric school and situating these claims within a larger dialogue on difference and diversity, allows us to gain insight into the larger significance of this project and its relationship to the Canadian national identity, even while it is still too new to comprehensively evaluate on the basis of its success and impact.

As I have discussed, the overall approach to the Afrocentric curriculum is reconstruction, not revision. It is stated from the outset of the project documents that the "Afrocentric curriculum is not an add-on."[128] Within the Afrocentric curriculum teachers are empowered to determine what is or is not Eurocentric and to judge the relative significance of material from the textbook.[129] It is argued in the curriculum itself that this method "serve[s] the needs of the students and not vice versa."[130] In general terms, this critical approach attempts to "reframe and recast the curriculum into a more inclusive and pluralistic view."[131] The purpose of this expanded perspective is then to teach students "how to deconstruct and reconstruct curricular knowledge" which will ultimately allow them to "know about themselves and the world in a *different* way" (emphasis mine).[132] I draw attention to the use of the word difference in this context because it is a phrase so notably absent from the goals of mainstream curricular documents. Recognizing both that differences between Canadians are racialized and that differences influence the way Canadians know and understand the world around them marks a distinct pedagogical and epistemological break from the Ontario curriculum.

The Afrocentric curriculum does not explicitly reference a theoretical school of thought or methodological approach; however as I will show, standpoint epistemology and theories of

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[128] "TDSB Afrocentric Curriculum Unit: Grade 5 Literacy Through Social Studies." Toronto District School Board. (2009): 4.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid., 6.
[132] Ibid.

situated knowledge have strongly influenced its arguments and rhetoric. As the documents themselves do not provide an extensive bibliography, taking many of the tenets of standpoint theory to be self-evident, I will now provide an overview of two theorists that seem to elucidate the objectives of the Afrocentric school project.

Patricia Hill Collins is a key proponent of utilizing Afrocentric knowledge to counteract the influence of Eurocentrism in educational institutions. She portrays the academy as a self-perpetuating and insular community with distinct political interests, explaining that "scholars, publishers and other experts represent specific interests and credentialing processes, and their knowledge claims must satisfy the political and epistemological criteria of the contexts in which they reside."[133] As such, she problematizes the systems of credentialing that are so crucial to the teleology of academia, because they reproduce a system of insiders while excluding outsider knowledge. She describes two specific criteria that influence this knowledge validation process. The first criterion is the way "knowledge claims are evaluated by a community of experts whose members represent the standpoints of the groups from which they originate."[134] This expands upon her previous characterization of the academic community as insular but draws a more explicit connection between knowledge and identity. Knowledge claims are evaluated by members of the dominant group who have their own self-preservation and interests in mind. Therefore, only those claims that support these dominant interests are considered credible.

The second, and closely connected, criterion discussed by Hill Collins relates to the way "each community of experts must maintain its credibility as defined by the larger group in which it

[133] Patricia Hill Collins, "Toward an Afrocentric Feminist Epistemology" in *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Routledge, 1991), 203.
[134] Ibid.

is situated and from which it draws its basic taken-for-granted knowledge."[135] In other words, the legitimacy of a knowledge claim is determined not only by experts from within the dominant group with their own interests in mind, but also by its adherence to other knowledge claims that have already been deemed worthy by the predecessors to that group. Hill Collins is concerned with the closed-circuit style of this system of knowledge production, arguing persuasively, "scholarly communities that challenge basic beliefs held in the culture at large will be deemed less credible than those which support popular perspectives."[136]

Throughout her analysis of conventional knowledge structures, Hill Collins focuses on the interconnected ways systems of evaluation and accreditation are influenced by the social relationships between dominant and marginalized social groups. The implications of this argument reach far beyond what Hill Collins explicitly addresses. If her assertions are accepted, then the problem lies not only in the way that new knowledge is evaluated, but also in the way that "old knowledge" is passed on. Within Hill Collins' vision of current pedagogical structures, knowledge is passed along unquestioned, rather than critically reevaluated. It is my contention that the Afrocentric curriculum in Toronto addresses this issue head-on by promoting critical literacy as opposed to direct knowledge transmission through the use of textbooks or media. For instance, in the social studies and history curriculum, students are taught deconstructive methodologies to complement their lessons on history and social movements. When presented with a text they are encouraged to ask "Who is the author? Who is the intended audience? Whose voices are missing?"[137] Moreover, "beyond identifying missing voices, students also attempt to reconstruct voices. In so doing, they transcend stereotyping people as victims and instead,

[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] TDSB, 3.

respect them as persons, complete with hopes, intentions, and agency."[138] These pedagogical strategies do not merely revise the mainstream curriculum but actually alter its core content by providing alternative perspectives on social and historical events that may actually redefine the events themselves. The process of "reconstructing voices" provides students with an opportunity to actually participate in the production of history and, in this case, assist in the creation of a history from the margins.

While my discussion of Patricia Hill Collins has examined some elements of standpoint knowledge claims, Sandra Harding's position on "insider" knowledge transmission further illustrates the significance of Afrocentric education in Ontario. Whereas Patricia Hill Collins argues for the importance of Afrocentric knowledge, or knowledge from the margins, her arguments regarding the knowledge validation process are mainly focused on critiquing the current educational bureaucracy and administration. Harding provides a useful expansion to this discussion by identifying specific problems with conventional "successor science" that hinges on notions of objectivity and value-neutrality, which she asserts are unattainable within a hierarchically organized society.[139] This argument mirrors Hill Collins' depiction of the academy as self-perpetuating and exclusionary, but with an expanded emphasis on epistemological methodologies. Harding specifically discusses the types of research that are privileged within the conventional knowledge system (ie. projects that utilize empiricism) as well as types that are frequently discredited (ie. projects that utilize experiential or qualitative data). Thus Harding is able to identify undervalued approaches, provide educators with a clear understanding of what

[138] TDSB, 3.
[139] Sandra Harding, "Feminist Standpoint Epistemology," in *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991): 134.

current systems of knowledge lack and provide a vision for the development of future alternatives.

One of the key aspects of Harding's vision is that knowledge systems "require overcoming excessive reliance on distinctively masculine lives and making use also of women's lives as origins of scientific problematic, sources of scientific evidence, and checks against the validity of knowledge claims."[140] By suggesting that knowledge is socially situated and that this situation limits the degree to which it can be understood as, in Harding's terminology, "strongly objective", educators are encouraged to redefine the ways they judge and disperse knowledge claims. This new breed of successor science is grounded in the experiences of individuals as well as the ways these experiences illustrate the "continuities between broad social formations and characteristic patterns of belief."[141]

These lessons about standpoint theorizing and situated knowledge apply broadly to my examination of the Afrocentric curriculum. Namely, the argument put forth by proponents of the Toronto Afrocentric school that "the greatest critique of the present curriculum will come from those who are most likely to be marginalized by that curriculum."[142] This position, that the "greatest critique" must come from the margins precisely *because* they have been excluded from mainstream Eurocentric knowledge validation practices, resonates with Harding's argument for stronger objectivity. When examining the objectives of the Afrocentric school project it is this type of standpoint argument that distinguishes the project most explicitly from the curriculum developed by the Ontario provincial government. While it is feasible to imagine the mainstream Ontario curriculum incorporating a critique of Eurocentrism, it is far more difficult to imagine

[140] Ibid., 123.
[141] Ibid., 136-137.
[142] TDSB, 6.

those who subscribe to the tenets of multiculturalism accepting the fact that Afrocentric, or marginalized knowledge in general, provides a perspective that is substantively *better*. In both Harding's work and the Afrocentric curriculum the valorization of equality within discourses of multiculturalism and diversity is exposed as misguided. In order to produce better knowledge and better pedagogy Ontario's differences must be addressed directly and comprehensively through curricular reforms that acknowledge the relationship between knowledge, power and identity.

As I have already mentioned, the curriculum of the Afrocentric school is still very new and while it is possible to examine its goals and objectives it remains difficult to evaluate its content in a conclusive way. Still, to provide some content-based analysis I have chosen to contextualize the innovations proposed in the Afrocentric Social Studies curriculum I have been discussing using the mainstream Ontario curriculum. By doing so I hope to underscore the differences between the two approaches and to illustrate why the revisions proposed in the Afrocentric curriculum are so vital and promising. *The Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies, Grades 1 to 6; History and Geography, Grades 7and 8, 2004* is published by the Ontario Ministry of Education and, similar to the Afrocentric curriculum document discussed above, outlines the expectations of all Social Studies, History, and Geography programs for Grades 1 through 8. Effective September 2005, all schools in the province were obligated to follow the guidelines in this document in order to receive provincial funding and maintain their accreditation as public educational institutions. Needless to say, it is a crucial document for understanding the mainstream approach to curriculum production in Ontario. Perhaps most notable in the document is the explicit emphasis, on economic productivity and citizenship. At the start of its introductory paragraph the policy states that the primary intention of the

cumulative Social Studies, History and Geography curriculum in Ontario is to teach the knowledge and skills necessary "to function as informed citizens in a culturally diverse and interdependent world and to participate and compete in a global economy."[143] This passage holds particular relevance to my analysis because it self-consciously articulates how the government of Ontario's has a vested interest – both political and financial - in the curricular content of the public school system. In a subject such as Social Studies, which directly informs students about the history and functions of government along with other civic issues, this has the potential to lead to the romanticization of government and the political process. "Sentimental civic education," Callan asserts, is "a widely prescribed remedy to the problem of political apathy and cynicism."[144] It is difficult, however, not to view this as a conflict of interest. If the content of students' educational curriculum is so easily manipulated in order to promote an increased attachment to civic values, which also happens to be in the interest of the Ontario government, who is to say that this curriculum could not be just as easily manipulated to promote the hegemonic power structures that keep this government in place?

Within the field of education studies there are some theorists who have argued for the use of textbook analysis as a means of elaborating the connection between various problematic narratives, often nationalistic ones, in mainstream curricula. Michael Apple has been a key theorist of this type of research, arguing that in order to understand how "legitimate" knowledge is made available by schools, one must first understand the textbook.[145] He posits that the best way to do this is by placing "the production of curricular materials such as texts back into the

[143] "Ontario Curriculum: Social Studies," 2.
[144] Callan, 203.
[145] Michael Apple, "The Culture and Commerce of the Textbook," In: *The Curriculum: Problems, Politics and Possibilities* Eds. Landon Beyer and Michael Apple (Albany: New York Press, 1998): 159.

larger process of the production of cultural commodities – such as books – in general."[146] As I outlined in the methodological component of my analysis, this is indeed my intention. I do, however, hope to expand Apple's argument because it is my contention that while textbooks are important, digital media sources have become increasingly significant in the process of curriculum development. These sources cannot be overlooked, particularly as they are often directly funded by governmental bodies as opposed to the independent business sector.

Civilization.ca is a website designed for home and classroom use by the Canadian Museum of Civilization (funded by the government of Canada) to extend the overall goals and objectives of the *Ontario Curriculum.* Designed to complement the History and Social Studies curricula in particular, this web-document is recommended in the *Ontario Curriculum* as a valuable classroom resource. Unlike many of the standard textbooks, this document is extremely up-to-date (created in June of 2007) and demonstrates the same contemporary influences of multiculturalist and liberal feminist discourses of inclusion as the curriculum itself. By exploring a few specific examples from this resource I will show that while this text attempts to construct equitable narratives, it does not necessarily view equity in the same way as the individuals behind the Afrocentric curriculum would define it. As such this resource presents an ideal source for my content-based analysis of the *Ontario Curriculum* and its relationship to the Toronto Afrocentric school project.

The first portion of the website Civilization.ca I will be discussing is called "Face to Face: The Canadian Personalities Hall." It tells the stories of 27 individuals who helped shape Canada.[147] Within "The Personalities Hall," on the Civilization.ca student website, 27 historical

[146] Ibid., 160.
[147] "Face to Face in the Classroom." Canadian Museum of Civilizations. Created: June 29, 2007. Accessed: May 2010.

figures are separated into five categories: “We inspired”, “We founded”, “We fought”, “We built” and “We governed”. The visual layout of the website allows the user to scroll through these headings and see small groupings of 4-5 of the historical figures’ images, with each individual’s name and major accomplishment becoming visible when the cursor is placed over their face. Within these small groupings each category contains a sampling of white men and women and/or Native Canadians (save the category of “We Built” which is entirely comprised of white males). This semblance of equity mirrors the antidiscriminatory mandate of the *Ontario Curriculum* and would likely appease multiculturalist and liberal feminist demands for inclusivity in representation. This layout presents the image that there are multiple histories being told because there are faces of “difference” being shown within almost every category. However, if we look beyond this display at the actual numbers of women and Native Canadians highlighted, it becomes apparent that this particular approach to “inclusivity” has a very low glass ceiling. Only 8 out of the 27, or 30%, of the figures in this historical hall of fame are women or Native Canadians. The other 70% of the purported most significant figures in Canadian history, “selected from thousands of potential candidates,” are white males. Clearly this revisionist version of history excludes many, not only the women and Native Canadians whose accomplishments were overlooked, but also the individuals from black, Asian, queer and countless other marginalized Canadian communities whose histories are not recognized at all. Moreover, there is no accountability for these exclusions because, by showing the stories of a select few women and minority groups, it appears as if a comprehensive effort at inclusiveness has been made, when in fact this effort was extremely limited and failed to tell the stories of those who would have substantively altered the historical narrative being told.

Another category of the Civilization.ca online supplementary curriculum resource is entitled "We Built," and in this section 100% of the figures chosen are white males. The historical narratives being told are hero's tales. Jules Timmins, for example, was a wealthy mining entrepreneur that helped open up the Quebec ore industry to international markets in the mid-20th century. He is portrayed as the ideal "self-made man," owing all his success to his own inventive mind and determination. This message reads vividly in passages such as: "The Ungava project, in Northern Quebec, is one of the greatest mining stories in Canadian history. Jules Robert Timmins made it happen."[148] The fact that Timmins was born into a well-connected wealthy mining family that funded his achievements is presented as an afterthought, a fact that might get in the way of the overarching narrative of triumph over adversity. Samuel de Champlain is another figure featured in the "We Built" section of the Civilization.ca student website, and his story is presented in similar terms. "Samuel de Champlain was a man of colossal scope," the text lauds, he was a "soldier, explorer, cartographer, writer and tireless promoter of the colony of New France."[149] This portrayal of Champlain, while certainly heroic, also seems to be presenting a nostalgic image of him as a "Renaissance Man." The reader cannot help but be impressed by his many achievements and to think fondly of the historical period when people aspired to do so much. His fame as an "explorer" only heightens this feeling of nostalgia, harkening back to a simpler time when Canada was still an "uncharted territory." This version of history overlooks, most notably, the hundreds of Iroquois slaughtered in the capture of New France, not to mention the bloody battles amongst European Canadians over ownership of the territory itself.

[148] Civilization.ca
[149] Ibid.

Contemporary theorists studying representations of whiteness have argued that while portrayals such as these may seem harmless at first, "positive stereotypes are as important as negative ones in defining the field of what the media communicate to us about race."[150] The representations of Timmins and De Champlain provide prototypical exemplars of the white stereotypes theorized by Seiter such as the "Go-Getter" and the "Adventurer." The Go-Getter stereotype, demonstrated by the Timmins narrative, is significant because while it portrays white people as active, the subtext is that those around these white actors (in this example, the countless racial minorities who ultimately worked in his mines or even, more generally, any marginalized individual who fails to "pick himself up by his bootstraps") are passive and lazy.[151] As for the narrative of Samuel De Champlain's discovery of New France, "adventure stories neutralize the historical meaning of such exploits – the violent domination of natives by whites."[152] Moreover, the implicit nostalgia in this story towards the life of the Renaissance Man, further neutralizes these actions by treating whiteness as a signifier of an earlier and more innocent age.[153] Feminists Artnot and Dillabough criticize such hegemonic representations of whiteness and masculinity specifically in relation to narratives of nation-state formation. They have sought to examine "the ambivalent manifestation of gender and male domination in nationalist and political rhetoric, in particular, those discourses which persistently function to marginalize women already defined as 'Other' in the state.[154] While it may seem as if stereotypical images of whiteness or masculinity in classroom materials only negatively impact students who are excluded from them, in fact, these representations also have an adverse effect

[150] Ellen Seiter, "Different Children, Different Dreams," In: *Gender, Race and Class in Media*. Eds. Gail Dines and Jean McMahon Humez (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc., 2002): 99.
[151] Ibid., 100.
[152] Ibid., 102.
[153] Ibid., 101.
[154] Madeleine Arnot and Jo-Anne Dillabough, "Feminist Politics and Democratic Values in Education," (*Curriculum* Inquiry, Vol. 29, No. 2, 1999): 163.

on students who comprise the dominant group. Pinar argues, for instance, that an unconscious process of "identity deformation" occurs when "students misunderstand who they are as racialized, gendered, historical political creatures."[155] In other words, while the identities of those who are excluded from mainstream representations of whiteness/maleness are reinforced as "different" because of these stereotypes, the identities of white/male students are effectively negated. This is problematic because it fails to teach these students about their own social location: instead, they internalize that their position is "neutral."

While women and Native Canadians are the only marginalized social groups that are included at all, and these inclusions are limited at best, it is still important to examine the form and content of these representations. Firstly, there are only three aboriginal Canadians included in the website, one under the category of "We Inspired" and two (related) individuals under the category of "We Fought." The first, Peter Pisteolak, was an artist and photographer, famous for his documentation of Inuit culture, oral tradition and history. His legacy is summarized as "a body of work illustrating, from an Inuit perspective, northern life at the intersection of past and present,"[156] Once again this representation of difference fits neatly into the framework of inclusivity outlined by the *Ontario Curriculum*. His achievements are presented as significant because they offer an "Inuit perspective" on life in Northern Canada. While this is indeed a notable accomplishment, we must recognize that knowledge production through the formation of curriculum is a highly selective process and one with close connections to the economic and political interests of government. With this in mind, it becomes clear that the decision to include Pisteolak may in fact have been a "selective inclusion", as he does nothing to present an alternate perspective on, say, the effectiveness of the Canadian Parliamentary system in Ottawa or

[155] Pinar, 62.
[156] Civilization.ca

anything else that would destabilize the historical meta-narrative of nation-building in Canada. Similarly, the representations of Mary and Joseph Brant, a Mohawk brother and sister that aided in Iroquois-British relations in the 18th century, reinforces the revisionist narrative of Canadian history that glazes over the cruelty towards and slaughter of innumerable aboriginal Canadians. Both Mary and Joseph Brant are praised for their abilities to assimilate into British culture: "Mary (or "Molly"), through marriage to a British official, and Joseph, through education, gained solid positions in colonial society." It is this open acceptance of colonial values which allowed them to act as "ambassadors of the Iroquois" and "a bridge between the Iroquois and British worlds," ultimately assisting in building support for the British in Canada.[157] However, this colonial fairytale quickly departs from the conventions of the "self-made man" narrative, or even the hero's tale, when the Native Canadians lost their land in 1783 and Joseph proceeded to spend the rest of his life "attempting - and failing - to create a new Iroquois state in Canada."[158]

Also breaking with the narrative conventions of the "Go-Getter" or "Self-Made Man" is the representation of first wave Canadian feminist Nellie McClung in the "We Fought" section of the website. Rather than placing her achievements at the beginning of the story, McClung's Christian upbringing, marriage, assistance from other women and education take the forefront. Unlike the story spun around Timmins, McClung's is not a tale of one woman single-handedly reforming the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Instead her achievements relied on the aide of others, and ultimately she is defined as being one of the "Famous Five" women who helped redefine the legal status of women in Canada. While it is true that McClung had a lot of help and assistance in her journey to the Alberta Legislative Assembly, her achievements are lessened when placed beside the aggrandized stories of men like Timmins who appear to have done it all

[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

on their own. Moreover, in the concluding passage discussing the "Famous Five" and their hard fought battle for "Canadian women," the fact that aboriginal women failed to receive these rights until 1960 is not acknowledged.

Some may argue that it is trivial to focus on the details of *how* white men are represented as heroes *why* women and Native Canadians are represented as passive and dependent, because at least these contemporary historical narratives bother to *include* these alternative approaches in the first place. However, proponents of the Afrocentric school project in Toronto have successfully argued that this multiculturalist, liberal feminist approach to curricular inclusion may not necessarily represent the best interests of the socially marginalized. Ultimately such an approach serves to reinforce the discursive and institutional structures that continue to exclude them and for this a more comprehensive alternative is required. Only time will tell how successful the Afrocentric school will be, but what can be known now is that it presents a distinct and viable alternative to a strategy of inclusion that leaves much to be desired in the search for schools that can truly be called "equitable."

By focusing on the objectives of the Afrocentric school project and theories that underpin these objectives and by contrasting these objectives with the mainstream approach to curricular policy making, I have attempted to provide a comprehensive vision of the Afrocentric school as a pedagogical strategy. In this final section of my discussion, I would like to examine the Afrocentric school through a slightly different lens. I would like to examine the school by focusing on the way in which it was popularized by the media. It is this image that became much more familiar to Canadians who lacked the time and ability to access the curricular documents themselves. In doing so, I hope to expand the scope of my analysis to include the way in which discussions of difference, knowledge and identity that the Canadian public were presented to and

consumed by the Canadian public. The source material for this component of my analysis is derived from three major print media sources: The Globe and Mail and the National Post, which both receive nation-wide circulation, and The Toronto Star, which caters specifically to the Toronto area. And while the issue of black-focused curricula was certainly discussed by these news sources in the years leading up to the 2007 controversy, I will specifically focus on articles from the height of the Afrocentric schooling controversy, between the fall of 2007 and the spring of 2008.

The articles that came out in support of Afrocentric schooling often drew upon the foundational concept of standpoint theory, that knowledge is socially situated, to support the initiative. Journalist Kelly McParland's explanation of Ontario's faulty educational system provides some insight into just how embedded this first premise is in the public debate about the Afrocentric school, even from those outside the academic community. She describes, in a straightforward and plain language manner, how "the epic alienation suffered by a frightening percentage of black kids might have something to do with the general failure of the existing curriculum to connect in any meaningful way with the realities of their lives… the existing curriculum is pretty much organized by white folks for other white folks, so it's not surprising the disconnect is even greater for blacks."[159] In McParland's vision of Ontario schools, the curriculum was indeed designed by "white folks" and this makes it "not suprising" that black students would have difficulty connecting to the subject matter. For her, the connection between identity and knowledge is a given and there is no need to explain further why race would matter to the creation of curriculum.

[159] Kelly McParland, "A New Lesson That's Worth Learning," *National Post*, 2 February 2008, A16.

In another article arguing for the Afrocentric school an associate professor from Ryerson University in Toronto, Grace-Edward Galabuzi, explains to Canadian readers the way in which "[a] curriculum that assumes sameness or colour-blindness does not necessarily lead to equality."[160] In doing so she raises an important criticism of the mainstream approach to accommodating difference in schools. She also expands upon this to examine the way in which knowledge structures themselves serve to maintain racial, classed and gendered hierarchies within society. As Galbuzi later describes even more succinctly, "[e]qual treatment does not mean same treatment."[161] In this passage, she makes it even more clear that the system itself is failing to meet the needs of marginalized students. This argument is taken even further in James Bradshaw's article "Black Focused Education" when he cites research from the University of Toronto demonstrating how "integration [often] means giving up one's identity in a so-called 'multicultural mosaic.'"[162] These researchers then go on to argue that this results in "a demonstrated educational disadvantage for many groups in our schools, including blacks, Portuguese and aboriginal peoples, that justifies a search for multiple ways of educating our students.'[163] While Bradshaw himself goes on to negate this argument as I will discuss later, this example demonstrates the degree to which discussions about standpoint knowledge are brought into full public view within these articles. By claiming, as these researchers do, that marginalized groups face an "educational disadvantage" that may indeed be structural, we see the way in which the argument over what defines equity is being extended far beyond issues of equal access. By going on to posit, as Harding and Hill Collins do, that these disadvantages then "justify" the creation of a whole new

[160] James Bradshaw, "Black-Focused Education," *Globe and Mail,* 8 February 2008, A11.
[161] Ibid.
[162] George J. Sefa Dei and Arlo Kempf, "Debunking Myths About African-Centred School," *Toronto Star*, 16 November 2007, Education.
[163] Ibid.

kind of curriculum, the standpoint argument is being taken to its logical conclusion. In both the articles I have been discussing, the roots educational inequity in Toronto can be traced back to the same structural and epistemological concerns outlined by proponents of the Afrocentric school and standpoint epistemologists.

The fact that public support for Afrocentric schools accurately reflected the Afrocentric curriculum may not be altogether suprising, however it does reflect the degree to which the formation of Afrocentric school succeeded in bridging a highly complex feminist and antiracist discussion into the social and political mainstream. Prior to 2007 it would have been difficult to picture an op-ed piece in the *Toronto Star* paying homage to the work of feminist epistemologists. However during the Afrocentric schooling controversy this became a daily reality. Of course not all articles and editorials on the Afrocentric school were as positive as the ones I have outlined. The articles emerging from the other side of these debates were often much . It has been interesting to note that opponents of the initiative rarely questioned any of the three premises that are readily found in articles that support the school.

The dominant argument against the Afrocentric schools was indeed that it fostered segregationist principles that were fundamentally opposed to Canadian multicultural values. The most vocal and influential individual to take this position was indeed the Premiere of Ontario and Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, Dalton McGuinty. McGuinty was notably vague about the specific curriculum reforms proposed by the Toronto district school board, however he publicly made statements arguing that "the single most important thing we can do for our kids is bring them together so they have an opportunity to come to know one another, to understand one another and to learn together and grow together."[164] He then went on to assert, using language that could

[164] Bradshaw, 2008.

have emerged directly from either the Antracism and Ethnocultural Equity policies of 1993 or the Inclusive and Education Strategy of 2009, that this "togetherness" is what serves as "the foundation for a caring, cohesive society."[165] It is interesting to note, however, that this rhetoric of togetherness often goes hand in hand with a critique of Eurocentric or dominant approaches to education. In fact, it is precisely the exclusions present within the mainstream educational system that provide fodder for multicultural discourse. This was evident even the equity policies passed during the early 1990s in Ontario when it was clearly acknowledged that "[m]uch of the traditional curriculum focuses on the values, experiences, achievements, and perspectives of white-European members of Canadian society and excludes or distorts those of other groups in Canada and throughout the world." Nevertheless, the proposed response to these curricular exclusions is not to reconstruct the Ontario curriculum from the bottom up but rather to vaguely assert that students may "benefit from a knowledge of the experiences and contributions of people of cultures and races other than their own."[166] Neither this document or the Inclusive and Equity Strategy that resulted recognize the contradiction between the integration of these marginalized experiences and stories and the exclusionary narratives being promoted within the mainstream curriculum. I have sought throughout this analysis to elucidate the distinctions between an approach to policy making that is geared towards incorporating "diversity" and one that thoroughly accounts for "differences." In this instance this distinction rests mainly in the solutions proffered and the willingness to follow an argument that is, at its core, an acknowledgement of situated knowledges to its uncomfortable conclusion.

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[165] Ibid.

[166] "Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation," Canadian Ministry of Education and Training (1993), 13.

More often than not it was the case that the journalists, educators and politicians who argued against black-focused schools, were willing to accept and even underscore the tenets of standpoint theory as long as they also coincided with the principles of inclusion and multiculturalism that purportedly define the Canadian national identity. One columnist, for instance, urged readers to focus on the greater social implications of a decision to create separate schools for black students. "Consider," this columnist notes, "the effect on social cohesion and tolerance removing black children – not to mention the black teachers needed to staff Afrocentric schools – from the regular public system. To what extent would blacks be stigmatized by students of other skin colours if they not only lacked exposure to them but were implicitly told that black students were incapable of functioning in the broader system?"[167] The underlying assumption in these questions and warnings is that non-black students require the physical presence of black students and teachers in order to resist their own tendency towards prejudice and racism. This type of argument directly relates to the standpoint epistemology offered by Harding when she argues that minority groups "have less to lose by distancing themselves from the social order; thus, the perspective from their lives can more easily generate fresh and critical analysis."[168] The fact that this columnist fears a world of unchecked dominance by the white majority, without the necessary sound of oppressed voices, illustrates the way in which ideas of subjective and experiential knowledge have informed our conceptions of "tolerance" and, more generally, multiculturalism.

Another commentator, Jeffrey Simpson, utilizes multicultural rhetoric in his stand against Afrocentric schooling in an article entitled "Memo to Toronto School Board: Are You Nuts?" In this article, Simpson referenced the recent elections in Ontario as proof that Ontarians value

[167] "School By Skin Colour: Why It's a Bad Idea," *Globe and Mail*, 1 February 2008, A22.
[168] Harding, 126.

"multiculturalism", "pluralism" and "inclusiveness" in their schools.[169] More than just arguing for the social benefit of racially diverse schools, he explains that "schools are *there* to assist social solidarity, to be one of the places where everyone comes together, rubs shoulders, deals with differences and, one hopes, becomes a better citizen for understanding different points of view."[170] Patricia Hill Collins argues that coalitions between Black feminists and "Black men, white women, people of color, and other groups with distinctive standpoints…are essential in order to foster other groups' contributions as critics, teachers, advocates and disseminators of a self-defined Afrocentric standpoint.[171] Similarly, Simpson argues that one of the most important roles a school can play in a student's life is to assist them in achieving an anti-oppressive consciousness.

Unlike the add and stir policies of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, Toronto's Afrocentric school presents a curricular model that reinvents the Ontario's approach to equitable education. In doing so, the Afrocentric curriculum represents both a challenge and alternative to the conventions of educational policy making in Ontario as they have been established by the Ministry of Education. By problematizing the unequal power relationships that exist within mainstream knowledge structures, the Afrocentric curriculum remains in keeping with the ultimate goals of equity espoused by the Ontario provincial government. However, by doing so in a way that focuses on the specific experiences of Toronto students as opposed to the generalized needs of "Canada's diverse population," they present an approach that is ultimately more comprehensive and sustainable. It is too early in the program to evaluate its effectiveness, nevertheless the fact that these suggestions and changes have occurred at all presents a promising vision of how Canadian educators, politicians and academics can work together to reformulate the problematic

[169] Jeffrey Simpson, "Memo to Toronto School Board: Are You Nuts?" *Globe and Mail*, 1 February 2008, Breaking News.
[170] Ibid.; Emphasis mine.
[171] Hill Collins, 33.

and untenable constructions of difference that exist in public policy today

Conclusions

The purpose of this analysis has not been to undermine the efforts of policy makers aiming to produce a more equitable approach to education in the province of Ontario. Instead, I have sought to fill a gap in this educational research and analysis in order to imagine better policies that fulfill the proposed goals of Canada's ideals of multiculturalism and equity. One of the key lessons I have drawn from the feminist and antiracist theorists who provide much of the extant framework for studying difference is that in order to achieve equality one must first ask the question "equal to whom?" In the preceding analysis I have interrogated this question and elaborated upon it by also asking the question "equal *for* whom?" Achieving equality is an honorable goal but in top-down approaches difference inevitably takes a backseat to the logic of inclusion which ultimately results in assimilation. Of course this process is neither straightforward nor one-sided, as I sought to outline as the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy in Ontario. The discourse of diversity is rife with good intentions, drawing upon the legacies of multiculturalism in Canada in order to foster community and nationhood. However, the problematic I addressed using the work of standpoint theorists, for example, was whether or not this rhetoric ultimately meets the needs of students in a pedagogical context. The case study of Toronto's Afrocentric school offered much to the discussion, because it is the first large scale publicly funded school of its kind to tackle Ontario's problems with low achievement and high dropout rates among racial minorities using their subjective knowledges as the foundation for a new curriculum. While it is still far too early to judge this program's success definitively, it takes as its starting point unequal relationships of power, providing a new approach to pedagogy. The subjective knowledges approach is more

capable of reflecting the kind of substantive change that policies like the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy lack due to an unflinching dedication to inclusion and "equality".

The research I have outlined here begins to draw connections between the fields of feminist difference theorizing and pedagogical research but much is left to be done. As I have contended throughout my analysis, this work needs to be taken up by educational researchers and policy makers and can no longer be avoided in favour of more convenient though outdated policies. The only comprehensive way to address issues of difference in Ontario's educational system is to substantively and comprehensively confront the reality that acknowledging difference does not mean shirking equity or inclusivity in the broad sense. Quite the opposite, it is ignoring difference that produces inequity by promoting a flawed conception of what equality looks like. While a discourse of "equity" and "difference" has been adopted in Ontario, the critical eye toward phenomenological and epistemological analyses of power have not. Until this challenging task is accepted, the province will stagnate in its so-called diversity rather than flourishing in its real-life differences.

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