

Vancouver Centre of Excellence



Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

Working Paper Series

No. 01-22

**Teachers of Chinese Ancestry:
The Interaction of Identities and Professional Roles**

June Beynon, Roumiana Ileva, Marela Dichupa

December 2001

RIIM

Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis

The Vancouver Centre is funded by grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Citizenship & Immigration Canada, Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. We also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Metropolis partner agencies:

- Health Canada
- Human Resources Development Canada
- Department of Canadian Heritage
- Department of the Solicitor General of Canada
- Status of Women Canada
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Correctional Service of Canada
- Immigration & Refugee Board

Views expressed in this manuscript are those of the author(s) alone. For more information contact the Co-Directors of the Centre, Dr. Don DeVoretz, Department of Economics, SFU (e-mail: devoretz@sfu.ca) or Dr. David Ley, Department of Geography, UBC (e-mail: davidley@unixg.ubc.ca).

**Teachers of Chinese Ancestry:
The Interaction of Identities and Professional Roles**

June Beynon, Roumiana Ilieva, Marela Dichupa¹

Faculty of Education
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6

june_wyatt-beynon@sfu.ca

rilieva@sfu.ca

December 2001

The authors acknowledge funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada and the National Metropolis Centre of Excellence: Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM), Vancouver.

¹ This working paper also appears as Beynon, J., R. Ilieva, and M. Dichupa. 2001. Teachers of Chinese ancestry: Interactions of identities and professional roles. *Teaching Education* 12 (2): 133-52.

Abstract: The research presented in this paper, based on ethnographic interviews with 19 female and 6 male Canadian teachers of Chinese ancestry, is part of a larger study examining perceptions of careers in teaching by secondary school and university students as well as practising teachers, all of minority Chinese or Punjabi Sikh ancestry.

In the present research we examine not only how Canadian teachers of Chinese ancestry perceive the nature of their work (roles) but also the ways in which they view their identities and interactions between roles and identities. Britzman (1992) theorizes that “role and function are not synonymous with identity; whereas role can be assigned, the taking up of an identity is a constant social negotiation. One must consent to an identity” (p.24). The thesis of our research is that “role,” which Britzman appears to describe as impermeable and prescribed by normative institutional practices and ideologies is, rather, potentially porous. Holland et al.'s (1998) theory of identity and agency in “figured worlds,” has informed our consideration about how minority teacher agency works to change role definition within dominant Anglo Canadian educational institutions.

The post-structural work of Weedon (1997), Hall (1996), and Bakhtin (1981) also helps us to see how identity can influence role and provides the foundation for recommending changes in teacher education and schools that would help to authorize transformation so that these settings, which presently favour the values, practices and discourse of the dominant Anglo European Canadian society can become more inclusive of the identities and experiences of minority teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Identities never arrive in persons or in their immediate social milieux already formed. They do not come into being, take hold in lives, or remain vibrant without considerable social work in and for the person. They happen in social practice (Holland et al. 1998, p.vii).

The research reported here examines issues of identity and role of 19 female and 6 male teachers of Chinese ancestry in public schools in British Columbia, Canada.² This inquiry relates to research and policy regarding the representation of minorities of immigrant ancestry in the teaching profession in a variety of national contexts. In the United States, Britain and Australia, as in Canada, immigration is an integral part of national history. In these different national settings significant inquiries and policy recommendations regarding minorities in teaching are framed by ethno-specific sociological and anthropological perspectives that theorize the salience of differences in race, history, language and culture in understanding educational experiences of minorities in mainstream institutions (see Gibson and Ogbu 1991; Jacob and Jordan 1993). Accounting for diversity of gender and socioeconomic background within ethno-specific studies is also the subject of significant theoretical work that articulates the importance of not essentializing minority educational experiences (McCarthy, 1990).

Our inquiries into the relationships of specific ethno-cultural immigrant groups to the teaching profession involve both a culture-specific and a non-essentialist approach. We see in Canada (Beynon, Toohey and Kishor 1992; Beynon and Toohey 1995; Beynon, Toohey and Kishor 1998; Hirji and Beynon, 2000) that minorities of Indian sub-continent or Chinese ancestry advantageously employ mainstream schools as a route to professional careers. Much the same pattern is documented for immigrant minorities in the U.S. (Gibson and Ogbu 1991; Leong 1995; Nakanishi and Nishida 1995), the U.K. (Osler 1997; Ghuman 1995) and Australia (Giese 1997). Based on these documented achievements the focus of our present inquiry is on the reasons individuals of Chinese ancestry are not as prominent in the teaching profession as they are in other professions in mainstream Canadian, U.S. or Australian society.³

² This research is part of a larger study examining perceptions of careers in teaching by secondary school (Beynon, Toohey and Kishor 1998) and university students (Beynon, Toohey and Kishor 1992; Beynon and Toohey 1995) as well as practising teachers (Hirji and Beynon 2000), all of minority Chinese or Punjabi Sikh ancestry. The research on teachers of Punjabi Sikh ancestry indicated that these teachers do important work as translators, role models and cultural brokers with the Punjabi community, as well as the work of classroom teachers comparable to their mainstream peers. In our previous writing, this special work was denoted as constituting the Punjabi Sikh teacher's role, and concerns were raised that the special knowledge of these teachers was not officially acknowledged or valued (Hirji and Beynon 2000).

³ In the U.S. Gibson and Ogbu (1991) research educational orientations of Punjabi-Sikhs, Leong (1995), Nakanishi and Nishida (1995), and Gordon (2000) research immigrants of Chinese ancestry. U.K studies focus on teachers who trace their ancestry to the Indian sub-continent (Ghuman 1995 , Osler 1997). There do

In our research into the diverse perspectives of Canadian teachers of Chinese ancestry on their professional lives, the structural obstacles they face and how they act as agents to creatively negotiate institutional norms and obstacles, we employ an analytical framework that draws on poststructural and sociocultural theoretical approaches. We find useful, poststructural understandings of identity as multi-faceted (non-unitary) and developed in the context of power relations (Hall 1996; Weedon 1987). Poststructural theoretical distinctions between identity and role (Weedon 1987; Britzman 1992) also contribute to our analysis. Sociocultural theories usefully highlight the improvisational (Holland et. al 1998), discursive and dialogical (Bakhtin 1981) nature of identity construction. The sociocultural approach also identifies the “openings and impositions” (Holland et al. 1998, 270) that discursive locations present to human agents.

Based on poststructural and sociocultural readings of the teacher narratives at the centre of this study, it is our thesis that minority teachers dialogically infuse mainstream roles with new meanings expressive of their multifaceted identities. Nevertheless, while it is important to look at how minority teachers can bring their own identity positioning to the interpretation of the role of teacher, we also need to look at the ways in which power structures in mainstream institutions exclude or nullify their efforts. Consideration of the interplay of identity and role helps us to discern the ways in which mainstream educational institutions in Canada, and by extension in other national jurisdictions, might change aspects of structure and curriculum to assist individuals of Chinese (and possibly other minority ancestries) in entering the teaching profession and subsequently supporting them in their work.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Role and Identity: Perspectives from teacher education

We are interested not only in how teachers of Chinese ancestry perceive the nature of their work (or roles) relative to their mainstream peers, but also the ways in which they view their identities. Britzman suggests that many teacher education researchers see teacher identity as synonymous with the teacher’s role and function (Feiman-Nemser and Buchman 1985). However Britzman (1992) theorizes that:

Role and function are not synonymous with identity; whereas role can be assigned, the taking up of an identity is a constant social negotiation. One must

not appear to be comparable U.K. studies of teachers of Chinese ancestry. Singh and Dooley (1996) research experiences of student teachers living in Australia who trace their ancestry to India but there appears to be no Australian research on teachers of Chinese ancestry. .

consent to an identity (p.24) ...Role is about function and what one should do, whereas identity voices investments and commitments, or what one feels (p.29).

Britzman's theoretical notions of professional role and identity do not explicitly take account of cultural, racial or linguistic dimensions. In contrast, we are interested in knowing if and how cultural, racial and linguistic experiences figure in the development of professional identities of teachers of Chinese ancestry. In addition, we want to find out from these teachers if and how they are able to draw on linguistic, cultural and racial experiences – which are implicated in their identities – in shaping new definitions of the role of teacher. We are also concerned with the institutional barriers to creating new role definitions, which they may encounter.

Delineating the poststructuralist approach to identity Britzman (1992) explains that conventional notions of identity

...are solely constituted by self-knowledge intuited by experience, [whereas] a poststructuralist approach to identity is concerned with tracing identity as subjected to the constraints of social structure and to practices of discourse while also subject to creative agency (p.26) ...identity always signifies relationship to the other and consequently must be negotiated (p. 27).

While we concur with Britzman's notion of identity as a creative interaction in a variety of institutional settings (i.e. as Bakhtin [1981] would term its dialogical nature), we do not draw as clear a distinction between identity as dialogical and role as an institutional given (or non-dialogical). It is our sense that "role," which Britzman describes as impermeable and prescribed by normative institutional practices and ideologies is, rather, potentially porous; it is open to dialogical transformation. In the following section, further implications of poststructural and sociocultural understandings of identity are explored through consideration of the works of Hall (1996), Holland (1998), and Bakhtin (1981).

IDENTITY, FIGURED WORLDS AND DISCOURSE: PERSPECTIVES FROM POSTSTRUCTURAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

Teachers of Chinese ancestry have participated in diverse social settings and discourses where they report having had varying degrees of power to influence their experiences. This diversity and variability connects to Stuart Hall's (1996) ideas about the dynamic, contested and non-unitary nature of identity.

...Identities [are]...multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions...they are constructed through, not outside difference...they emerge within the play of...power and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the

sign of an identical, unity-an ‘identity’ in its traditional meaning (that is an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation) (p.4).

Teachers of Chinese ancestry will interact in a variety of ways with their respective families, and draw varying resources from their traditions and histories. Hall cautions us that this variability has bearing on discussions of identity in relationship to ethnicity.

Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from,’ so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities ...relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself ...not the so-called return to roots but a coming-to-terms-with our ‘routes’ (p. 4).

Understanding the multiplicity of social settings (e.g. family, teacher education program, classroom and staff room) in which minority ancestry teachers operate and how they become engaged in the process of self-definition (identification) in these settings is facilitated by reference to the idea of “figured worlds” which helps us shift our focus to the microcosms in which culture, society and identities are transacted and away from the larger, harder to discern social and cultural spaces which constitute the world of public education.(Holland 1998) Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) describe figured worlds as:

historical phenomena, to which we are recruited, or into which we enter, which themselves develop through the works of their participants...[and] in which participants’ positions matter. [Moreover, figured worlds] are socially organized and reproduced...and they depend upon...interaction and...inter-subjectivity for perpetuation. The significance (indeed the existence) of cultural worlds in our lives derives...from re-creating them by work with others... (p.41).

Holland et al. elaborate as well on how identities are produced:

The identities we gain within figured worlds are... grown through continued participation in the positions defined by the social organization...[At the same time] figured world...provides a means to conceptualize...agency, persons...forming in practice (p.42). [The idea of figured worlds helps us to see how]...the improvisations that come from the meeting of persons, cultural resources and situations in practice [which used] again and again, can become tools of agency...and change” (p.40).

From this perspective, teachers of Chinese ancestry participate in many figured worlds. In this paper we focus on the world(s) of their families and communities and the world(s) of professional educators.

Each of these worlds, as Bakhtin’s (1981) work clarifies, has its own social language(s) and genres(s) within which operate “authoritative” and “internally persuasive” discourses. Whereas

authoritative discourse, fused with political and institutional power “demands our unconditional allegiance” (p. 343), internally persuasive discourse is creative and productive and is, “tightly interwoven with one’s own words (p. 345)...The figured worlds of family, schools and teacher education are replete with authoritative discourse(s) “...that have great power over us” (Holquist 1981, 424). The development of internally persuasive discourse according to Bakhtin’s ideas about dialogue “... are part of a constant struggle [to insert ones own intentions] and free one’s own discourse from the authoritative word” (Holquist, *ibid.*).

Consideration of Bakhtin’s ideas on authoritative and internally persuasive discourses supported formulation of the following research questions. What is the nature of the authoritative discourse(s) in which Chinese ancestry teachers have engaged with their families, communities, childhood schooling experiences, professional preparation programs and places of work? What internally persuasive discourses do they construct ...at home, as students, as teachers? How do they use the authoritative discourses of family, school and teacher education for their own purposes and insert their own intentionality? How does their involvement in these discourses articulate with their identities?⁴

Our objective in this research is to better understand how teachers of Chinese ancestry perceive the interactions they have in the various figured worlds and discourses in which they participate in the process of becoming and being teachers. How do they negotiate their identities in the figured worlds of family and ethnic community, teacher preparation and in the professional world of teachers? To what extent are they expected to remain silent about their conversations and positions in their communities of ancestry and only converse in the authoritative discourse of mainstream educators? We need to understand these teachers’ perceptions their in order to construct our schools and teacher education programs in ways that will support creativity and agency of future minority ancestry teachers.

⁴ Bakhtin’s idea of “human coming to consciousness... which is a constant struggle between authoritative and internally persuasive discourse” is an idea which we see as parallel to the notion of ‘identity’ as articulated by Hall (see Holquist, Emerson and Holquist, 1981, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, p 424).

METHODOLOGY:

Research team: positions and locations

The research team consisted of three female graduate students one of Chinese, one of Filipino and one of Bulgarian ancestry as well as a female university faculty member of Jewish cultural ancestry. The two women of Asian ancestry conducted the interviews and data analysis was done by three of the research assistants and the faculty member. The two interviewers shared with the interviewees their own personal and professional interest in the research topic stemming from their respective teaching experiences.

Who is represented: The individuals and the group

Teacher education program records were used to identify graduates and an advertisement calling for participants was placed in *The Teacher*, the publication of the B.C. Teachers' Federation distributed to all teachers in the province. In these ways we identified twenty-five teachers (19 women and 6 men) who were individually interviewed and taped in sessions that lasted from one to one and a half hours.

These teachers shared several characteristics and much experience in common. All identified themselves as teachers of Chinese ancestry, the criteria by which they self-selected to participate in this study. All had done their teacher education in Western Canada and were teachers in a public school in the greater Vancouver metropolitan area, albeit across a spectrum of neighbourhoods with varied ethnic/demographic compositions and socioeconomic circumstances. In addition to the above-noted differences there were also differences regarding age, marital status, immigration history (just two of the men and four of the women had immigrated to Canada) age at immigration, countries of origin (China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, the United States and Canada); parental occupations, languages spoken, grade level and subject matter of teaching assignments, and length of teaching career, as well as other differences in individual experiences of a variety of kinds.

The interviews

The in-depth ethnographic interviews (Marshall and Rossman 1995) were guided by a consistent series of open-ended questions on a broad range of topics related to family and language background, career selection and experiences across the continuum of schooling from elementary to post-secondary teacher education. Considerations regarding identity and role took shape in the context of

questions about the figured worlds of professional work and life experiences, which these teachers selected to tell us about in relation to their teaching careers.

While focussing on the central idea of the ways in which identity has an influence on role, it is essential to clarify that not only did each individual have many “identities,” but also there is no single description that adequately conveys the multiplicity of ways in which these teachers’ identities influenced their roles. Identities were constructed within the particular situations and circumstances experienced by these individuals in their families, their own education and their professional work in schools. While we are looking for commonalities we want to avoid “pressing down very hard in the pattern-making process...with results...too much like stereotypes; and yet analysis is impossible without pattern making of some sort” (Casey 1993, 24).

Our analysis of the data accounts for gender differences (Gluck and Patai 1991; Personal Narratives Group 1989). Only where we perceive differences in perceptions apparently related to gender do we make a special note of these differences in the data analysis reported here. In order to attain a measure of objectivity in data analysis the data was analyzed separately by three of the researchers.⁵

Interview Analysis:

The Social Contexts

We analyzed the interview transcripts mindful of highlighting those circumstances and statements that illuminated the relationships of identity and role. We identified the following social contexts where a relationship between identity and role were discernible *and* associated in the teachers’ perceptions with their Chinese ancestry:

1. their own parents’ expectations regarding their careers
2. childhood experiences with school
3. teacher education
4. employment: experiences in securing jobs, job satisfaction
5. use of first language in teaching
6. dealing with racism and discrimination in the classroom and in the staff room

⁵ Each researcher identified salient themes(i.e. social contexts) and the reliability of these was established by cross-checking to verify that researchers made similar selections of exemplary quotations for the respective themes.

Not every interviewee talked about each of the above outlined social contexts. Nevertheless, taking the body of responses collectively these contexts were the most commonly mentioned by respondents as important settings in which their work as teachers took shape. Although the teachers did not consistently relate their experiences chronologically, for the purposes of data analysis and interpretation we have organized these social contexts in a roughly chronological trajectory.

In regard to the first three contexts teachers talked about themselves as relatively powerless to negotiate their activities. In the context of seeking and securing employment teachers begin to see themselves as having some limited influence. It is in interaction with students that they see themselves as most influential. Our analysis of the interview data relating to the early phases of the identity route illustrates that dialogue is primarily shaped by the authoritative discourses of parents and teachers (Bakhtin 1981). As interviewees begin to relate their experiences in securing employment and their interactions with the students in their classes, their narratives illustrate the ways in which they draw on their identities (Hall 1996), improvise (Holland et al. 1998) and insert their own intentions in developing internally persuasive discourse(s) (Bakhtin 1981).

Parents' career expectations

Interviewees had a wide range of experiences with parental expectations. In spite of this range of experience most of the teachers readily articulated awareness of the commonly held stereotype of the Chinese community, namely that its members perceive teaching as neither sufficiently prestigious nor lucrative to consider worth pursuing. For their own part, the interviewees generally saw these stereotypes as consistent with the “grain of truth” theory of stereotypes. Their own specific experiences were as follows. Nearly half felt their parents were neither strongly opposed nor strongly in favour of teaching as a career. Five of the teachers were explicit that in their families a career in teaching was not considered desirable.

Sandra and Sarah respectively articulated their parents' perception of teaching as not particularly desirable. Sandra was born in Vancouver. Her parents immigrated in the 1950s and had made their living variously as farm, restaurant and factory labourers. She described her parent's expectations this way:

My parents said: “Being a teacher is better than working in a bank [as a teller], but is not a desired field to be in...if you were smarter you could have been a doctor. Lawyer, no they hated that...anything that talks, you know deals with confrontations they stay away from (laughs).”

Sarah came to Canada from Taiwan at age 12. Her parents were civil servants. She recalled:

I was never really slated to become a teacher. I knew I had to go to university, because from a Chinese background university was sort of bred in our blood, so I had no choice, I went to University.

Women respondents in particular noted that their parents accepted teaching as a career choice for them only because they had brothers or older female siblings who were pursuing more prestigious careers. A few individuals were pursuing teaching as a second career after being dissatisfied with initial careers (e.g. paralegal and medical technologist, financial services) that more closely met their parents' expectations.

In contrast to the above-outlined perceptions six individuals (two of whom were male) commented on the ways in which their parents encouraged them to pursue careers in which they would find enjoyment and personal satisfaction and that teaching was perceived as offering job stability and reasonable financial rewards. In this group of six, one of the women mentioned that in traditional [Confucian] culture, teaching was viewed as a "noble" profession. Other statements referred to the pride parents had in the interviewees' accomplishments. There were also references to siblings and parents who were teachers.

Recollecting the figured world of their families, the interviewees appeared initially as "the recipients of the acts of others" (Holland 1995, 41). All saw that the wishes and expectations of their parents were an important and powerful factor involved in shaping their career paths. Nevertheless, in a number of instances, through long-term negotiation with parents, they inserted their own intentions into this authoritative parental discourse (Bakhtin 1981) in order to create a place for themselves as teachers.

Childhood experiences with school

A few interviewees related positive childhood experiences in school as the starting point for imagining themselves as teachers even though they seldom encountered teachers of Chinese ancestry when they were students. Wallace emigrated from China as a pre-adolescent. Similar to a number of the males he had positive experiences with school sports and attributed his desire to teach to his admiration for his high school sports coaches who encouraged him to "reach for the stars."⁶ Sandra related her kindergarten experiences as a child growing up in Vancouver's multi-ethnic East Side:

⁶ In her development of a model of teaching in Chinese education based on the understanding of Confucian social norms Manman Han describes three variations: "teacher as master," "teacher as virtuoso performer" and "teacher as coach." Teacher as coach was the only model that allowed a friendly and informal relationship between the teacher and the student outside of the class setting. Inside the class setting formality and deference to authority still defined the relationship (n.d. p.9).

I had a really good experience as a child starting in kindergarten, going through school. I really enjoyed elementary school and I felt that I always looked up to my teachers. And at the time there weren't a lot of visible minorities teaching. Guess that's where I got the idea that this is something that I want to do. I want to be a Chinese person teaching children...that's where I got the idea.

With no Chinese role models and little parental support, as a young child Sandra nevertheless "imagined" herself as a teacher. In the "...specific social setting [of the kindergarten, she began to]...improvise an identity from the cultural resources at hand..." which conformed neither to parental values nor dominant society norms (Holland et al. 1998, 4).

Lynn, the youngest of the interviewees, graduated from secondary school in the late 1980s and had very positive memories of her elementary and high school experiences because of the emphasis they put on multiculturalism in their programs.

We celebrated different cultures a lot; we had multicultural nights...it was just incredible. In high school we had a cabaret night...we auditioned kids from different cultures. Singing, dancing, instrumental acts...I saw how rewarding it was for these people to perform for others...their pride was just incredible...I experienced that [pride] vicariously.

This handful of positive experiences contrasts with accounts that many interviewees narrated of their day-to-day childhood experiences of racism. Both Maureen and Joy related racist school experiences, which each respectively felt had had an influence on their perceptions of their work as teachers. These perceptions about their own approaches to teaching will be discussed later in the paper in the section that focuses on how the teachers deal with racism and discrimination.

Maureen grew up on Vancouver's multi-ethnic East Side.⁷ Her parents spoke mostly Toisan at home and she continues to speak this dialect. She recalled that in kindergarten she was so shy she hardly said a word and consistently throughout her childhood in the sixties she experienced racism.

All the time...in elementary school we were called "chinks" or "Chinaman" and that really hurt. I remember it was so painful...you knew that people hated you because you were Chinese...I remember there was a time when I hated being Chinese because of that. I didn't want to be Chinese. I didn't want to be associated with Chinese...those feelings come back to me once in a while ...when [I] go somewhere and there are still people around that call you names.

⁷ The city of Vancouver is bisected north/south by Main street. This division was established in the early days of the city by the Canadian Pacific Railway. The West Side was developed as residential lots for managers and the wealthy, the East Side, with smaller building lots and more economical housing for railway employees. Vancouver's Chinatown is on the East Side. The East Side has traditionally been the site of first residence for immigrant minorities especially labourers, small shop owners and non-professionals. Recent Chinese immigration from Hong Kong and Taiwan has been predominantly of Professionals and entrepreneurs and is focussed more on the wealthier West Side of the city.

Like Maureen, Joy too recollected experiences of racism in school. She grew up in a small rural town in Ontario where her family was the only one of Chinese ancestry. Her older sister only spoke Toisan when she went to school and had to repeat grade one. Joy spoke English but was nevertheless made to feel conspicuous. She narrated an episode about a teacher who she felt was “racist, she didn’t like me and she picked on me.”

In grade one my teacher was reading this story...about a little black boy. She made me stand up in front of the class to represent the black boy in the book. It’s pretty pathetic...I just remember feeling so humiliated. All the kids were laughing and pointing to my skin. It was in the fall and I got so, so dark being little, running around and swimming all the time...after that I hated getting a tan and always stayed in the shade.

In a later section we will consider in greater detail how like Maureen, Joy saw this early incident informing her own approach to teaching. For both women these negative experiences provided the context from which they would insert their own intentions and creatively build positive and empathetic experiences for children in the classrooms in which they teach.

TEACHER EDUCATION

University seminars

Teacher education took place in the settings of the university classroom or seminar and the school based practicum. Seven of the interviewees, who were either recent graduates or had fewer than seven years of teaching experience, related that multiculturalism and anti-racism was included in some way in the university-based segment of their teacher education programs. A number of these individuals were in cohorts where special attention was given to multicultural and anti-racist education and there were structured opportunities to share aspects of family background with other student teachers. Lucy felt this sharing was positive:

Talking about my family background made me...feel included...for years I fought it and I wasn’t proud to be Chinese.

Lynn recalled a seminar focussing on the use of first languages in the classroom. She described a discussion with a fellow student teacher who spoke Hindi:

She (the Hindi speaker) had the same experience (that I did). She had an ESL student who couldn’t speak very much English and she had to translate. Her work with him was a most rewarding experience...She (as I did) established a special bond with that child. The university teachers saw it as a valuable thing; as well it was seen as valuable within the school community.

On the negative side, Sean, who has been a teacher for six years, felt that in his teacher education multiculturalism was dealt with in a “token” way that did not provide opportunities to explore issues of identity, which he perceived as important in his education.

I wanted discussions of how to improve a students’ self esteem ... how to be proud of their ethnic origin...and how to deal with ethnic identity crisis...and a lot of it was just...this is Chinese New Year...it was very superficial...the professors (I think) were just assigned to these courses but didn’t have the expertise.

The majority of teachers reported that issues of race language and culture were never addressed in the on campus segments of their teacher education programs.

Practica

“... as a student teacher you have no power” (Trish, recent graduate)

As in the case of their university-based teacher education experiences, interviewees described a range of practicum experiences regarding cultural, linguistic and racial diversity. Only one-third of the teachers had done their practica in multi-racial schools and these tended to be the beginning teachers.⁸ In only a few of the schools that were linguistically, culturally or racially diverse did the principal or staff acknowledge the importance of curriculum approaches and a school climate that was inclusive of diversity. In their descriptions of the figured worlds of practicum placements interviewees saw few opportunities to improvise or insert their own intentions into the discourse. Lynn, a beginning teacher, had an exceptional experience. She perceived that the school staff was appreciative of many kinds of diversity and she saw this openness as the basis of their support for cultural diversity.

My (second) practicum school (in contrast to my first) was very inviting...We had very eccentric, and very different and fun personalities. And because of that they were very willing...Once when we were having a holiday we really got into it...we had cultural foods...multicultural dinner nights with all the community involved. The principal was really into different cultures...There were a few times when teachers (from other classes) came to me and asked me to help translate for an ESL student who spoke Cantonese...but they never made me feel self-conscious.

By contrast, Joy, who had been teaching for three years, witnessed overt discrimination against ESL students in her practicum.

⁸ In part this is reflection of the fact that in recent immigration and settlement patterns families’ initial communities of settlement include suburbs. This is in contrast to the more traditional pattern of settlement in urban centres. In part this also reflects that these student teachers were in a teacher education module focussing on multiculturalism and anti-racism in which special efforts were made to secure practicum placements in multiethnic schools.

I saw a lot of things [in that school] that really excluded my ESL students. The other classroom teachers did not want the ESL students involved in certain activities, like using the computer lab, because it was just too much work for them to try to explain it at the [students'] level. And they just told us "Just keep those ESL students down in your classroom, just keep them there." We were the only class down in the basement, and we never received notices. It was just constant; it was like they weren't even a part of the school.

Occupying the relatively powerless position of student teacher, Joy felt there was not much she could do to change this situation. However, she did feel strongly enough to report it to her university practicum supervisor.

Where Joy and Lynn respectively had explicitly positive or negative practicum experiences in regard to the ways in which race, language and culture were involved in classroom settings, Sandra, who has been teaching for ten years, perceived her practicum classroom as an implicitly null environment in relation to her own race, language and culture. She perceived that the absence of minority students in her practicum classroom meant an absence of recognition of her identity.

In my practicum my race, language and culture didn't play any role. I was placed in classes where there was not one Asian child so...other than that they saw me as an Asian teacher, it didn't play much of a role at all. Because simply I was told this was what you have to teach, this is how you are...how we want you to teach, and that's about it.

In her own estimation, as with most of the interviewed teachers, Sandra made no attempts to question normative practice and the authoritative discourse in the figured world of teacher education (most particularly the practicum) or to improvise in ways that noticeably drew on her race, language or cultural identity. She (and others with similar experiences) attributed her inability to creatively draw on her experiences to shape her interactions to their disempowered positions in the figured world of the practicum classroom.

Employment Status and Job Satisfaction

At the time of the interview, fourteen of the teachers in this study were employed and eleven, who had recently completed their teacher education programs, were seeking or already involved in full-time work as teachers on call.⁹ In total, half of those employed had positions that were full-time ESL or had a part-time ESL component.¹⁰ In addition to ESL, interviewees held a variety of positions.

⁹ In the Greater Vancouver districts in which these teachers were seeking employment it is common for new graduates to work as teachers on call (TOC) for anywhere from one to three years before securing a full-time contract. In a few of these districts securing TOC work is very difficult because status as a TOC is a position with contractual implications for being a full-time district employee.

¹⁰ This number seems high to us relative to the population of teachers overall. However, we know from our first-hand experience working in teacher education that many beginning teachers from mainstream as well as

Table 1 provides an overview of the employment status of the 25 respondents at the time of their interview. Positions at the secondary school level included: English literature and composition, history, science and mathematics, and home economics. At the elementary level there were five teachers who were involved in full or part time ESL teaching, two enrolling teachers with no designated ESL responsibilities, a primary French immersion teacher, a counsellor, and two administrators.¹¹

Table 1: Teachers of Chinese Ancestry: Summary of Employment

<u>YEARS IN TEACHING</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>	<u>POSITIONS</u>	<u>SPECIALTIES</u>
BEGINNING				
less than 1 year	3	8	TOC'S: 5 TOC APPLICANTS: 6	
1 to 5	1	4	2 Secondary 1 Intermediate enrolling 2 Elementary ESL	1 ESL 1 English 1 Learning assistant 1 counselling
6 to 10	2	5	3 Primary enrolling 2 Elementary ESL 2 Secondary(includes ESL)	1 French immersion Home Ec Math
11 and up	2		1 Secondary (with ESL) 1 Elementary enrolling	Mandarin
TOTALS	8	17		

minority backgrounds are taking courses in ESL because it is considered a valuable qualification in the current job market in a region that is one of the three largest centres for immigration in Canada.

¹¹ The term “enrolling teacher” is used to designate elementary school teachers who have their own classrooms and teach the full range of subjects; these classes may enroll some ESL students. An ESL teacher on the other hand works exclusively with students designated (across a full range of grade levels) as requiring assistance with English language acquisition. In most districts the ESL teacher works with students on a “pull-out” basis

Those individuals not teaching ESL consistently talked about their pride in being successful in positions that were different from the commonly held stereotypes of math and science for men and ESL for women. A number of these individuals worked within the conventional curriculum and did not identify possibilities for reshaping this curriculum to bring in cultural knowledge related to their Chinese ancestry. Especially notable were two secondary English teachers who did not learn English until they were in their early teens.

In spite of the above-noted exceptions, eighty percent of all the interviewees (elementary and secondary) had taken courses in ESL. Several in the group of experienced teachers recounted that the need for ESL teachers and their ESL training, combined in a few instances with their knowledge of one or more Chinese dialects, had helped them in securing employment. Many of those who were just beginning their job search felt that preparation to teach ESL would be an asset in the current job market.

Job satisfaction

Among the group of 14 experienced teachers most expressed satisfaction with their jobs. Among those with more than ten years of teaching experience (all women) there was concern expressed about limited opportunities for promotion to senior positions and the women saw this as a function of race and gender. Most in the group of teachers whose jobs were either full-time ESL or included an ESL component were satisfied with their work. They expressed a shared perception that immigration opened up job possibilities for which they were, because of their ESL training and cultural background, advantageously positioned. Many of these individuals felt that their level of fluency in Cantonese (or another dialect) was insufficient to be an asset in their jobs. Those who did consider themselves fluent made clear to prospective employers that they possessed what they felt was a valuable skill.

Professional identity as an ESL teacher was rewarding or problematic in varying degrees to different individuals. Jane had been teaching for 18 years and recounted herself as one of the few formally trained ESL teachers at the time she was hired. She reminisced about her initial work with a group of Punjabi speakers:

I really fell in love with the job...Right from the beginning I acted as an advocate for my students...I was a very well known ESL teacher...I started the first program in a secondary school [in her district].

where the students leave, for some period, classrooms with their enrolling teachers to participate in ESL instruction.

From her position as an ESL teacher with a strong academic background in language teaching, Jane continued to be creative in a system that presented her with few opportunities for career advancement. She refers to her family and childhood and credits her father with insisting that she maintain her conversational Chinese language skills as well as gain academic qualifications in Chinese language. The figured world of her family and several trips to China provided her with a strong foundation for the Chinese language program that she now teaches to students from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In contrast to Jane, Sandra (who began teaching 10 years ago) experienced the position of ESL teacher as more restrictive. Sandra has worked as an ESL teacher at schools in a wide range of socioeconomic sectors of her district, and has also held a position in a teachers' professional association for several years. In the sociocultural context of a competitive job market in a city with a very high number of ESL students, a majority of whom are of Chinese ancestry, Sandra was clear about her identity as a teacher of Chinese ancestry. She actively identified her knowledge of Cantonese and the courses in ESL that she selected while in teacher education.

I think that one of the things that really helped (in securing a job) was the (academic) concentration in ESL, and having another language...and the School Board was experiencing an onslaught of immigration. They were getting an asset by having someone trained in ESL and someone that spoke another language and understood another culture.

For Sandra the practicum setting (as related in the previous section) offered no opportunities to draw upon her identity, but in a new set of circumstances in her first job she saw a way to insert her intentions (Bakhtin 1981). Then after several years of working in the figured world of ESL, she began to experience it as limiting her opportunities for improvisation. She described the limitations in her comments on being an ESL teacher:

But then there is a negative aspect that they see you as an ESL teacher for life and I would like to teach other things...On the one hand it's an asset...on the other hand it's a stereotype. I think they should open it up a lot more.

Individuals in the group of 11 who were recent graduates at the time of the interview cited their academic preparation to teach ESL as part of their qualifications.¹² Whether they will, over the course of their careers, experience this as an opening or an imposition (Holland et al.1998, 271) or unique blends of the two, remains to be seen.

¹² Informal contact with some members of this group indicates that they are working either as enrolling teachers with some ESL responsibilities or as full-time ESL teachers. How they perceive their experiences in securing employment and in their early years of teaching is the subject of a follow up study which will begin in the next year.

Use of first languages

While a substantial number of the interviewees had ESL qualifications, only a very small number felt their skills in Chinese dialects were sufficiently developed to be useful in communicating with parents and students for whom a dialect(s) of Chinese was a first language. Several of the teachers who had spoken Chinese as children felt they no longer had that ability but encouraged their students to maintain the language. In their interactions with their students they drew on their own experience of language learning and loss and the ways it was interconnected with their identities. These experiences became the basis for connecting with the students on the basis of their linguistic, cultural and racial experiences and identities.

Joy recounted that her language loss was connected to being a minority in a predominantly Anglo town. On the basis of this experience she hoped that her ESL students in a Vancouver suburb with many Cantonese speakers would be able to maintain their first language(s):

We spoke Toisan at home, but once I started school, I stopped speaking Chinese at school. I just spoke English because I didn't want to be different from anyone else. It was hard enough to look different and to be constantly discriminated against...Being an ESL teacher I see young Asian students learning English and some of them will not speak their native language any more. I say to them, "No, that's wrong. You want to learn English, great! Don't forget your Chinese as well."

Lucy described the difficulties she faced as a young Cantonese child immersed in an English language classroom, as well as the kind [Anglo] teachers who took special care and extra time to help her. She also described how her family setting helped her to maintain her Chinese language, which turned out to be a significant resource throughout her teaching career. This mixture of experiences in home and school served as a basis for devising creative and supportive ways to help Cantonese immigrant families and their children.

When I was younger my grandfather would subscribe to Chinese newspapers and I would sit there and read with him and I was [also] going to Chinese school. In high school and university I didn't live with my grandfather any more...so I stopped all that ...throughout my practicum and high school I never thought of using Chinese and I didn't. But then when I started my first job (and needed to communicate with Chinese speaking parents) somebody said, "You've got Chinese...well use it."

Lucy's ability to communicate with Cantonese parents was an asset to other staff members if, for example, a sick child needed to be taken home.

The teachers here would just call me and say, "Could you phone home?" If I wasn't here they would have to phone the home school worker, who may or may

not be available...they might be available in two days. So I can give immediate service [to have a family member come and pick up their sick child].

Lucy also used her language skills to help the students themselves with emotional or physical needs. She gave the example of a child who didn't feel well but couldn't or didn't feel confident to express this in English.

All the child can do is cry. But if I talk to them in Chinese at least I can say, "Is it your tummy or is it your head?" Then they can lie down or I can call their mom...in a way that gives them the security and the comfort [that they need].

Finally, Lucy used her Cantonese language to help students to understand the curriculum and to assist them in their acquisition of English. Working in a team teaching arrangement she and a teacher from another primary class exercised creativity in designing the following approach to language arts lessons. They jointly introduced the lesson to their combined classes. Then when it was time for the children to do their own work Lucy met with a group of children from both classes who spoke only Cantonese. Meanwhile the other teacher supervised the rest of the children.

I would re-read the story in English. Then we would talk about it in Chinese...so then they understood what the story was about. Then I would help them with the [English] vocabulary, by explaining in Chinese what the word[s] mean. I would tell them in Chinese the task they needed to do. Then they would go and try to work on it in English. So I do use my Chinese a lot to help these kids.

Rather than following the conventional institutional approach of immersing the children in English and providing no interpretation, Lucy and her colleague challenged prevailing classroom practice and devised a way of working with the children that built on Lucy's unique skills. Lucy saw her approach as very much within a progressive mainstream philosophy, which she described as "helping the children to learn how to learn," a role she felt she played (in different ways) for all her students. Thus, at the same time that she was challenging more conservative aspects of contemporary language instruction she was creatively bringing in both her progressive educational approach and unique skills rooted in her Chinese ancestry.

DEALING WITH RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

In the Classroom

In this section we will focus on what many of the teachers spoke of as "safety issues" encountered by students of minority (racial) ancestry. These issues are related to racism, prejudice and discrimination in the classrooms and schools in which they teach. The teachers explained that the fact that students identified with them provided a foundation; building on the identification they often drew on their own childhood experiences of racism in approaching this area. Sarah explained it this way:

ESL students gravitate to teachers who have some sort of similar background and experience. I think they feel more secure. Some students see me as less dangerous or intimidating because I am Chinese and the school I teach in has a heavily Oriental population.

In representing this complex area, their ideas illustrated many facets of the theoretical literature on identity (Hall 1996), dialogue (Bakhtin 1981) and improvisation (Holland et al.1998). In many school contexts where there is no formal multicultural/anti-racist curriculum these teachers experiences became the basis for improvising a script for conversations about racism with their students. Bakhtin's ideas about conversations occurring among people sharing a social language and creating meanings through their shared social language appear helpful to us in understanding the importance that Gwen put on the students "hearing the words" about her experiences with discrimination. She emphasized the importance of calling attention to her identity and that "words" were a way to do this.

I have talked about the issues at various times and I have felt that the students feel I'm credible because I myself am a visible minority and I'm not afraid to talk about my own experiences. I am a visible minority, although they can see that, they need to hear that, to hear the words. I think that makes them feel so comfortable that they can open up and talk about their real feelings.

Gwen's intentionality or voice (Bakhtin 1981) is expressed through these "words." Her use of these words seems to us to illustrate Holland et al.'s (1995) idea of a creative act (of teaching) drawn from one figured world (her identification with her childhood as a racial minority) and woven into a different figured world, the mainstream school, which has few concrete and explicit ways of acknowledging either her experiences of racism or those of her students.

Sarah initiated her explanation of how she deals with racism in the classroom by narrating the following "dialogue" which she had with her ESL students. This dialogue, like Gwen's "words," also illustrates Bakhtin's ideas about the conversations that can occur when speakers are sharing a social language. Sarah is concerned that many of her ESL students complain about white kids but don't easily examine their own attitudes. She articulates the dialogue in the following way:

[Students]:The Canadian boys and girls, they don't like us...they stuff garbage in our lockers.

[Sarah] : Well how well do you like them? Who do you think is the best culture?

[Students]: Well of course our own (Chinese) culture is the best and everyone else is not so good.

[Sarah]: With this kind of attitude, how do you expect other people to like you? Of course everyone is going to think they are the best in the world...so if you understand you are Chinese and you are valuable...you must give the same consideration to every one else.

In elaborating on her approach to dealing with racism in the classroom, we can see how Sarah drew on the figured worlds of her Chinese upbringing and of university counsellor preparation, illustrating in the process Hall's (1996) notion that "identities are multiply constructed... across different discourses"(p. 4):

I've always tried to marry the West with the Eastern tradition...I invoke some of the teachings of Confucius, that you should respect your parents, respect your neighbours.

Sarah then referenced western counselling:

We should always take time to understand where the other person is coming from, before you put up your dukes. I emphasize the fact that because people do different things, wear different things...believe in different things, doesn't mean they're wrong, they're different from you.

She then articulated a creative synthesis:

When you see all the manifestations of the human spirit, it's cause for you to celebrate that you are part of the human race...instead of looking for the differences and making trouble out of that.

In the conclusion to this narrative about dealing with racism in the classroom, which follows below, Sarah goes back to her own sense of identity and exemplifies Hall's idea that identity related to race or ethnicity is not necessarily the "so-called return to roots but a coming to terms with our 'routes'." As a teacher of Chinese ancestry dealing with racism in the classroom, Sarah draws upon her minority identity but she doesn't just return to her experiences and restate them. Rather she uses them as a basis for building her understanding. She explains her view of racism and her perspective on the conversations she has with her students:

I think because I'm Chinese I'm able to (talk to my students in this way about racism), because I've been the butt of many racist remarks, growing up in Canada, however, now I have the understanding that racism is not 'out there,' racism is endemic in every person.

Sarah's statement about racism and identity for us references Hall's notions about identity(ies) and the multiple routes that individuals take. Her statement illustrates that she is taking the 'route' of the professional educator/counsellor, and drawing on her experiences as a minority.

In Interactions with Colleagues, and Advocacy

From novice to expert, all interviewees found that interactions with colleagues regarding issues of race, language and culture could be problematic. One interviewee recounted the ways in which colleagues positive attitudes toward her role, status and position as an ESL teacher changed over the years. Early in her career her ESL students were from diverse linguistic and cultural groups. She

recounted that her colleagues valued her as an advocate for all of these students. In more recent years, reflecting changes in immigration to her district, her students have been primarily of Chinese ancestry. She observed the reaction of some of her colleagues:

One thing that made it uncomfortable for some of my colleagues was that the students and parents gravitated towards me because of the language barrier. I was the only person who could communicate with them...and the administration asked me for my help. I gladly provided the extra time thinking that I was really helping people...but some (of my colleagues) didn't see it as positive. It was easier for me to effect changes in the days when Chinese were the minority, but with massive immigration all of a sudden, I'm no longer one of the teachers, I'm "one of them" (the immigrants).

In contrast to the subtle racism illustrated in the above narrative, teachers also recounted witnessing overt examples of racism in the staff room. One of the men recounted that when he was a first-year teacher on call a colleague told a racist joke about First Nations people.

I didn't say anything about it. It was one of those things that...I thought I should have said something. But I was a new teacher...I didn't have my contract. The principal laughed too...the principal sets the tone for the school.

Some years later, however, a new principal was appointed.

One of the first things she said was 'I don't accept racism in my school' and made it clear.

In his concluding comments about interactions with colleagues this elementary school teacher offered the following analysis:

Now in your (own) classroom, you have more power, you have more influence because these are your students. When you are dealing with adults you are dealing with equals. You have to be more careful about what you say. Each classroom is like a kingdom and kings and queens do not always get along. You have to be very careful and diplomatic with each one.

Elaborating on the theme of diplomacy an administrator in the study said she would take action regarding racism among staff but not risk undermining collegiality. This administrator illustrated her philosophy with the following example in which she contrasted her approach with children to her approach with adults:

Sometimes with kids you can just come right out and tell them this (racist behaviour) is not appropriate...But (with) the adults it's very, very sensitive. I know some people come right out and say, "That's racist, don't do that." I know I can't do that unless it is directed at me. If there is something racist written on the board I would just erase it. There was a picture of somebody on the wall and I saw a comment there that I thought was not appropriate so I just said to one of the teachers, "Oh could you please just erase that? I wouldn't want the parents to see that," and I just left it at that. I think they got the message. If I heard something in a restaurant that I never had to go back to I would say something

more direct. But in a working environment where you know you are going to be working with these people everyday, the relationship is important, I would do it in a more passive way with a note or a reminder (to) parents.

The contrast between ways of dealing with racism among colleagues and among kids (described in the previous section) will be considered further in the discussion that follows.

DISCUSSION

Holland et al. (1998) theorize that it is understanding “identity in practice” that helps us to see how identity takes shape in, and is shaped by “figured worlds” in which we “send messages (to ourselves and others). [Sometimes] these messages are... in collaboration with others [but sometimes] they are in opposition to and distance us from others” (p. 271). Thus placement or “positionality” is linked to issues of power and status. In these social spaces we become authors as we select from discourses we are positioned in order to craft a response (and develop a “voice”). These crafted responses are authoring acts of human agency, but they are not autonomous acts of individualism divorced from the social milieu in which they occur. In the social milieu there are “openings and impositions” and these mutually constituted settings and “authorings”(Bakhtin 1981) are the context for “co-development” of new figured worlds, or social change (Holland et al. 1998, 271).

The authoring voices of the teachers in this research recount a series of interactions within the figured worlds with which they are involved. These interactions start in the family where there is ambiguity regarding teaching as a professional choice. They then enter teacher education and employment in the mainstream system of public education with few actors who are conversant with or represent the figured world of their cultural ancestry. In all these cases from childhood through to employment as teachers, we see more impositions than openings for developing images of oneself as a teacher that encompass cultural ancestry. Nevertheless, in spite of these impasses in the home and in the school, through creative acts of imagination and agency individual young people of Chinese ancestry do trace a ‘route’ that establishes them as legitimate professional participants in the world of the public school. For many, the mainstream authorized position of ESL teacher is an opening to the figured world of mainstream schooling. For some, like Jean, this is a dynamic space from which to converse with students and colleagues. For others, like Sandra, after a time this opening becomes an imposition on their authoring voices (Bakhtin 1981) and the sense of agency, which is so vital a part of how they have shaped their identity, is constrained.

How do teachers create openings when their institutionally prescribed role appears to them to stifle creativity? The classroom setting seems to offer some space for identity to insinuate itself and to begin to” blur “the edges of role. We borrow the metaphor of “blurring” from Gwen’s narrative :

I find that because I myself am a visible minority, I bring a lot of my personal experiences into my teaching and because I choose to teach ESL students too, they're *blurry* (italics ours) the lines between those positions. It becomes very difficult for me personally to try to segregate the fact that I am a visible minority, that I am very aware of my personal culture. It becomes very difficult to separate that from being a teacher and I don't think you can, so I think I have a great advantage. Because I know so much about my own culture, and then of course that lends itself to a greater sensitivity, hopefully to all other cultures as well.

Gwen elaborated on this "blurriness" when she spoke about the content-oriented nature of teaching in a high school.

I find again that there's very blurred lines between my personal life and what I do in the classroom, because I think it should permeate throughout...Although I am in a high school where the emphasis is very content-focussed, I see my role extending far beyond content. I see myself more in a role of a teacher for life skills, for social skills.

The "permeation" that Gwen speaks about reminds us of the point from which we started: that roles can be "porous" and subject to influences of identity. Sandra, on the other hand, was concerned that the role of an ESL teacher was limiting ("not porous") and did not in her perspective allow permeation into a wider arena. We understand her concern. We see, as Sandra does, that one of the limitations of this role is that it prevents opportunities for dialogue between these teachers and mainstream students.

Viewed from the poststructural and sociocultural theoretical perspective we have outlined, we wonder how students (minority or mainstream) who don't interact with a teacher like Gwen will come to learn the valuable personal/professional knowledge in which teachers of minority ancestry could engage them. We see these teachers as potentially key figures in facilitating dialogues not only between themselves and mainstream students but among mainstream and minority students as well. Development of discourse and a dialect that links students from varied backgrounds is, we think, at the heart of a vital multicultural anti-racist curriculum and we see minority teachers working with each other, with mainstream colleagues and minority and mainstream students as key agents in this curriculum development process. Certainly teacher education would benefit from having more student teachers conversant with experiences of racial minorities in Canadian society.

For these reasons we are also concerned that not many interviewees were consistently or comprehensively in teacher education programs that dealt with anti-racism or multiculturalism. Because these teachers of minority ancestry are so few, they are not often in situations where they might join up with other minority colleagues to undertake collective action. Because their mainstream colleagues are often not fluent in speaking about racism and have possibly had little or not conversation on this topic in their teacher education, these teachers of Chinese ancestry have found it

difficult to initiate conversations with their mainstream colleagues except on an *ad hoc* basis as events arise. Even then these individuals tend to be non-confrontational; they carefully assess the potential value of overtly tackling their colleagues discourse and weigh it against the possible damage it may do to other aspects of their relationships with co-workers.

The most vibrant and powerful examples in the teachers' narratives describe how their own childhood experiences with discrimination, these classroom "revelations of identity" gave authenticity to their efforts to dialogue with their own students about the moral and practical importance of eliminating racism and treating one another with respect. Our interpretation of the stories we heard about their authoring voices was that it was their own classroom (rather than their families, teacher education programs or the staff room) that provided the best social landscape for developing these authoring voices.

Casey (1993) and the Personal Narratives Group (1989) both remind us of the importance of seeing potential for educational change not just in major policy directives from official leaders at the helm of bureaucracies or in authoritative narratives of institution and society. In the positions of child, student, new teacher seeking employment, and as authorized teacher, the imaginative acts of these individuals in concert with and counter-distinction to others (parents, teachers, colleagues, students) illustrated the notion that their actions were "political." They were strategically taken and shaped with a view to creating what they perceived to be desirable outcomes for themselves and or their students. Consistent with Holland's notion of creativity, improvisation and agency in figured worlds, we have seen the openings for personal/political action that individuals perceive within these authoritative discourses; how they navigate both the structures and the prescribed roles and infuse these with their own definitions, and thus build their internally persuasive discourse (Bakhtin 1981).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The notion of "role" modeling is often discussed in the literature on women, minorities and employment as a key factor in increasing the numbers of minorities in teaching. The consideration in this paper of the complexity of identity (Hall 1996), how persons come to imagine themselves in particular identities (Holland 1998) and how interaction and discourse constitute the medium in which this imagining occurs (Bakhtin 1981) give us some new ways of looking at how "modeling" works and the special position that minority teachers can hold in "identity" modeling for minority youth.

June Gordon's (2000) U.S. study of teachers of colour addresses the reasons for the few numbers of minority teachers from a variety of ethnocultural and racial groups. Gordon theorizes that we must look not only at institutional barriers but also at community influences to explain the poor

representation. Her interview data with teachers of Asian ancestry indicated that, “Negative attitudes toward the teaching profession as held by parents was the number one factor given for Asian American students not choosing teaching”(p. 61). Enhancing the status of the profession, role models and communication with parents were all suggested as ways of addressing this issue. Similar findings and recommendations regarding minority teachers who trace their ancestry to the Indian subcontinent have been made in Canadian and British settings respectively (Beynon, Toohey and Kishor 1992; Beynon and Toohey 1995; Beynon, Toohey and Kishor 1998; Hirji and Beynon, 2000; Osler,1999).

The idea that professional status of teaching, minority models and communication with parents are interconnected and that the connections provided a key to the puzzle of how to recruit more minorities into teaching was also articulated by one of the teachers in the present study who has recently been appointed as a principal. From the vantage point of this “authorized position,” she helps us to discern how the way in which she has chosen to shape her relationships with parents and grandparents, as well as children of Chinese ancestry, might bring about possibilities for change in this area:

The Chinese *parents* can look at me and say: ‘Oh, there’s somebody I can go talk to directly without thinking that I can’t speak English.’ Without having to explain the whole culture to me I know what they are trying to say to me. They say: ‘Well you are Chinese, you know how it is.’ And I say: ‘Yes I do.’ So there’s that cultural connection.

I know the *grandmothers* here. Every time they see me they say: ‘Oh, we are so proud to have a Chinese principal here, and you can speak Chinese.’

And the *kids*, the first time one little boy heard me speak Chinese he said: ‘You speak Chinese,’ and I said, ‘That’s right’ and he says, ‘Me too.’ And I said, ‘Oh good!’ And then it becomes a special bond I have with these kids and they always come to me and say hi.

After narrating these experiences in which she had selected to actively employ aspects of her Chinese heritage this principal concluded her interview by sharing her vision of a future with increased numbers of educators of Chinese ancestry.

I hope they [kids] are proud that I am where I am and even though I’m the first Chinese teacher or principal that they’ve seen they can say “Hey, I can be there too.” So I am hoping that’s what they are thinking.

Her hopes, as well as the narratives of other teachers in this study echo Holland et al.’s (1998) vision that “It is not impossible for people to figure and remake the conditions of their lives “ (p. 45). Our analysis bears this out. However we are concerned that Holland’s framework, while focusing on the individual, does not adequately account for how individual agency might become part of collective advocacy. Speeding up this process, we believe, requires bringing more minority speakers

into the dialogue. In addition to the outreach and recruitment needed to bring under-represented minorities into the teaching profession, we are concerned about the nature of minority student experiences with their mainstream and minority peers once they are engaged in the discourse/figured world of teacher education .

Of all the social contexts analyzed in this study, it is in the social spaces of childhood and teacher education, especially the practicum, that actors are the most vulnerable and have the least power to effect change. As full-fledged professionals they have considerable influence in their own classrooms but seem to be considerably less forthright with colleagues .How can teacher educators, teachers and employers work to break the self-perpetuating cycle of low representation of teachers of Chinese ancestry? We refer back to the experiences of teachers such as Lynn who are just starting out and veterans like the principal quoted earlier in this section. Across 20 years of difference in age and professional experience there is a hopeful element in both their voices. The data from the teachers interviewed here, viewed from the poststructural theoretical perspective articulated by Holland and others, gives us hope that more occasions when young people of Chinese ancestry are valued and acknowledged for their ancestry, language and cultural biographies would provide a foundation on which to creatively move into mainstream institutions.

In the process of moving into these institutions, with the support of sponsor teachers, colleagues and administrators, they could begin to create changes in the way Chinese language is used in the classroom, how ESL students are positioned as learners in the school and how racism and discrimination are countered in classrooms and (possibly) in staff rooms. The curriculum of teacher education, both content and pedagogy, needs to place a high priority on dealing explicitly with issues of race, language and culture in order to affirm the diverse backgrounds of future teachers – pedagogical strategies which include the valorization and creation of a safe environment for all. We know that in most teacher-education institutions with which we are familiar efforts in this regard are encapsulated in specialized programs, not reaching all students, or as Sean pointed out in his reflections about his experiences in teacher education, they do not focus on relevant concerns of identity and self esteem.

Teacher educators from their positions in mainstream institutions need to work collaboratively with their minority colleagues in the schools, to improvise and “co-develop” (Holland 1998, 33) ways of recruiting minorities into teaching. We need to cease constructing education as an either/or process in which sacrificing cultural and linguistic identities is the cost of getting an education. We need to advertise that we value the diverse knowledge and experiences of prospective teachers and then follow through by building these into our pedagogy. We admire the creativity of the

individual teachers in the present research, however it seems to us inequitable to expect them to singularly carry the responsibility for wide-scale institutional change. Perhaps when there are more teachers of diverse ancestry in the profession to support one another, discussions of racism and discrimination in the staff room may become as open as this discussion is in some classrooms.

References

- Beynon, J., L. Toohey, and N. Kishor. 1992. Do visible minorities in British Columbia want teaching as a career? *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 24 (3): 145-66.
- Beynon, J., and K. Toohey. 1995. Access and aspirations: Careers in teaching as seen by Canadian University students of Chinese and Punjabi-Sikh ancestry. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 41(4): 434-58.
- Beynon, J., K. Toohey, and N. Kishor. 1998. Do visible minority students of Chinese and South Asian ancestry want teaching as a career?: Perceptions of some secondary school students in Vancouver, B.C. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 30 (2): 50-72.
- Bakhtin, M. M. 1981. *The dialogic imagination.: Four essays by M.M. Bakhtin.* Ed. M. Holquist, Trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Britzman, D. 1992. The terrible problem of knowing thyself: Toward a poststructural account of teacher identity. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 9 (3): 23-46.
- Casey, K. 1993. *I answer with my life: Life histories of women working for social change.* New York: Routledge.
- Feiman-Nemser, S. and M. Buchman. 1985. Pitfalls of experience in teacher preparation. *Teachers College Record* 57: 53-66.
- Ghuman, P. A. 1995. *Asian teachers in British schools: A study of two generations.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Gibson, M. A., and J. Ogbu. 1991. *Minority status and schooling: A comparative study of immigrant and involuntary minorities.* New York: Garland Publishing.
- Giese, D. 1997. *Astronauts, lost souls and dragons: Voices of today's Chinese-Australians.* Queensland: University of Queensland Press.
- Gluck, S., and D. Patai. 1991. *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history.* New York: Routledge
- Gordon, J. 2000. *The color of teaching.* New York: Routledge.
- Hall, S. 1996. Introduction: Who needs 'identity'? In *Questions of cultural identity*, ed S. Hall and P. Du Gay. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Han, Manman, n.d. .Toward a Chinese model of teaching in Chinese education. Vancouver: Unpublished manuscript.
- Hirji, S., and J. Beynon. 2000. Teachers of Punjabi-Sikh Ancestry: Their perceptions of their roles in the British Columbia education system. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 46 (3): 250-66.
- Holland, D. W. Lachicotte, D. Skinner, and C. Cain. 1998. *Identity and agency in cultural worlds.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Holquist, M. 1981. Glossary. In *The dialogic imagination.: Four essays by M.M. Bakhtin.* Ed. M. Holquist, Trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Jacob, E., and C. Jordan. 1993. *Minority education: Anthropological perspectives.* New Jersey: Ablex.

- Leong, F.T., ed. 1995. *Career development and vocational behavior of racial and ethnic minorities*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Le Compte, M., and J. Preissle. 1993. *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. San Diego: Academic Press Inc.
- Marshall, C., and G. Rossman. 1995. *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- McCarthy, C. 1990. *Race and curriculum: Social inequality and the theories and politics of difference in contemporary research on schooling*. New York: The Falmer Press.
- Nakanishi, D.T., and T. Nishida, eds. 1995. *The Asian American educational experience: A source book for teachers and students*. New York: Routledge.
- Osler, A. 1997. *The education and careers of Black teachers: Changing identities, changing lives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Personal Narratives Group, ed. 1989. *Interpreting women's lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives*. Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press.
- Singh, P., and K. Dooley. 1996. Tolerant inclusion: Racialised experiences of Asian Australian pre-service teachers. *Studies in Continuing Education* 18 (2): 147-57.
- Weedon, C. 1987. *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers.

Working paper series from 2000

No.	Author(s)	Title	Date
00-01	J. Atsu Amegashie	A Political Economy Model of the Permissible Number of Immigrants	01/00
00-02	David Ley	Seeking <i>Homo Economicus</i> : The Strange Story of Canada's Immigration Program	05/00
00-03	Chieko Tanimura	Immigration of Nikkeijin to Ease the Japanese Aging Crisis	05/00
00-04	Eden Nicole Thompson	Immigrant Occupational Skill Outcomes and the Role of Region-Specific Human Capital	05/00
00-05	Christiane Werner	A Taste of Canada: An Analysis of Food Expenditure Patterns for Canadian-born and Foreign-born Consumers	05/00
00-06	Don DeVoretz and Chona Iturralde	Probability of Staying in Canada	08/00
00-07	Ravi Pendakur, Fernanda Mata, Stan Lee and Natalie Dole	Job Mobility and Promotion in the Federal Public Service. A Joint Project with Strategic Research and Analysis, Multiculturalism Program, Canadian Heritage and Research Directorate. Public Service Commission.	05/00
00-08	Barry R. Chiswick and Paul W. Miller	The Complementarity of Language and Other Human Capital: Immigrant Earnings in Canada	07/00
00-09	John E. Hayfron	The Housing Market Outcomes of Immigrants in Norway	08/00
00-10	Greg Cunningham, Daniel Hiebert and Brian Klinkenberg	Immigration and Greater Vancouver: A 1996 Census Atlas http://www.geog.ubc.ca/metropolis/atlas	09/00
00-11	Barry R. Chiswick	The Economics of illegal Migration for the Host Economy	09/00
00-12	Daniel Hiebert	The Social Geography of Immigration and Urbanization in Canada: A Review and Interpretation	09/00
00-13	Barry R. Chiswick and Paul W. Miller	A Model of Destination Language Acquisition: Application to Male Immigrants in Canada	09/00
00-14	Jamie Winders	Immigration to Vancouver: An Analytical Review	09/00
00-15	Daniel Hiebert	Cosmopolitanism at the Local Level: Immigrant Settlement and the Development of Transnational Neighbourhoods	09/00
00-16	David Prescott, David Wilton, Canan Dadayli and Aaron Dickson	Visits to Canada: The Role of Canada's Immigrant Populations	08/00
00-17	J. Atsu Amegashie and John E. Hayfron	Perception and Labour Supply: A Theoretical Analysis with and Application to Immigrants	10/00
00-18	Geraldine Pratt	Studying Immigrants in Focus Groups	12/00
00-19	Allesandra Casarico and Carlo Devillanova	Social Security and Migration with Endogenous Skill Upgrading	12/00
00-20	Don DeVoretz, Holger Hinte, Christiane Werner	Some Immigrant Language Lessons from Canada to Germany	10/00

No.	Author(s)	Title	Date
00-21	Don DeVoretz	An Analysis of Turn-of-the-Century Canadian Immigration: 1891-1914	12/00
01-01	Shahrokh Shahabi-Azad	Immigrant Expenditure Patterns on Transportation	01/01
01-02	Johanna L. Waters	The Flexible Family? Recent Immigration and 'Astronaut' Households in Vancouver, British Columbia	01/01
01-03	David Ley, Peter Murphy, Kris Olds, Bill Randolph	Immigration and Housing in Gateway Cities: The Cases of Sydney and Vancouver	01/01
01-04	Gillian Creese, Robyn Dowling	Gendering Immigration: The Experience of Women in Sydney and Vancouver	01/01
01-05	David W. Edgington, Bronwyn Hanna, Thomas Hutton, Susan Thompson	Urban Governance, Multiculturalism and Citizenship in Sydney and Vancouver	01/01
01-06	Kevin Dunn, Minelle Mahtani	"Adjusting the Colour Bar": Media Representation of Ethnic Minorities under Australian and Canadian Multiculturalisms	01/01
01-07	Ian Burnley, Dan Hiebert	Emerging Patterns of Immigrant Settlement in Metropolitan Sydney and Vancouver: The Need for New Concepts and Models	01/01
01-08	Daniel Hiebert, David Ley	Assimilation, Cultural Pluralism and Social Exclusion Among Ethno-Cultural Groups in Vancouver	02/01
01-09	Harald Bauder	The Visible Minority Category and Urban Analysis	01/01
01-10	Johanna L. Waters	Migration Strategies and Transnational Families: Vancouver's Satellite Kids	01/01
01-11	Dominique M. Gross, Nicolas Schmitt	Do Birds of a Feather Flock Together? The Role of Cultural Clustering in Attracting New Immigrants	01/01
01-12	Diane Coulombe, William L. Roberts	The French-as-a-second-language Learning Experience of Anglophone and Allophone University Students	03/01
01-13	Galina Didukh	Health and Personal Care Consumption Patterns of Foreign-born and Canadian-born Consumers: 1984-1996	04/01
01-14	Carl Mosk	Asian Immigrants to the Pacific Northwest: Canadian and American Experiences Compared	05/01
01-15	Margaret Walton-Roberts	Returning, Remitting, Reshaping: Non-Resident Indians and the Transformation of Society and Space in Punjab, India	08/01
01-16	Parin Dossa	Narrative Mediation of Conventional and New Paradigms of "Mental Health": Reading the Stories of Immigrant Iranian Women	08/01
01-17	Harald Bauder, Johanna Waters and Sin Yih Teo	Impacts of Immigration on British Columbia: Population, Labour Markets, Housing Markets and International Linkages	09/01
01-18	Lin Wang	Household Operations and Furnishings Consumption Patterns of Canadian and Foreign-born Consumers: 1984-1996	09/01

No.	Author(s)	Title	Date
01-19	Laura Beattie and David Ley	The German Immigrant Church in Vancouver: Service Provision and Identity Formation	10/01
01-20	David Ley, Judith Tutchener and Greg Cunningham	Immigration, Polarization, or Gentrification? Accounting for Changing Housing Prices and Dwelling Values in Gateway Cities	08/01
01-21	Shemina Hirji and June Beynon	Teachers of Punjabi Sikh Ancestry: Their Perceptions of their Roles in the British Columbia Education System	11/01

For information on papers previous to 2000, please see our Website

<http://www.riim.metropolis.net/research/policy>

Back issues of working papers are available for \$5 from

Vancouver Centre of Excellence: Immigration, WMX4653, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, B.C, Canada V5A 1S6. Tel: (604) 291-4575 Fax: (604) 291-5336

E-mail: riim@sfu.ca

<http://www.riim.metropolis.net/>