

# **Conflict and Compromise:**

**the move from community control to provincial centralization  
from 1961 to 1975**

**By**

**Constance Valerie Quenett**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER of EDUCATION**

**Department of Educational Administration And Foundations  
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**CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE:  
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FROM 1961 TO 1975**

**BY**

**CONSTANCE VALERIE QUENETT**

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

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## **Abstract**

Between 1961 and 1975 Manitoba schools were greatly affected by consolidation. This thesis explores, by means of autobiography and using techniques borrowed from oral history, the subjective dimension of the process of consolidation. The analysis of the author's experience involves an examination of consolidation in three different geographical areas in the province.

The conceptual framework is provided by the concept of hegemony as a process (as developed by C. Mouffe); the concept of culture as both a site for struggle over values (as defined by H. Giroux) and as redefined knowledge (as introduced by A. Brookes); the understanding of the school as a set of political relations (as discussed by B. Curtis and P. Corrigan); and the understanding of values as socially constructed. The autobiography is also framed by a historical analysis of the period and a review of contemporary interpretations of consolidation. Consolidation is interpreted as a process of conflict and compromise lived out within the political site of the school.

The research shows how hegemony is built. It makes clear the relevance of legislative power in the process of re-articulating hegemonic principles. The thesis attempts to capture, through autobiography, the sentiments and perceptions of two unwitting players: the teachers and the students.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my Thesis Committee for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this document. A special thank you to Dr. Rosa Bruno-Jofré for working on my behalf as my thesis advisor and chair. As well, a thank you to Dr. Romulo Magsino and to Dr. Ken Osborne for agreeing to serve on the committee. I appreciate their advice, encouragement, suggestions and unflagging support.

## **Anonymity of Place Names and People**

Hometown, Smalltown and Northtown are fictitious names which are given in this Thesis to the real places which are discussed. This is done in order to avoid the very real possibility of unnecessary harm or embarrassment to anyone which might arise from the community wide knowledge of people and events, which is usual in small rural communities, leading to identification of the specific people involved. The identity of some individuals is also concealed, for the same reason.

The decision to follow this practice in the present Thesis is entirely mine and I wish to acknowledge here that my Thesis committee has made me fully aware of the implications of my decision.



## **I. Introductory Chapter**

### ***A. Purpose of the Study***

#### **Thesis Topic:**

*Conflict and compromise:* the move from community control to provincial centralization from 1961 to 1975.

#### **Purpose:**

In this thesis, I examine how I, and how I believe that the people in each of three geographical areas in which I lived, understood and made sense of the process of consolidation of Manitoba's public schools.

This thesis provides a condensed look at the period of history from 1961 to 1975 by examining the outcomes of consolidation through the use of autobiography, techniques drawn from oral history and the examining and analyzing of documents and other primary sources. It provides an over-view of how implementation of consolidation led to a change in pedagogical trends<sup>1</sup> in Manitoba Public School education and a redefinition for education that, while encouraged and pursued on a province-wide basis, was in some cases faced with opposing philosophies at individual district and/or division levels. A discussion of some of these pedagogical trends also occurs with a brief reference to their country of origin, where appropriate, and the influences that resulted from their use.

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<sup>1</sup> \*Note: In this thesis I use the term 'pedagogical trend(s)' as others might use the term 'educational practices'.

Several concepts are discussed in the paper by considering power<sup>2</sup> and knowledge issues. These include changes in attitudes that began to surface to create a new interest in the profession and professionalism of teaching and questions of equity in education for both female students and teachers.

Included with support material from literary references and my own personal papers and reflections, are reflections of comments made by colleagues and/or individuals who were either studying or teaching through some or all of the fifteen years in question.

It is anticipated that at the conclusion of the paper, the reader will have a view of how all of these events contributed to my present recollections of my experiences in Manitoba Education from 1961 to 1975 from two dimensions: that of a student and that of a teacher.

### ***B. Research Question***

How did individuals living in two rural and one urban environment view and implement the notion of consolidation in Manitoba Schools, from the perspective of the author?

### ***C. Significance of the Study***

Although there are a number of articles in the literature relating to consolidation, including those written under the auspices of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, it is my

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<sup>2</sup> \*Note: The author recognizes that the words authority, control and power are often used interchangeably by individuals in their daily speech. There may be times in this thesis wherein this is so as well, especially through the inclusion of quotations. It is understood however, that authority and control are related aspects of power. In this thesis, power shall for the most part be used to describe situations and activities which involved one or more individuals, agencies and/or groups having domination or an almost unrelenting influence over another. This power may be implemented through both overt and covert means.

observation that few personal histories have been written about the period in question.

It is my further belief that even fewer personal histories exist that present the same person's reflections, as they are now remembered, of their experiences as a teacher and as a student.

Therefore, this study hopes to provide more than one contribution to education. First, it uses autobiography, which allows for the inclusion of personal experiences, as a legitimate method of historical account. Second it considers autobiography as a legitimate method to conduct historical analysis by providing for a method of conducting a comparative study between different geographical areas. Third, it considers as valid the experiences, feelings, and historical facts of people (others as well as myself), in relating with each other. I am aided in this consideration because I am able to use written sources to triangulate dates and facts to support my work. Fourth, it may serve as a catalyst to provoke future students to write their own personal histories. Fifth, it may reveal that "there could be glaring disparities between what was supposed to happen in the schools and what actually took place"<sup>3</sup> and may motivate students to produce educational papers to examine whether or not such disparities continue today. Sixth, it presents material through a subjective dimension as it presents a protagonistic perception of how the people felt in three areas affected by consolidation, by the personal sharing of experiences, that unveil their words and

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<sup>3</sup>Ken Osborne, "Introduction," in Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices, R. del C. Bruno-Jofré, ed., (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 5.

actions. Seventh, it contributes to the studies of the history of education in Manitoba by examining from a subjective dimension, women's issues, pedagogical trends, teaching as a profession, and the visions held of education by the various players, through the use of concepts of hegemony, values, culture and the school as a set of political relations wherein power and knowledge are active components. Last, it works to fulfill a need or shortcoming that educators such as Osborne indicate exists in the history of education in Manitoba. He writes, "we need oral histories and stories from the inside, no matter how anecdotal. We need studies of specific schools, of particular episodes, of Manitoba's various cultural and linguistic groups."<sup>4</sup> This thesis, I contend, significantly contributes to filling part of that literary gap.

## **II. Methodology**

### ***A. A Reference to Historical Methodology***

#### **1. Introduction**

The research material which follows in this thesis arises out of a perceived need to examine the impact of consolidation of education in Manitoba schools from the perspective of those influencing and influenced by its implementation in three jurisdictions in which I lived. Such an examination requires the discussion of the thoughts, words and actions of people. Concepts of culture, values, hegemony, and the school as a set of political relations became concerns. Issues of power and knowledge are, by implication, included.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6.

In the 1960s and 1970s my personal involvement afforded me many opportunities to live out the re-articulation of hegemonic principles, the struggle over values, and the workings of the school as a political site. It soon became apparent to me that much subjectivity would need to be a part of any thesis or other research paper which wished to address the same type of human interest concerns for a number of reasons. First, the people living in the areas considered, all had stories, experiences and life histories that both influenced and were influenced by the then current developments in politics, especially politics involving education. Second, emotion, bias, and cultural attitudes influenced the actions and conversations of the populations in question. Third, there was an intensely high amount of human contact and interaction among the members of each of the three populations. Fourth, individuals and groups became very involved in the process of education and in the factors that influenced it. Last, the consolidation issue was simply one in a series of human issues that was to influence the lives of people over time. Based on these observations, I concluded that the nature of my questions generated the need for an eclectic methodological approach. In analyzing historical research works by Portelli,<sup>5</sup> Jaeger,<sup>6</sup> Popkewitz,<sup>7</sup> Thompson,<sup>8</sup> White,<sup>9</sup> Finklestein,<sup>10</sup> Brookes,<sup>11</sup> and the Personal Narratives Group,<sup>12</sup> I was encouraged to

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<sup>5</sup>Alessandro Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup>Richard Jaeger, ed., Complementary Methods for Research in Education (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 1988).

<sup>7</sup>T. S. Popkewitz, Paradigm and Ideology in Educational Research (Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1984).

<sup>8</sup>Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>9</sup>Hayden White, Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

<sup>10</sup>Barbara Finklestein, ed., Regulated Children, Liberated Children: Education in Psychohistorical Perspective (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1979).

discover that, first, many history writers share the view that historical presentation is not restricted by one standard form of inquiry or reporting. Second, some of the aforementioned authors support a notion of history with which I concur. It includes, amongst other things, accepting as valid (that is true, worthy of acceptance or historical recognition because of a relevance to humanity or because an individual indicated it happened as a part of experience) the stories of people, the incidents of their lives, and the interpretation they and others make of these stories and incidents. Third, as a consequence of association with other disciplines, the ways and means of conducting historical research vary from historian to historian and change over time as newer technology, better access to information, and a growing interest by a subject population increase.<sup>13</sup> For example, in Complementary Methods for Research in Education, various contributors discuss various techniques historians can use. They emphasize that the research methods employed would be essentially governed by the expectations and procedural rules of the discipline or established technique in question.<sup>14</sup>

Popkewitz<sup>15</sup> indicates that researchers need to constantly ask themselves if they are being too conventional in their approach to research. He states “our methods of

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<sup>11</sup> Anne Louise Brookes, Feminist Pedagogy: An Autobiographical Approach (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> The Personal Narratives Group, Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989). \*Note: it should be observed here that these are feminist writers who use narratives and oral history as their method of presenting historical information.

<sup>13</sup> Jaeger, Complementary Methods, ii.

<sup>14</sup> Lee S. Shulman, “Disciplines of Inquiry in Education: An Overview” in Complementary Methods for Research in Education Richard Jaeger, ed., (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 1988), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Popkewitz, Paradigm and Ideology, 101-104.

research emerge from our involvement in our social conditions and provide a means by which we can seek to resolve the contradictions we feel and the worlds that seem unresolved in our everyday life.”<sup>16</sup> I interpret this to mean that the social conditions we experience as individuals influence to a great degree the kinds of questions we ask as researchers, and the method that we choose to solve contradictions or discrepancies that leave us confused or unhappy in our daily life. Popkewitz advocates asking good questions and using a language of inquiry that encourages others to tell their stories.<sup>17</sup> He indicates that it is necessary for people to tell their life stories since “the content or storyline of findings provides a way for people to reconcile contradictions and ambivalence encountered in everyday life.”<sup>18</sup> It is also a way for researchers to interpret and analyze information and to make generalizations. As they elaborate on their techniques, researchers make clear the point that there are limitations, restrictions, cautions, advantages and disadvantages experienced by researchers who choose to do research in education, especially historical research.<sup>19</sup> For example, limitations can be caused by the constraints of time and financial resources, as well as availability of information available on topics researchers wish to research.<sup>20</sup> Restrictions may be imposed arbitrarily, for example when certain ‘happenings’ are too confidential to discuss, and those controlling the ‘happenings’ are in control of determining who shall have access to that information. Further restrictions rely on

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., viii.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 102.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Jaeger, Complementary Methods, ii; 69-70. Roy Martin, Writing and Defending a Thesis or Dissertation in Psychology and Education (Springfield, Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1980), 6.

human courtesy and confidentiality. When revealing a person's identity causes him/her hardship, the researcher feels restricted to relating and describing incidents, and to withholding names or descriptions out of respect for the individuals concerned.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, cautions directed towards accurate reporting, respect for those contributing to the research, and words urging care in selecting research material are also included.<sup>22</sup> The advantage of historical research that I believe, best suits my work is found in references to history as a discipline that involves people.<sup>23</sup> People and especially children were involved in Manitoba's consolidation question. Researchers voice concerns that large volumes of material may or may not be accurately recorded, interpreted or translated.<sup>24</sup> However, the first hand knowledge and experience I bring provides me the means to examine and question some of those volumes.

Paul Thompson wrote an in-depth study of how "oral sources can be collected and used by historians."<sup>25</sup> He examined the growth in use, validity of, and acceptance of oral history since its inception as a historical research method. Oral history, according to Thompson,<sup>26</sup> is concerned primarily in hearing, recording and interpreting the spoken words of people, especially people such as the poor or the illiterate who might

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<sup>20</sup> Shulman, Disciplines of Inquiry in Education: An Overview, 4. Popkewitz, Paradigm and Ideology, 102.

<sup>21</sup> Jaeger, Complementary Methods, 3. Popkewitz, Paradigm and Ideology, 102. Carl F. Kaestle, "Recent Methodological Developments in the History of American Education," Complementary Methods for Research in Education Richard Jaeger, ed., (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, 1988), 68-70.

<sup>22</sup> Carl F. Kaestle, Recent Methodological Developments, 68-70.

<sup>23</sup> Jaeger, Complementary Methods, 3. Popkewitz, Paradigm and Ideology, 102.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.; Ibid. Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Thompson, Voice of the Past, viii..

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



otherwise be missed by historians. He believes the telling and interpreting of their historical experiences will enable these people to take control of their own future.<sup>27</sup> His work and subsequent writings, which deal with the method and validity of conducting oral histories and interpreting and using them, have served as the basis for many other scholars who have used oral history as a research technique.

Thompson states "all history depends ultimately upon its social purpose."<sup>28</sup> Many scholars, including Portelli, use oral history to determine, amongst other things, what that 'social purpose' is. Portelli uses oral history to show how it is possible to compare and contrast how a historical event was remembered by individuals as compared to what historical records say about that incident. He acknowledges the testimonial validity of collective and individual memories. For example, in researching events about the death of Luigi Trastulli, Portelli examined the newspaper articles written of the events and "outlines of the police inquest on the episode."<sup>29</sup> He discovered that "written sources are not always automatically reliable"<sup>30</sup> as proven when the same police incorrectly identify Trastulli in their report. As a consequence as a part of his research, Portelli examined, compared and interpreted these disparities through considering the recollections of individuals alive at the time. In so doing he notes that the most common widespread error of contributors was "the shifting of the date and context of the event from the 1949 anti-NATO rally to the street fighting subsequent to

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>29</sup>Portelli, Death of Luigi Trastulli, 3.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

the layoff of two thousand workers from the steel factory in October, 1953.”<sup>31</sup> He stresses that the people’s memories and their interpretations of those memories were just as valid as the reports made in official documents. He indicates that those holding such memories and interpretations held them because they were trying to make sense of their lives as they fit into those experiences and life in its broadest terms. He concludes, “the oral sources used ... are not always fully reliable in point of fact. Rather than a weakness, this is however, their strength: errors, inventions, and myths lead us through and beyond facts and their meanings.”<sup>32</sup> It is through interpreting the oral words carefully while being cognizant of the recorded documentation that Portelli is able to change alleged weaknesses of the historical reporting into historical data.

Both Portelli and Thompson respect and value oral testimony given to produce oral history as the most valid and valuable of all historical data. Thompson emphasizes mutual respect, courtesy and dignity in dealing with subject persons providing oral history. Portelli expands this notion by insisting that there is a relevance and validity not only to the words spoken but also to the relationship that develops between the interviewer and the one interviewed. To both, the retelling of memories is exceptionally important. Portelli adds the dimension that the expressing of experiences by those interviewed must be considered as valid historical fact.<sup>33</sup> To illustrate their positions both Portelli and Thompson develop and analyze the practice of oral history and present vivid samples of their own research.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 2-3.

In contrast, a substantial body of scholarship in history of education is archives and/or document-based. In other words, the written word takes pre-eminence over the spoken word. Some researchers/authors include Rooke and Schnell,<sup>34</sup> Wilson,<sup>35</sup> Prentice, Houston<sup>36</sup> and Finklestein.<sup>37</sup> For example, Prentice<sup>38</sup> emphasizes the use of family papers to write her work. Rooke and Schnell, in Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective,<sup>39</sup> and Wilson, in An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History<sup>40</sup> include archives-centered research in their work of examining aspects of the history of Canadian education. It can be argued that they view the use of material and official documents as a necessary component of educational and historical research. For example, Finklestein<sup>41</sup> used much document-based research when she wrote an article in which she explored the “multiplicity of social networks in which formal learning proceeded.”<sup>42</sup> Kaestle, an educational historian, writes “there is no single, definable method of inquiry”<sup>43</sup> that is applicable solely and exclusively to history. I concur with his view.

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<sup>34</sup>Patricia Rooke and R. L. Schnell, Studies in Childhood History: A Canadian Perspective (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1982).

<sup>35</sup>Donald Wilson, ed., An Imperfect Past: Education and Society in Canadian History (Vancouver: Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Instruction, University of British Columbia, 1984).

<sup>36</sup>Susan Houston and Alison Prentice, Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

<sup>37</sup>Finklestein, Regulated Children, Liberated Children.

<sup>38</sup>Alison Prentice, The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

<sup>39</sup>Rooke and Schnell, Studies in Childhood History.

<sup>40</sup>Wilson, An Imperfect Past.

<sup>41</sup>Finklestein, Regulated Children, Liberated Children.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>43</sup>Carl F. Kaestle, Recent Methodological Developments, 61.

Additionally, Portelli, the Personal Narratives Group, Jaeger, Hayden, Finklestein and Thompson, Kaestle suggest that all historical research usually includes an element of retelling. Many individuals with whom I communicated told me their personal thoughts, fears, worries and experiences. It is part of my desire in this thesis to retain an element of retelling so that some of their experiences can be shared. However, beyond the retelling White,<sup>44</sup> Shulman<sup>45</sup> and Kaestle<sup>46</sup> all indicate that analysis and interpretation of findings needs to evolve. It is my view that analysis and interpretation of my findings based on my experience and the experience of others is possible.

Hayden White writes “theorists of historiography generally agree that all narratives contain an irreducible and inextinguishable element of interpretation.”<sup>47</sup> Narratives, as defined by the Personal Narratives Group in Interpreting Women’s Lives “present and interpret women’s life experiences”<sup>48</sup> and “can take many forms including biography, autobiography, life story -a story told to a second person who records it- diaries, journals and letters.”<sup>49</sup> Since portions of my own experience can be best discussed as narrative, that is telling without evaluating from the point of view of an impartial third party, I determined that portions of my thesis might benefit from a narrative approach as interpreted by the Personal Narrative Group.

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<sup>44</sup>White, Tropics of Discourse, 50-52.

<sup>45</sup>Shulman, Disciplines of Inquiry in Education: An Overview, 4.

<sup>46</sup>Carl F. Kaestle, Recent Methodological Developments, 60-64.

<sup>47</sup>White, Tropics of Discourse, 51.

<sup>48</sup>Personal Narratives Group, Interpreting Women’s Lives, 4.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

Kaestle has argued that in writing of history of education there can be difficulty in connecting history to the actions, belief, structure and ideas of individuals and groups.<sup>50</sup>

However, the ways in which many citizens related to others, in the communities wherein my experiences occurred, in many ways were connected with what they appeared to believe. Their ideas and personal philosophies influenced the structure of cultural attitudes, the operation of the schools and the community as a whole. It therefore became necessary for me to find a method of research that would enable me to deal with these concerns.

“The limited time and energies of the researcher must be focused on those questions that have the most promise of making an important difference, theoretically and practically.”<sup>51</sup> With this in mind, from my research of history methods, I concluded that “history, more than most other disciplines is a hybrid, a methodological home for a wide variety of approaches, techniques and modes of inquiry. Among all the disciplines it has resisted categorization.”<sup>52</sup> I interpret this as an invitation to be inventive, creative and varied in my approach. Inasmuch as the research material I wish to consider for this thesis contains that obtained through personal experience, I need to incorporate a method that allows for my personal (subjective) expression of ideas.

The methodology that I finally selected is a hybrid of other methodologies. It is made up of three elements. The first element is autobiography. The autobiographical method

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<sup>50</sup>Carl F. Kaestle, *Recent Methodological Developments*, 60-62.

<sup>51</sup>Martin, *Writing and Defending a Thesis or Dissertation*, 6.

<sup>52</sup>Shulman, *Disciplines of Inquiry in Education: An Overview*, 21.

takes precedence since it is through autobiography that I am able to relate and share experiences, incidents and encounters. Included is narration. The second element, is oral history from which I draw ideas and techniques to strengthen my autobiographical approach. For example, I draw from recollections and memories of conversations and comments. Their inclusion adds 'local colour' and provides some additional points of view. Third, and nearly as important as autobiography is the analysis of official documents and other primary sources. As with Rooke and Schnell, Wilson, Portelli, Finklestein, the Personal Narratives Group, and others, I believe it is necessary to include substantial reference to documents (both official and from personal collections), published commentaries, reflections and reports in order that all portions of this thesis may be fully developed.

Each of these, autobiography (including some narrative), documentation, and oral history has specific characteristics. It was the examination of each of these three elements in terms of application to what I want to do, that has solidified their appeal to me. I therefore determined to define and investigate each as a viable, useful and interesting method on which to base my methodology or from which to borrow techniques to develop my thesis research and discussion.

## 2. Autobiography

### *Grumet / Brookes*

Articles and papers written in the subjective voice by the Personal Narratives Group,<sup>53</sup> two articles by Grumet<sup>54</sup> and a text written as the out-growth of a doctoral thesis by Anne Louise Brookes<sup>55</sup> have been strong influences in my decision to use autobiography as a major method.

Autobiography is essentially the meticulous retelling and re-experiencing of experiences.<sup>56</sup> The process requires “the selection of some events, the exclusion of others, the repudiation of some feelings, and the acknowledgment of others”<sup>57</sup> while recognizing that “these accounts can never exactly coincide with our experience.”<sup>58</sup> Grumet indicates that “it is information that pulls the past into the present, drawing it together to confirm what I anticipate will be my next move.”<sup>59</sup> She voices sentiments I also hold when she states autobiography allows the user to pose a number of questions. “How does my present situation influence my understanding of the past? How do my hopes and dreads determine what it is in my past that I remember? How does my past veil the present? How does it provide the future? What is it that we find when we

<sup>53</sup>Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives*, 4.

<sup>54</sup>Madelaine R. Grumet, “Autobiography and Reconceptualization,” in *Curriculum and Instruction: Alternatives in Education*, H.A. Giroux, A.N. Penna and W.F. Pinar, eds., (New York, McCutcheon Publishing Corporation, 1981) 139-144; and, Madelaine R. Grumet, “Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience: An Autobiographical Method for Curriculum Theory,” in *Rethinking Curriculum Studies*, M. Lawn and L. Barton, eds., (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981) 115-130.

<sup>55</sup>Brookes, *Feminist Pedagogy*.

<sup>56</sup>Grumet, *Autobiography and Reconceptualization*, 141.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

reclaim our experience?”<sup>60</sup> Like Grumet, I have asked myself similar kinds of questions over the years in trying to understand who, where, why and what I am today as a teacher and as a person. These are the kinds of questions arising out of my own experiences that led me to determine what specific questions and topics I would need to research for a history paper or thesis. In each case, because of my involvement, it has become necessary to relate, analyze and interpret my position in relation to what else was happening.

The use of autobiography allows the writer to discuss authority and knowledge issues and “the tales of power, its use and abuse.”<sup>61</sup> These issues were important issues in my research considerations. Moreover, such a use of autobiography implies that the researcher then has the option to discuss the cultural and value concepts of a particular situation, since these are implicitly connected to power and knowledge issues. It is possible for me to conduct such a discussion of these concepts and issues from the three jurisdictions by sharing experiences with others.

Grumet states “remembrance is the dominant form of autobiographical writing...it is usual that we think of autobiographical accounts as memoirs.”<sup>62</sup> Much of my research information is drawn from experience lodged in memories and drawn from personal memoirs. Additionally, Brookes speaks as if for me when she says of her own writing “mostly it is a story about some of what I have imagined, experienced and theorized and

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<sup>60</sup>Grumet, Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience, 115.

<sup>61</sup>Grumet, Autobiography and Reconceptualization, 141.

<sup>62</sup>Grumet, Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience, 115.



that which I might yet imagine, experience and theorize.”<sup>63</sup> She adds “mostly, it is a story about social relations and how I and (some) others organize and construct our daily practices. In this sense, it is a story about relations of power.”<sup>64</sup> My experiences are based on and drawn from the same kind of writing base Brookes ascribes to herself.

Both Grumet and Brookes admonish the writer of autobiography with several reminders to consider when analyzing material. They suggest that factual, unbiased, clear, and unembellished reporting needs to occur before analysis and interpretation of material is possible. However, by its very subjectivity, autobiography and the use of experiences arguably affect how well one achieves such goals. Grumet and Brookes also make it clear that people, their actions and interactions, their speech, customs, and values are interwoven into what really becomes something that one can view as history. History, to an autobiographer, is based on the inclusion, discussion, interpretation and most importantly the valuing of individual experience. Autobiographers indicate that it is through the valid sharing, interpreting, analyzing and using of information from those experiences that contributions to the history of humankind are made. The actions and interactions of the people in the three areas to be used in the research, their speech, customs, political views, and values were familiar to me. On the one hand I had spent most of my life immersed in or exposed to similar customs, culture, speech, actions and values. On the second hand the introduction of changed customs, culture, speech and values when they occurred, came as a part of such overwhelming culture-shock that

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<sup>63</sup>Brookes, *Feminist Pedagogy*, 2.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

they were unlikely to be forgotten. It is *my* personal involvement in them, however, that adds the personal dimension that autobiography requires.

Additionally, autobiographers indicate that “detail is required to demonstrate lawful possession of the tale.”<sup>65</sup> To add this dimension the author needs to be the one having the experience so that “subjectivity, that is the foundation for the method for the first person”<sup>66</sup> is possible. I was very involved in many experiences in post consolidation school environments. At the same time, I knew, or believed I knew, what was happening. Details, insignificant to others not participating in the experience, were vivid and pressed themselves into my memory. So totally did the details of events influence my day to day life, that it has not been possible to forget them. Notes and personal papers help reinforce the accuracy of my memory. As a consequence of my investigation of methodology, therefore, I conclude that autobiography is a medium through which that detail may be related to others. I realize that there will likely be a “rift between experience and expression”<sup>67</sup> since no words no matter how expressive are adequate enough to discuss the experience felt.

Since my views concur so strongly with those of Grumet and Brookes I decided that autobiography would be the primary method that I should use in my thesis. It would enable me to analyze and use material from other individuals and from personal and public documents.

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<sup>65</sup>Grumet, Autobiography and Reconceptualization, 142

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>67</sup>Grumet, Restitution and Reconstruction of Educational Experience, 123.

However when I began to reread and examine notes and mementos that had recorded past experiences that form a part of my private and personal collection, my emotions rose so poignantly and swiftly, and at times painfully, that I had difficulty in dealing with them. As one memory pressed swiftly on the heels of another, I knew that my autobiography needed to be designed in a way that allowed me to express my perspectives, my observations, my assumptions, my interpretations factually and historically. It was also necessary that I did not lose the element of personality the use of the autobiographical method, by implication, includes. I concluded that my autobiography would need a design that permitted me to show emotion and to elaborate, perhaps unnecessarily, on what might seem to be trivial details. At the same time I recognized that within method, "there is an order, a regularity, obscure though it may be, which underlies an apparent disorder thus rendering it meaningful."<sup>68</sup> Jaeger stresses "a central concept in educational research is disciplined inquiry."<sup>69</sup> I interpreted this to mean that the historian collects data, marshals evidence, draws arguments and chooses methods for replication, verification or refutation carefully. It was obvious that any autobiographical method selected needed to make order of apparently disorganized and unordered experiences. The experiences themselves would need to be detailed well in order to convey a message. At the same time, in order to address more than one issue, selection and conciseness of detail would need consideration. Too much data, too much evidence would not allow for analysis,

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<sup>68</sup>Jaeger, Complementary Methods, 3.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

interpretation or reasoned argument. Replication and verification concerns were also to be addressed. Like Grumet and Brookes, I have found it necessary to ask myself some questions. How would autobiography alone convince the reader that the people, the events, and the jurisdictions did exist? Would the use of official documents and other primary sources be enough? Would autobiography be enough? How would dealing solely with experiences and interactions answer the questions I wanted to address dealing with power and knowledge issues? How would they enable me to conduct a comparison of the three geographic areas and at the same time address the questions of conflict and compromise in consolidation?

I have, upon reflection, concluded that an autobiographical outline dealing with each jurisdiction and subsequent draft of detailed information to be discussed within each jurisdiction, when connected laterally by a subtle consideration of power and knowledge issues, provides me with a structure in which to write about my experiences. It also allows for some literary freedom. Inasmuch as each will be connected to and an element of 'consolidation issues' each feature fits in a disciplined, meaningful, ordered way within the Analysis of My Experience (the Research Section of this thesis).

The need for freedom comes from a number of reasons. First 'storytelling' and the writing of narratives has been a particular love of mine for many years. I need freedom to relate the experiences about which I want to tell, not what someone else might want to hear. Second, many of the memories have been burned into my mind so deeply, and in some cases so painfully, that I need a flexible method by which they can be taken

out, sorted, evaluated, analyzed, and discussed emotionally, if need be. Third, while I love writing narration, I want as Grumet says to “turn back upon [my] own texts and see there [my] own processes and biases of selection at work.”<sup>70</sup> Fourth, I wish to use a design that gives me the chance to maintain “possession and authority”<sup>71</sup> of my own past as the “active agent of [my] own interests”<sup>72</sup> in an environment that I share here and now with other individuals.<sup>73</sup> Fifth, autobiography gives me the freedom to focus more on content than on style. It provides both the means and the opportunity for me to become totally immersed in my work, so that I am able to concentrate on discussing the experiences themselves from a number of points of view.

I had determined that autobiography was not only an acceptable format but had in fact been used by other thesis writers such as Anne-Louise Brookes. However, I noted also that different writers interpreted the method of autobiographical writing in different ways even as they were concerned with defining and developing a “more fully human conception of social reality”<sup>74</sup> including issues relevant to both males and females. My experiences come from issues and concerns felt by members of both sexes. Incidents experienced and recorded in my personal files come from the social reality of the lives of people from all walks of life within the three jurisdictions. The Personal Narratives Group state “traditional explorations of social dynamics have tended to emphasize either the constraints of social structure or the power of the individual agency. Only

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<sup>70</sup>Grumet, *Autobiography and Reconceptualization*, 141.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives*, 3.

recently have social theorists begun to undermine this polarity. Our reading of women's personal narratives suggests the need to understand the dynamic interaction between the two."<sup>75</sup> I do not identify myself as a theorist. However, by using 'power' as one of the connecting issues in my autobiography and by using the specific topics discussed, as they are discussed, I believe that some of the "dynamic interaction"<sup>76</sup> between social structure and individual agency can be explored.

Considering the statement (which in many ways is appropriate to the lives of the women in the jurisdictions in which I lived) "women make their own lives (and life histories), but they do so under conditions not of their own choosing"<sup>77</sup> can best be done from my perspective, through autobiography. As both a student and a teacher I believed that I had certain obligations placed upon me. Some of these were the result of cultural influences and expectations. Others were socio-economically based. The use of autobiography provides me with the means to investigate how those obligations had been established and whether or not other places, times, and cultures viewed them as legitimate.

Through autobiography I hope that I am able to discover whether the equity issues I mean to discuss were issues resulting out of cultural or value structures, or because of a power struggle, or as the result of ignorance of the perpetrator or because of some other reason. Such examination may give me the opportunity to reflect upon the behavior of

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

the local 'establishment' and provincial government towards the continued education practices. By using autobiography I also believe I have a method to show what "strategies and activities"<sup>78</sup> were used to challenge the norms of an oppressive community and/or employer.

Autobiography also provides me with the opportunity for comparison and contrast. It offers me the opportunity to 'be me,' to tell my personal history and to write about my experiences my way. It may free me from the critical eye of perfection and enable me to continue even when painful memories and self-doubt cloud my thinking. It presents me with the opportunity to reconsider the substance and recollection of talks I have had with other teachers, to re-evaluate the accuracy of my memory. Such a reflective search enables me to carefully select from my experiences and personal summaries of anecdotes. The people with whom I spoke shared joys and miseries. Their informal words, often responding to my direct questions arising at the time out of curiosity, have in part served as a critical catalyst motivating this proposed examination of consolidation issues. It has become apparent to me that any design, then, has to be chiefly autobiographical to preserve the integrity of material recorded from primary sources of a past era.

Additionally, autobiography offers to a third party the opportunity and means to formulate connections of their own life and experiences to those of other individuals through, for example, the use of reflective search. It offers the reader the opportunity to

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 7.

question existing dualities such as how things are perceived as compared to how they really are. Further, it provides a means by which individuals can validate their own importance in history.

As a contribution to knowledge, autobiography provides the means to show how people, their actions and interactions, their speech, customs, and values are interwoven into what really becomes something that one can view as history. Its primary contribution to knowledge is the validity of the shared information that it provides from the writer who is a 'primary source' of the information provided. An extension of this knowledge exists as the user can connect incidents of the historical past, to the present and make predictions about the future. It does this by adding a dimension to history that is to a large degree missing in existing historical documents, since it presents material from the primary source, that is, the author of the autobiography.

Consequently, an attempt has been made to design all portions of this document in an autobiographical format. To summarize and connect the salient ideas into a comprehensible form a conclusion is embedded in the 'Analysis of my Experience' that is the Research Section. It serves, I believe, as a culmination and reiteration in shortened form, of the major issues researched. It is connected in its entirety to the rest of the research paper in three ways. First, it continues in the autobiographical tone. Second, attempts to consider, reaffirm, consolidate, and re-establish the power and knowledge issues much as the issue of consolidation ideologically drew together school jurisdictions throughout the province. Third, it serves as a place where some of my own



views and biases have been expressed. Therefore, I argue that the inclusion of a 'conclusion' in the Analysis section of the thesis is both useful and necessary.

### **3. Oral History: techniques borrowed for autobiography**

Initially, despite my intention to use autobiography as the primary methodology, it had been my intention to include reference to the spoken views and actions of the living people with whom I have come into contact over the years. As well, I believed it would be productive to be able to examine reflective thoughts, opinions and attitudes other researchers and writers have already recorded and compare them to my own. However, it was not my intention, since this work is essentially autobiographical, to conduct interviews. Consequently, none have taken place.

It was only when I examined the works of Thompson,<sup>79</sup> Portelli,<sup>80</sup> Gluck and Patai<sup>81</sup> and the Personal Narratives Group<sup>82</sup> that I discovered oral history. These writers share a consensus on some elements of oral history which I believe provides me with some tools I am able to use to help in the development of an autobiographical work since I would be able to include public information written by others, and information written from informal conversations others held with me.

There are a number of ways in which oral history research techniques are useful. First, oral history is essentially the recording, (on tape if possible and subsequently in print)

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<sup>79</sup>Thompson, *Voice of the Past*.

<sup>80</sup>Portelli, *Death of Luigi Trastulli*.

<sup>81</sup>Sherna Berner Gluck and Daphne Patai, *Women's Words, Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York and London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1991).

<sup>82</sup>Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives*, 5.

of the spoken word of individuals which relates to or gives relevance to some specifically selected historical consideration from their lifetime. However, oral historians do not share a consensus as to what material is suitable for oral history, how it is to be obtained, used, interpreted and reported. For this reason, I determined that it was possible to include material gathered from a variety of sources to include in historical research. For example, I had already collected mementos, information and made mental or written summaries of conversations, as I remembered them, with the intent of publishing a personal autobiography. Later, when I realized that there was material available from which to write a book, I began to make more of an effort to direct, and where possible, to make notes of remembered dialogue to include specific questions on consolidation-related topics even though I did not conduct these as a formal interview. Still later, I became convinced that although these are not oral histories some references to and inclusions of those conversations, as I had remembered and noted them, could be used in a thesis. They are in some cases reinforced by supporting public documents.

Second, both Portelli and Thompson insist that oral history stands on its own merit since it gives value to facts by enabling people to give sense to their memories and their lives. It enables individuals to have dignity and to develop an important understanding of their own worth as placeholders and contributors to history by virtue of their existence and experiences. It is through the accumulation, reporting and validation of these 'words' that oral historians have an opportunity to help individuals make sense of

their lives. In conducting this research, I hoped I would also be able to develop an understanding of my place and time in history, and give some sense to my own memories. In this regard, I saw parallels to oral history.

Third, the interpretation of what constitutes oral testimony is often made individually and personally from a set of criteria which grows out to the purpose of the study. I use this element of oral history to help me clearly establish a focus or fixed purpose, which is to subjectively examine the outcomes of consolidation in three Manitoba jurisdictions from 1961 to 1975.

Fourth, there is a level of attachment between various individuals in oral history research that is more personal than in other forms of research.<sup>83</sup> By examining closely the remembrances and summaries of the words of those with whom I had conversations, I think I am able to use this element out of oral history to determine how others felt about me, but more importantly, how they felt about themselves and each other.

Fifth, the definition, application or use and presentation of historical data is often different from one researcher to another. I used this element of oral historical methodology to broaden my autobiographical approach. This technique, when employed, enabled me to change what might have been an informal autobiography into a formal thesis that allowed for the inclusion of analysis, interpretation, and justification for research.

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<sup>83</sup>Gluck and Patai, Women's Words, Women's Words, 75-80.

The sixth and last common characteristic shared by the oral historians researched for this thesis, deals with questions of anonymity. Some believe that “all accounts need verifiability and specified sources.”<sup>84</sup> Others insist “identifying one’s sources may drastically restrict the type of material with which a researcher is likely to be entrusted.”<sup>85</sup> I believe the anonymity that some oral historians encourage is necessary to protect the privacy of the individuals considered in this research. I hold this view out of my personal integrity and a respect for them as individuals and as members of larger geographical communities. If I had not been able to retain anonymity for this work, it would not have been written.

Some specific characteristics used by the individual oral historians also influenced my thinking and influenced my desire to use elements drawn from oral historical methodology in this thesis to strengthen the development of my autobiographical approach. Thompson, Portelli, Gluck and Patai and the Personal Narratives Group<sup>86</sup> were the most influential.

### *Thompson*

In his classic work The Voice of the Past Oral History Paul Thompson<sup>87</sup> emphasizes that all oral histories center around the words that “ordinary people, ... working-class men and women ... working people”<sup>88</sup> the old, and others who might be otherwise

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> \*Note: It should be noted that although these individuals write ‘oral histories’ and ‘narrations’ they closely follow feminist scholarship more closely, in my opinion.

<sup>87</sup>Thompson, Voice of the Past.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 3.

ignored by political or other historical researchers, use to discuss their lives, experiences and feelings. This description is applicable to the individuals in the three districts which are included in this research and in which I lived. While the use of “registers of births and marriages, minutes of councils and the administration of poor relief and welfare, national and local newspapers, school teachers log books”<sup>89</sup> and other official, legal often political records is useful to establish time, place and topic for the research, these provide only one side of the discussion.<sup>90</sup> Written records of the histories of ordinary people, such as letters, diaries, postcards, and annotated photographs are valuable research sources.<sup>91</sup> Thompson’s support of the use of documents adds validity to my arguments in favour of using such material in my own work.

Thompson states “all history depends ultimately upon its social purpose.”<sup>92</sup> and indicates that clues to the interpretation of the social purpose of the history of the people talked to is hidden in their words. By examining the community social makeup and sharing parts of the conversations and casual dialogues I experienced, as I remember them, I expect to gain some insight into why individuals reacted to consolidation as they did.

Thompson’s underlying theme seems to be that oral history not only records spoken words but also gives history back to the speaker so that it denotes a past, that when

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

understood in the present enables individuals to take charge of their own future. Additionally, it gives relevance and clarity to the records documenting the lives and feelings of all kinds of people. It allows individuals including teachers, students, females government officials and others to develop an understanding of the emotions and motives at work in their private lives when public expectations are placed upon them. "The most striking feature of all, however, is the transforming impact of oral history upon the history of the family."<sup>93</sup> I borrow these features of oral history to add another dimension to my autobiography through relating experiences out of both my private and public life. For example, the comments, arguments, town hall meetings and publicity consolidation issues created had a powerful impact on the life of many families including mine. The conversations surrounding consolidation held in our home and others in which we visited, and the articles written at the time in newspapers and journals showed a divergence of opinion with opposing groups simultaneously urging either its acceptance or rejection. Through interpreting and using information from this transformation, I believe I am able to unveil social relationships between people including the contacts families and kin held with each other.

Thompson suggests some oral histories may be written as narratives or stories or other format once the researcher has selected a specific paradigm to do so. Moreover, he centers all his work around the concepts of value for the historical words spoken and respect for the individual speaker.<sup>94</sup> I believe this element of oral history is a very

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 7.

helpful technique to incorporate into my autobiographical work since the excerpts from remembered conversations, although intensely personal, are to be valued. Their value is based in the fact that they come from living, breathing people who have lived the social history to which they relate. The incidents related reveal a part of their personal life history which ultimately influenced and was influenced by the purpose and direction of their past life, but also influenced the social purpose of the community, society, or home in which it occurred. The usefulness of these experiences is that of connection and control: connecting the past to the present, so that the holder may be able to take control of his/her own future. This connecting idea, borrowed from oral history, enables me to enrich my autobiography still further.

### *Portelli*

In The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories, Form and Meaning in Oral History<sup>95</sup> Portelli follows general guidelines established by Thompson but adds new dimensions to oral history. He identifies how individuals try to create memories in order to make sense of their lives.<sup>96</sup> He advocates the verbalization of experiences and “suppressed memories and forms of expression”<sup>97</sup> used to give voice to those memories. I borrow this notion within the broader confines of autobiographical writing to give voice to suppressed memories of my own. It provides the opportunity for me to share

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<sup>95</sup>Portelli, Death of Luigi Trastulli.

<sup>96</sup>Donald Quataert, editorial commentary on The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History, by Alessandro Portelli (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), i.

<sup>97</sup>Portelli, Death of Luigi Trastulli, viii.

autobiographical experiences based upon reflection and at the same time recognize the validity of the actions and words of others.

Portelli advocates the use of subjectivity that is “the study of the cultural forms and processes by which individuals express their sense of themselves in history”<sup>98</sup> and relies heavily on what he refers to as “the truth of the human heart.”<sup>99</sup> People, Portelli indicates, tell what they believe happened as they interpret personal experience to first give sense and value to their own lives. Second, the events remembered serve to help people link their own lives to the lives of those around them, or to previous and subsequent generations of people. In this way, they try to establish their unique place in history. Third, Portelli insists that the research information oral historians collect is as valid and responsible as research collected in any other way from any other sources.<sup>100</sup> He indicates this is because all people try to construe memories and the content of their lives in order to help them improve their lot in life.<sup>101</sup> When I examined Portelli’s comments in light of what I wanted to do I determined that I was able to borrow his ideas to enhance my autobiography still further. For example, the populations of the three jurisdictions I discuss in my research were influenced by and influenced history. Consolidation impacted upon their lives. Their actions and comments indicate how many reacted to it. My recording of and reaction to consolidation and to the reactions of other people, including teachers, is essentially subjective and involves many of the

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., ix.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., lx.

<sup>100</sup>Portelli, Death of Luigi Trastulli, ix, lx, 90-105.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.



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sentiments that Portelli raises. When he states “my motivation was purely political”<sup>102</sup> Portelli implies the involvement of things political in the lives of ordinary people. As a result, it can be argued that researchers need to account for the influence of things powerful, political (controlled and/or controlling covert and/or overt) when researching, collecting words, writing and interpreting history. Inasmuch as power issues were part of the entire consolidation issue, reference to appropriate official documents provides samples to strengthen my own interpretation of power issues in my study. Portelli indicates that positive, trust-filled human interaction is an explicit element of oral history. I draw from this idea but further contend that trust and integrity are important elements of all research, not just oral historical research. For example, while positive human interaction did exist in some cases in my own personal experience, in some cases it did not. The encounters were sometimes brusque, rude, or authoritarian. However, the words and the actions together are powerful material for an autobiography, since they serve as excellent examples of comparison and contrast. Additionally, when coupled with the written information these encounters provide reinforcement for the view that studying human interaction is a necessary component in studying history. I use Portelli’s ideas further to produce this thesis as a contemporary study, as a vehicle for discussing the past, that may have a link to the future, so that as Portelli advocates there is one continuous flow of words that leads to better understanding of the importance of politics and culture in influencing the lives of people.

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., xi.

*Gluck and Patai*

Gluck and Patai<sup>103</sup> add yet another dimension to oral history which I find useful to strengthen my autobiographical writing. When they state “oral history begins with talk”<sup>104</sup> they are specifically concerned with women’s words and a methodology that is designed carefully to discuss women’s experiences. They look at “oral narratives as an avenue for understanding and documenting women’s culture and history”<sup>105</sup> and for rescuing “women’s words”<sup>106</sup> about their experiences before those words become forever lost. They believe this is necessary in order to enable “women from all walks of life”<sup>107</sup> to be agents of their own destiny as they gain a greater “understanding of the social world.”<sup>108</sup> I found Gluck and Patai’s work useful since the women in my family, others with whom I spoke or whose experiences I shared, represent a cross-section of the kind of women Gluck and Patai describe. Some wanted to be agents of their own destiny and could not. Others seemed content to leave things as they had always been. Others, did take control of their own lives. Gluck and Patai’s interpretation of oral history invites the use of reflective techniques and methodologies to consider, interpret and record the data they glean through both formal interviews and informal conversations. Such techniques provide for discussions of issues of specific importance to females. I both use and am able to benefit from these techniques to bolster my use of

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<sup>103</sup> \*Note: It is my understanding that these two women are feminist authors. I found their work to be rewarding and enriching in both its material and approach. They provided a dimension of writing with which I was as yet unfamiliar.

<sup>104</sup> Gluck and Patai, Women’s Words, Women’s Words, 9.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

autobiography especially since their interpretation provides for the contribution of information in an individualistic ordered way.<sup>109</sup> Human interaction is an important element of all historical writing not just feminist oral history. Consequently, elements of human interaction will be visible in the autobiographical research. In reading Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History<sup>110</sup> it became evident that empathy and sympathy were keynote criteria in obtaining the testimonies and writing the oral histories included in the text. Through writing about my experiences as a female, as a student and later as a teacher, I endeavour to use these same criteria to strengthen my autobiography as I highlight how emotions tied to equity issues were in part emotions I shared with my contemporaries.

Anderson and Jack<sup>111</sup> summarize the contents of Gluck and Patai's work when they say: "the oral history interview demands a shift in methodology from information gathering, where the focus is on the questions, to interaction, where the focus is on process, on the dynamic unfolding of the subject's viewpoint."<sup>112</sup> They add "it is the interactive nature of the interview that allows us to ask for clarification, to notice what questions the subject asks about her own life, to go behind conventional, expected answers to the woman's personal construction of her own experience."<sup>113</sup> I agree that sharing and

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<sup>109</sup>Gluck and Patai, Women's Words, Women's Words. Personal Narratives Group, Interpreting Women's Lives, 2.

<sup>110</sup>Gluck and Patai, Women's Words, Women's Words.

<sup>111</sup>Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," Women's Words, Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History. S.B. Gluck and D. Patai, eds., (New York and London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc. 1991).

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

interaction are necessary components of research. These elements are by implication necessary elements of autobiography. However, where Anderson, Jack and I differ is that first, I do not accept the premise that interview provoked words are the only ones that designate what material is suitable for use in historical reporting. The words we speak or write daily as individuals are made in response to general comments, circumstance, conversations or situations that provoke them. Second, words, autobiographies and narratives have been recorded. Some are found in official documents, informal papers such as letters, diaries, letters to the editor of newspapers, journal publications and notes prepared for use in subsequent publications, and recorded oral histories. The use of such material this way indicates that some historians consider these materials to be valuable sources of historical data. I use the same notion when I relate the content of conversations as part of my autobiographical presentation.

### *Personal Narratives Group*

The Personal Narratives Group<sup>114</sup> include the notion that “both individual agency and social structure must be considered”<sup>115</sup> in historical research. Their narratives “illuminate both the logic of individual courses of action and the effects of systems-level constraints within which those courses evolve.”<sup>116</sup> I use their approach to support my use of autobiography. For example, it is evident that many individuals were influenced by and influenced consolidation. The students I taught, their parents, my

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<sup>114</sup> Note\*: it has been noted that these are feminist writers, not historians. However, that does not, as far as I am concerned, detract from the value of their research or reporting.

<sup>115</sup> Personal Narratives Group, *Interpreting Women's Lives*, 5.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

school chums, colleagues, our families and I were forced to accept government imposed consolidation complete with the controls and constraints that such a system demanded. I believe that by examining written materials and presenting my own experience in autobiography, I reveal some of those constraints. Further, the actions of individuals, the logic for such action, and the constraints against which they were directed may also be made apparent. The Personal Narratives Group believe it is necessary for women to tell their stories in whatever manner is best for them because often those individuals “expose the viewpoint embedded in dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal and because they reveal the reality of a life that defies or contradicts the rules.”<sup>117</sup> This view matches one I held in the post consolidation era, since in many ways I believed that the rules established for male members of the population did not necessarily coincide with those established for females. However, I believe that it is necessary for females to break paradigms of expression and research methodology and presentation so that what they want to say can be said. Pre-established definitions and concepts individuals hold depend at least in part upon their views, experiences and self-image.<sup>118</sup> Having lived the kind of life many of the people in these three areas lived, I believe I am capable of internalizing and drawing upon, where needed, the definitions and concepts of the people involved in the research and clearly relating them to others.

The authors of the Personal Narratives Group indicate recorded histories should develop “from a shared passion for a good story and our desire to understand and

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 11.

interpret it for ourselves and others.”<sup>119</sup> Moreover, to be understood and interpreted these stories need to have a context, that is, they “had to be thoughtfully situated in time and space”<sup>120</sup> by a predetermined logic and method. Since my personal belief is that history involves an element of story telling, I infer that the use of autobiography enables me to best tell the historical story I wish to tell. The times and places of my research are easily definable. A logical order to present the research material is possible to organize. It is a story capable of the telling and is believable and understandable. It is an exposé to which others may be able to relate. The narrative forms which I merge with autobiography to additionally strengthen and diversify it enable me “to understand how women themselves interpreted their own life experiences.”<sup>121</sup> They also provide opportunity for the emphasizing of the important issues brought about by “the realities and conditions of inequality.”<sup>122</sup>

The reporting of experiences in narratives, oral history, autobiography, or story telling is valid. The Personal Narratives Group call this validity “truths”<sup>123</sup> when they state “we knew that fundamental truths were embedded and reflected in women’s experiences as revealed in their life stories.”<sup>124</sup> This validity arises because the individuals relating their experiences and thoughts are willing to expose their innermost thoughts, emotions and secrets to the scrutiny of others. Such self-exposure involves a degree of risk-

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 7.

taking for the contributor who has no assurance that his/her views will be accepted. In the case of this thesis, personal experiences, references to conversations I shared with others and the observations I have recorded, reveal numerous truths which provide a subjective dimension to the question of examining consolidation of Manitoba Schools. I argue that the validity of which the Personal Narratives Group speaks can be extended to include this thesis as well.

#### **4. Document-based Research: Internal Criticism**

Since neither autobiography as defined by Grumet and Brookes, nor oral history as defined by Thompson, Portelli, Gluck and Patai and the Personal Narratives Group completely satisfied what I believed that my research demanded, I determined that document-based research would be necessary in order to close a missing link in my autobiography. I further determined that a substantial proportion of such research would need to be housed in a special section of my thesis entitled "A Critical Review of Contemporary Interpretations". The use of documents and personal papers enables me to triangulate, verify and compare my experiences to what has been recorded in the documentation by examining claims made by protagonists and literary contributors. It enables me to make sense of my own memories and to clarify, for myself, the positions held by myself and others as it enables me to use my own experience and knowledge to look at, refute, challenge or agree with others. This arises partially because I am able to consider questions that arise surrounding the hegemonic establishment, cultural environments, and authority figures. Examining such documentation provides me with

the opportunity to research and include in my autobiographical presentation the reactions and views of others towards the 'official line'.

My own personal files, such as souvenirs, mementos, conversation summaries, news clips, samples of work, photographs, memoirs, notes, personal letters, keepsakes, personal documents, such as diaries and journals, and other materials, along with my reflections, supply the basic material for the thesis development. However, inasmuch as these are personal documents the inclusion of reference to official and public documents in this work helps, I believe, to fill the void that lack of access to personal papers may create. Among the materials selected for consideration are journal or newspaper articles including publications of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, official documents such as those published by the Department of Education as annual reports, and the writings of those influencing or influenced by the establishment of consolidation such as the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. As well, reference to reports by educational leaders and the research and writings of other educators and researchers, both then and now, are considered necessary for inclusion, since in many respects they have recorded the written testimonies and/or experiences of contributors. Such work supplies me with a data base around which to design an approach and purpose to writing my thesis and to modify an autobiographical approach.

Interspersed within the formal documentation are recalled references to casual formal and informal conversations and/or comments. These have been drawn meticulously from personal reflection of re-experienced experiences. Through their use, which is



assisted by my constantly referring to documents of all types, both personal and public, I am able to examine and interpret the uniqueness of my emotions, thoughts, incidents and experiences subjectively in relation to the experience of others. By positioning my own autobiographical reflections and material in line with that produced during the same era by others, I hope to critique more effectively my own views and my findings.

The people with whom conversations occurred include members of my family, friends, acquaintances, students and members of the larger community who shared the same lifestyle, culture, or experiences I did. My memory of their comments is used to add emphasis to my own words and experiences, to clarify, to validate, to provide examples of comparison and contrast, and to say better what I cannot say. However, even as the conversations accessed serve to emphasize that this is my reporting of history, not theirs, the inclusion of their words serves to emphasize my contact, my experience, my feelings, my behaviour in contrast or accord with their own and to establish my place and time in the history of the geographic community. Such interpretation enables me to maintain a connection to the past from the present. It allows me an avenue to, in the future, add another chapter to the work and write about my experiences of the rest of my teaching years.

Additionally, understanding why people behaved as they did may provide insight for researchers into understanding future human actions over, for example, additional educational reform. Even as the use of document-based research allows me to critically evaluate the vision of consolidation both government and individuals held, it also leads

me to question whether this same vision is again in evidence surrounding public school division boundary review and/or on-going school reform.

Inasmuch as it has been continuously my intent to design a thesis that would protect the identity of my subjects in the three communities in which I lived, document-based research enables me to do so because I am able to draw heavily on my own reflections and material and the printed work of others. However, this respect for their privacy should in no way be taken to stand for a reduction in the authenticity or validity of their contributions.

Document-based research also gives me an avenue from which to try to remain focused in my subjective reporting. In actual life, conversations and dealings with teachers, children, parents, and school administrators manifested varying degrees of interaction. Daily experiences in communication were often accompanied by facial expressions, gestures or other body language which are a part of my oral experience. By continuously referring to the printed word I hope to present a clear and unembellished picture to try to convey some of the accompanying movement.

In conclusion, drawing on documents for autobiographical purposes assists this work by enabling me to more critically capture and examine experiences, to interpret my findings in relation to those of others and to present and use the data effectively in analyzing the question of consolidation of Manitoba's Schools.

## ***B. Conceptual Tools***

As its central purpose, in this thesis, I examine how I, and how I believe that the people in each of three geographical areas in which I lived, understood and made sense of the process of consolidation of Manitoba's public schools. The conceptual framework selected for analysis allows me to compare and contrast how similar and differing outlooks, positions and attitudes existed and co-existed in dealing with the process of consolidation in the areas selected. Furthermore, it allows me to explore the subjective dimensions of the political process.

Upon re-examining my mementos and memories I identified recurrent issues. Power<sup>125</sup> and 'knowledge' issues seemed closely tied to hegemony which seemed reinforced by the educational bureaucracy. For example, upon introspection, I realized that political issues had influenced not only my life, but the lives of others as political agendas were often carried out through the auspices of the school. I remembered also how family discussions frequently led to an examination of how our values and cultural traditions were being influenced by the activities of the government and the public school system. Therefore, I decided that what was needed was a discussion of the concepts of culture, values, and hegemony as well as the school as a set of political relations.

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<sup>125</sup> \*Note: It is understood that authority and control are related aspects of power. However, in this document I have chosen the term power, as I define it. That is: the use of a position, of knowledge, of information or of cultural heredity or any other position of strength including legal authority, to monitor and influence overtly or covertly the actions of others so that a predetermined, often unidentified, goal may be met or maintained. It is further understood that power can be misused, even abused, and that those in positions of authority (teachers, parents, government agencies) have what Weber has called positional power as well as personal power. Since this paper is not endeavouring to define control, power and authority there may be occasions in it when the three are used interchangeably or together to emphasize a point or because there are other implicit or explicit reasons to do so.

## 1. Concept of culture

In this thesis, I am using three complementary and parallel notions of culture. *First, culture is treated primarily as the site of a struggle between forces which promote change and those which oppose it.* As such, it is continuously in a state of flux. For example, on one hand Carnoy's global notion of culture as the "totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a population"<sup>126</sup> helps me to conceptualize the general attitude and resistance to change that pervaded Smalltown and to some extent certain members of Hometown communities.<sup>127</sup> This notion also helps me also to conceptualize some of the generally strong reactions opposing school consolidation in those areas. *Second*, I borrow from Anne Louise Brookes' understanding of culture. Her notion helps me to better understand Northtown culture. She emphasizes the interaction, ideas, visions and experiences of all members and the connection between

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<sup>126</sup> M. Carnoy, *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2d College ed. (New York, American College Publications, 1985), 10.

<sup>127</sup> Barrow and Milburn indicate that culture as growth is "the way of life, manners, and customs of a group." Robin Barrow and Geoffrey Milburn, *A Critical Dictionary of Educational Concepts* (Brighton, Sussex, England: Whitesheaf Books, 1985), 62.

\*Note: I interpret this to represent a more universal view of how a general population of people sharing the same general geographical area does things. The practices of culture are lived processes; that is, culture defines how different groups experience and respond to day to day occurrences. Culture is a description of the actions of people in special groups within a bigger population. While such a definition of culture is implicitly and de facto included in most definitions or other interpretations of culture, this is *not* how I choose to define it. However, illustrations of experiences relate that this is in fact, how many members of both Smalltown and Hometown communities considered culture to be. In this regard, culture requires individuals to hold on to some beliefs, attitudes and values that have been transmitted unchanged from one generation to another. Examples, could include cultural rituals, art forms, or kinship relationships. It has been my experience that this interpretation of culture was held by a great number of people in numerous rural prairie communities in which I spent many years of my life. It became more evident to me as I grew older, especially as I entered Senior High and University environments that there were different cultural expectations for female and male members of my family, my cultural group, and my 'geographical' group.

culture and knowledge so that *culture is viewed as redefined knowledge centered around the importance of relating personal experience.*<sup>128</sup> To Brookes story-telling, identifying, and unveiling “divisions of socially constructed dualities”<sup>129</sup> enables individuals such as myself “to better understand how our collective and individual identities are culturally produced.”<sup>130</sup> I believe that the use of memory work and the autobiographical reconstruction of my every day experience, enables me to illustrate elements of those dualities. To further promote change, Brookes encourages individuals to examine cultural environments to see “how ideologies are organized around particular perspectives”<sup>131</sup> and how ideologies provide dualities that provoke conflict and compromise and the questioning of basic premises including those that deal with women’s issues.<sup>132</sup> Interpreting culture as Brookes suggests allows me to conduct such an examination. *Third, I take Giroux’s and McLaren’s notion of culture as a site for struggle over values and political agendas.* They relate culture to forms and development of democracy.<sup>133</sup> Their notion of culture helps me to understand more clearly the process of acceptance in Northtown.

Culture evolves when individuals and groups begin to take charge of their own lives, to demand answers to established views and to broaden personal knowledge and

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<sup>128</sup>Brookes, *Feminist Pedagogy*, 31.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

<sup>133</sup>Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy, the State and Cultural Struggle* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 3.

control.<sup>134</sup> However, situations requiring compromise or creating conflict may arise out of defining the ownership of those actions and/or cultural practices. Who belongs to which group and who does not? Promoters of cultural change respect, invite, recognize and understand cultural disparity out of a genuine recognition that the contributions of all cultural members contribute to a better social structure. Those opposing change argue that change is not necessary and may in fact be harmful to existing social arrangements.

A number of questions grew out of that conceptual framework. For example, how was my education affected, directed influenced, achieved in educational institutions? Was there a pre-determined covert goal to which I was unwittingly being directed? How did my cultural experiences compare with that of other females in those geographic areas? Were my experiences unique, or did I simply think that they were? Was the 'broader society' aware of this routing of its female members? Could recording my personal reflections, experiences, memories, conversations be reconstructed and interpreted as actual contributions to knowledge?<sup>135</sup> An eclectic definition of culture provides me with the opportunity to explore responses to those questions.

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<sup>134</sup>Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation (New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Company, 1989), n.p.

<sup>135</sup>Brookes, Feminist Pedagogy, 107.

## 2. Concept of value<sup>136</sup>

“A value is a choice of an individual or a social system as to what is worthy of effort, devotion, and allegiance.”<sup>137</sup> Values serve as the central core that influence how individuals relate to others, choose political ideologies, and develop and practice personal morality.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, for my research, values serve as a *basis of questions*. For example, in Manitoba during the research time in question, were there great differences in the values held between rural and urban settings? During the 1960s the phrase ‘the new morality’ was interpreted by myself and many of my friends and their families to refer to the set of emerging values that challenged established social conventions and how people construed their sense of morality. However, it was unheard of for many of us to define and develop individual or unique codes of morality out of fear of non-conformity with existing family values.

Osborne indicates that different cultural groups can have different values.<sup>139</sup> This implies that values are both contextual and socially constructed and that circumstances can change the application of values. In the research portion of this thesis, illustrations will be made that indicate how socially constructed values were held and what some of

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<sup>136</sup>\*Note: I am not speaking of universal values here, nor those ascribed to a brotherhood or sisterhood of humankind. It is accepted as a ‘given’ that universal values will, of necessity, constitute the communities under discussion in this thesis, especially since all are geographical localities in the same province in a democratic country. I have, of necessity for consideration to space, included such by implication.

<sup>137</sup>Harold W. Bowles and James A. Davenport, *Introduction to Educational Leadership* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1975), 427.

<sup>138</sup>Romulo F. Magsino and John C. Long, “Toward the Intrinsic Good: Happiness, Rationality and Schooling”. In *Teaching, Schools and Society*, ed. Evelina Orteza y Miranda and Romulo F. Magsino (Hampshire, Eng. and Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press, 1990), 67-89. M. Downey and A. V. Kelly, *Moral Education: Theory and Practice*, (London, Eng.: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1978). Note: \*This text deals almost exclusively with the question of moral education.

<sup>139</sup>Osborne, “*Introduction*”, 9.

those were. Descriptions of experiences will illustrate how deeply social interaction and values are connected. For example, it is interesting how the attitude prevalent in Smalltown and Hometown, where there was strong preservation and limited questioning of values, contrasted with that held in Northtown. In the latter, free and independent thinking and the breaking of existing paradigms were encouraged. Personally, I experienced a sharp change and examination of values when I moved to Northtown. For one, I began to ask myself more questions about both the environment in which I presently found myself and those from which I had moved.

Since each group believed its set of values and its code of morality was the correct one, how did powerful members establish their will, their values, their morality on both students and staff, on 'weaker' members of the community and on women? Did the individuals who elected to live and work, especially to teach, in these jurisdictions meet with or at least outwardly appear to agree to conform to such values? Were value differences the sole basis from which compromise or conflicts arose when individuals, community groups, and/or families in Smalltown and Hometown independently tried to develop 'the new morality' according to their definitions? Were family values conflicting with cultural or political values as to who was responsible for the actions of youth? Was there really a hidden curriculum in the schools?<sup>140</sup> If so, what really was its agenda?

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<sup>140</sup>Walter Feinberg and Jonas Soltis, School and Society (New York, NY: Columbia University Teachers' College Press, 1985), 59. Ishmael J. Baksh, "The Hidden Curriculum". In Teaching Schools and Society, ed. Evelina Orteza y Miranda and Romulo F. Magsino (Hampshire, Eng. and Bristol PA: The Falmer Press, 1990), 170-189. \*Note: It was not until a number of years after leaving high school that I even realized such a thing as 'a covert curriculum' existed! It came as a severe shock that people I had believed



### 3. Concept of hegemony

According to Chantal Mouffe's interpretation, Gramsci's hegemony depends upon a relationship or association that exists between the ruling group and a ruled group.<sup>141</sup>

As a form of control<sup>142</sup> "hegemony can be defined as an organizing principle or world view (or combination of world views) that is diffused by agencies of ideological control or socialization into every area of daily life."<sup>143</sup> It is also the center from which flows definitions and applications of knowledge and values. In the case of this thesis, the agencies of control are the department of education and the proponents of educational change. The organizing principle is that of consolidation. Culture and communities are continuously in a state of flux wherein there is a continuous change and interchange of ideas; those ideas can be accepted willingly or they can be imposed. I interpret Weiler as stating this when she writes "societies are not homogeneous, but contain competing classes; the dominant intellectuals will be the transmitters of the hegemonic ideology of the dominant class."<sup>144</sup> In the three jurisdictions I consider, members of the competing classes include those opposed to change and consolidation as well as those in favour of it.

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had the best interests of students at heart, to assist them scholastically to the highest potential of individual academic excellence, could be operating from anything but an 'up front' basis. When I became aware of the subtle influences of community, governments, churches and so on in education, and in mind control and direction of youth, after my initial anger passed I began to experience a deep sadness.

<sup>141</sup>Chantal Mouffe, "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci", in Culture Ideology and Social Process: A Reader ed. Tony Bennett, Graham Martin, Colin Mercer and Janet Woolcott (London, England: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd., in association with The Open University Press, 1981), 231.

<sup>142</sup>Kathleen Weiler, Women Teaching For Change: Gender Class and Power (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1988), 14.

<sup>143</sup>Carl Boggs, Gramsci's Marxism (London, England: Pluto Press, 1976), 39.

<sup>144</sup>Weiler, Women Teaching For Change, 14-15.

Osborne indicates Gramsci used the idea of hegemony to “describe the processes by which people come to accept a given state of affairs as natural and inevitable and even for the best, even though in some objective sense they are disadvantaged by it.”<sup>145</sup> In this thesis, I explore how I personally experienced the ideological struggle and the articulation of the hegemonic principle as a student and a teacher. The conceptualization of *hegemony as a process* allows me to use an autobiographical approach to illustrate both personal and political experiences. Conceptualizing hegemony in this way allows me to examine instances of conflict and compromise and to best relate my experiences and relationships with other members of the educational community, such as the teachers’ association, parents, students and trustees, for example.

The conflict/compromise struggle often occurs as those who wish to maintain a historical or cultural sameness often engage in a hegemonic power struggle with those who advocate change. Many things including the demographics, histories, habits and career choices of a population influence the process of articulating alternative hegemonic principles. Examining the concept of hegemony as a process allows me to illustrate how the pursuit of professional recognition is intensified within the struggle for ideological hegemony. This conceptualization enables me to explore examples of the processes working for and in resistance to consolidation. It also provides me with opportunities to recapitulate experiences showing examples of a struggle between those who wish to reproduce cultural, economic, academic and social conditions unchanged

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<sup>145</sup>Osborne, “Introduction”, 11.

from one generation to the next, and those who wish to take active control of their own lives, thought processes, and actions.<sup>146</sup> As an extension to this, I am able to unveil instances of covert politics that had been utilized so cleverly that those disadvantaged by it either did not know what happened, or no longer believed it necessary or possible to do anything to reverse the action.

The process of re-negotiating hegemony affected education and the lives of young people, especially my students. The process was also played out differently in small rural and larger urban settings. In viewing hegemony as a process I am able to incorporate the concepts of culture and value into hegemony as I examine stereotypes, fallacies and misconceptions held of women, of teachers and of students and relate the result of those examinations in the research portion of this paper. And lastly, by interpreting the concept of hegemony as understood here I am able to facilitate the understanding of two opposing reactions to consolidation. Additionally, I am able to determine my relational power to that of other protagonists by locating myself in time and place with reference to those two poles.

#### **4. The school as a set of political relations**

In discussing “what schools are for in a democratic society”<sup>147</sup> J. Goodlad indicates that there is a “multi-layered context”<sup>148</sup> in which all teaching occurs. This multi-layered

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<sup>146</sup>Paulo Freire, The Politics of Education: Culture Power and Liberation (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1985). Paulo Freire, Education for Critical Consciousness (New York, N Y: A Continuum Book-The Seabury Press, 1973). Note: \* this has been a consistent theme in works I have consulted by and about Freire.

<sup>147</sup>J. Goodlad, “The Occupation of Teaching in Schools”. In The Moral Dimensions of Teaching, ed. John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, Kenneth A. Sirotnik (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), 18.

relationship is subject to direction, influence and causality from influences and protagonists who may have differing, even opposing, often covert agendas. In this thesis, therefore, as sites where teaching occurs *schools are sites of educational development and political relationships wherein inter-related power and knowledge issues are played out as they mix with or form a part of the frame of reference held by individuals and/or groups*. In Hometown and Smalltown, for example, the balance of power and control of such academic or 'educational' matters was determined and controlled by a small number of closely knit, often wealthy, and politically powerful individuals. In Northtown, there was more of a community involvement, a spirit and move towards change, a drive to make things 'better' and to work to those ends as a community wherein a few knowledgeable people would serve as models and consultants. The understanding of knowledge in the school setting was conditioned by the dominant ideologies in each setting.

Additionally, in Smalltown and Hometown 'knowledge' was mainly understood as the reproduction of memorized details 'banked' for future use. Pedagogically, this approach to knowledge included acquiescence to authority, and a position of obedience. In this instance the emphasis is on what many philosophers define as 'knowing what.' In Northtown, however, the reformationist concept that knowledge is created and recreated constantly as the lives of people and students change was more evident.<sup>149</sup> In

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<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

<sup>149</sup>Freire, *Critical Consciousness*. \*Note: This is the general theme of many of Freire's works. As a result, no specific pagination is included. \*Note: It may be that individuals, in Northtown, involved in educational administration or leadership roles were, in fact, influenced by the work of writers such as

this case, the broad definition of the word knowledge as used will be what many philosophers refer to as 'knowing how'.

During consolidation, state education "was self-evidently an organized attempt to shape people's thinking. It represented an attempt by the state to assume powers which had traditionally been left to the family, the community, and the church."<sup>150</sup> I can relate to Osborne's comments. My family and some of our friends saw and felt that their values were being eroded over time by agencies of power that were too strong for them to oppose. Proponents of consolidation had the full power and support of the state authority behind them. In the face of what we interpreted to be over-whelming strength, we grew to accept as legitimate the establishment of consolidation, since neither we nor our friends were powerful enough to do anything about it. In my own family, education was such a priority we grew to accept the validity of consolidation, *because* it was sanctioned by the school.<sup>151</sup>

Educational reform and political power were closely tied together. For example, in Smalltown and in Hometown, although to a lesser degree, local school boards believed the best way to retain a measure of local control was to comply with the provincial

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Freire. However, I have no clear evidence to indicate that they were. It is my present perception that Maria Montessori was greatly admired by several educational leaders including at least one superintendent.

<sup>150</sup> Osborne, "Introduction", 10.

<sup>151</sup> \*Note: I also remember witnessing and experiencing outpourings of this sentiment in Hometown and especially Smalltown. As I remember it, people, including family and close family friends felt that some things the provincial government wanted to do through consolidation were immoral and were eroding their authority within the family. In Smalltown, several moved their children into parochial schools to try to offset what they seriously referred to as the destruction of their family's culture and morals by 'big brother.' They resented what I remember them defining as the department of education's intrusion into their lives.

regulations concerning consolidation and then manipulate them to local ends. Parents, clergymen, and 'respectable local residents' often acted as unofficial school 'inspectors'. In Smalltown this sentiment extended to unexpected, often confrontational, visits to classrooms by parents, for example. In contrast, in Hometown and Northtown the classroom visitors were invited, and visits were usually cordial. Each individual had his/her own personal agenda and expectations of schools and teachers. Sometimes these expectations, did not agree with those of other community members or the state and led to conflict. At other times, what began as conflict ended as compromise. However, it can be asserted that in Hometown and Smalltown Osborne's comment that "there was a contradiction between the priorities of the policy makers at the center, for example in the case of school consolidation, and the practices of small rural communities"<sup>152</sup> is applicable to my findings. What the state wanted and what happened were not always the same; and, because they were not the same, issues involving power were fought politically as education and knowledge issues.

My 'findings' have been sparked by asking myself introspective questions which grew out of working to understand and make sense of the reality in which I was living. Were subtle, rude or even abusive actions of authority figures towards teachers in Smalltown the outcomes of or precursors to covert political power struggles? Were the encouragements educators received to break existing paradigms in Northtown made because educators were given real autonomy or because the local boards wanted them

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<sup>152</sup>Osborne, "Introduction", 16. \*Note: Comments re 'intrusion' are appropriate here too.

to think they were autonomous for other reasons? What did consolidation really mean for pedagogical trends, women's issues, and questions of teachers' professional autonomy? Were individuals who seemed active as powerful community members also powerful in the school? What were their views? Was there true cultural diversity, history and individual opportunity to succeed or was there an overt centrist movement to have everyone turn out the same way? For example, the curriculum guidelines established by the department of education contained predetermined value-laden curriculum. It can be argued that this curriculum was so selected to reproduce the views encouraged by the department of education.

### **5. Closing Comments**

In the 1960s and 1970s consolidation was becoming firmly established in Manitoba Schools. At that time, I was struggling with the normal problems of youth and with the additionally serious concern of leaving 'home', establishing a career, and dealing with the values, cultural, social and emotional 'tapes' with which I had lived. I became aware that the existing models of education with which I had been raised were being challenged. Additionally, women, educators and students began to ask more questions about such things as gender, pedagogical, and social issues, and to persist in their questioning especially if they did not receive satisfactory answers. I have lived almost innumerable experiences arising out of challenges and issues that arose in Manitoba schools because I asked questions. It is these experiences and my understanding of them that I would like to share with others. I believe that the conceptual framework

and tools of analysis that I have selected for this thesis will facilitate the systematic explanation of this experience.

### III. A Review of the Literature

*Consolidation* of Manitoba Schools into such units was begun in the 1950s but did not take root until the 1960s. However, in considering the impact and/or outcomes of consolidation in three Manitoba school jurisdictions it is first necessary to view what researchers consider consolidation to be. Gregor and Wilson<sup>153</sup> best describe it as “the amalgamation, through referenda, of small ‘districts’ into larger ‘divisions,’ the union of elementary and secondary systems under division-wide administration working under the direction of elective boards of trustees and superintendents”<sup>154</sup> so that the “size and character of the divisions enabled them to provide services (such as specialized consultative staff in such areas as art, music, physical education and special education) that the smaller districts had not been able to provide, and schools large enough to provide a full curriculum and adequate facilities.”<sup>155</sup> The school was to be located at a site central to the division as a whole. This thesis concurs with Gregor and Wilson’s definition of consolidation.

The remaining literature, however, dealing with the question of consolidation, from the perspective I have chosen to examine it, using the methodology I have selected to examine it, is severely limited. First, there is no systematic analysis of consolidation

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<sup>153</sup>Alexander Gregor and Keith Wilson, The Development of Education in Manitoba (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 1984).

<sup>154</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 137.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid.



issues in the history of education in Manitoba. The topic is introduced and discussed in limited detail in Gregor's and Wilson's<sup>156</sup> work but it does not use the subjective dimension. Essentially, their work deals with the issue of consolidation as one of a series of elements experienced in Manitoba as the system of education was being re-structured. The topic is presented aseptically and considers few if any subjective views by protagonists in the question of consolidation, beyond those in officialdom. As well, it is very nearly a chronological report.

Additionally, B. Levin's work "The Struggle over Modernization in Manitoba Education: 1924-1960"<sup>157</sup> endeavours to show a more interpretive treatment of the question of consolidation. However, the article deals more with stating and discussing themes and changes in the recommendations of the McFarlane Report and government expectations than in illustrating the effectiveness of implementing those changes.

A second limitation arises in that the literature does not deal with the subjective dimension of consolidation, and how it was experienced by students and teachers.

Mary Brewster Perfect's thesis entitled "One Hundred Years in the History of the Rural Schools of Manitoba: Their Formation, ReOrganization and Dissolution 1871- 1971"<sup>158</sup> is a massive work indicative of long hours of research and correlation of documents.

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<sup>156</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba.

<sup>157</sup>Benjamin Levin, "The Struggle over Modernization in Manitoba Education: 1924-1960", in Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices, R. del C. Bruno-Jofré, ed., (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 84.

<sup>158</sup>Mary Brewster Perfect, One Hundred Years in the History of the Rural Schools of Manitoba: Their Formation, Reorganization and Dissolution (1871-1971), M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1978 (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba).

However, it is highly descriptive. For example, one entire chapter deals with the “Compilation of Names, Numbers, Formation and Reorganization Dates together with the 1971 status of the Rural School Districts of Manitoba and a Record of the Administrative Devices Used to Create, Change and Dissolve them.”<sup>159</sup> As well, although she also states, “successive governments, even though they had at their disposal the means of reorganizing school units, were usually politically adroit enough to proceed with such changes slowly and with a minimum of direct intervention,”<sup>160</sup> Perfect makes no substantial reference to the subjective acceptance or rejection of those changes, or the conflict or compromise that either caused or resulted in their use, especially with reference to consolidation issues. There was no clearly observable indication of views and opinions of the ordinary people in those areas.

Additionally, although Carolyn Lintott’s recent work connects the past to the present in examining boundary changes she states “more simply put, in this study it is the writer’s intention to examine the question of boundary reorganization and division size as a vehicle for understanding policy decision-making, and the role of research in that process.”<sup>161</sup> She uses as the foundation for her research the Royal Commission on Education of 1957 and the resulting McFarlane Report, and the Blueprint for Change initiated by Clayton Manness on behalf of the Manitoba government in 1993. To support her work she cites excerpts from both the McFarlane Report and the Manitoba

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<sup>159</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., iv.

<sup>161</sup> Carolyn Lintott, SCHOOL DIVISION SIZE: An Examination of School Division Size with a view to developing an understanding of policy decision-making, and the role of research in that process, M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1995 (Winnipeg, Manitoba: University of Manitoba).

Teachers' Society position paper submitted to that commission in 1957. Of note, for this thesis, she states in reference to the changes precipitated by the McFarlane Report, that "what had changed since 1890 were not the arguments for or against consolidation but rather the context within which those points of view were put forth, discussed and decided upon."<sup>162</sup> However, although she achieves her purpose, like Perfect, Lintott includes no subjective comments, descriptions or reactions of individuals affected by the boundary changes, policies and decision-making about how they felt as *individuals*, not as part of a group. There is no relating of autobiographical experiences, no emotion, no oral history. There is no examining of conflict or compromise that may have arisen out of the context of how the arguments for consolidation were considered. Instead, she presents views and opinions of agencies and groups. For this reason, despite the excellent quality of the work itself, there is a literary limitation in Lintott's work. Hers is an administrative and policy analysis.

I could not find any autobiographical texts dealing with my questions and concerns about consolidation as it impacted on individual lives. No history thesis approached the topic on a personal basis. It seemed that the material researched consistently dealt with issues on a collective level only, or on a highly impersonal level, or on an 'issue within an issue' level.

Osborne writes "we need to know much more about the attitudes and reactions of those for whom education was intended (or to whom it was aimed), be they students, parents,

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<sup>162</sup>Ibid., 29.

teachers or whoever. We know very little about the actual impact of education on those who received it.”<sup>163</sup> I contend that part of the reason educators do not have this information is because literature, research studies and theses about it, are not available. The documents that do exist present only one dimension, or are few in number, or are limited by size or publication constraints, so that they cannot provide as much information as their contributors might wish to present. Secondly, I contend that the literature is extremely limited, because existing paradigms surrounding papers presented as ‘research documents’ have been modeled on traditional ones which did not encourage experimentation in presentation.

As a result, despite the usefulness and broad scope of bibliography and literature used as a research base for this thesis, I concluded that I needed to draw more intensely on personal experience, mementos, autobiography, techniques drawn from oral history, reflections of personal conversations and dialogues, and documents, than those published exclusively to ‘report’ from one point of view or another, consolidation or educational issues relevant to education of the 1960s and 1970s.

## **IV. Historical Background**

### ***A. Modernization of Manitoba Education: process and resistance***

In the early 1900s and extending into the post war years, the “ethnically diverse character of the population continued to have its influence on the development of

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<sup>163</sup> Osborne, “Introduction”, 6.

education”<sup>164</sup> in Manitoba. This influence led to a number of changes. So great was this change that local boards and school district personnel were elected to respond to cultural outcomes expected by members of those ethnically diverse populations. At the same time, “the ethnic diversity of the province posed problems of school administration and teacher employment”<sup>165</sup> since many different cultural groups held differing ideas on the value of education. In many rural areas ideas about the value of education were attached to the perceptions people developed and maintained of those who ‘taught.’ While perceptions in urban areas were more favourable towards education, the prewar, war and post war years caused financial burdens on the nation and at all levels including provincial and local boards of education.

Over time, revisions occurred to government documents such as The Public Schools’ Act. As well, the powers of the newly established educational authority based in Winnipeg gradually became redefined, refocused and broadened by successive provincial governments in an attempt to develop and achieve common goals. Input from trustees, school inspectors, parents, community members, teachers and a growing teachers’ union influenced many of the changes and decisions that, once started, were to continue into the 1950s and beyond.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 126.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>166</sup>Rosa del C. Bruno-Jofré, Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993). Note: \* A number of articles in this volume deal with educational issues and activities that cover a significant number of years in Manitoba’s educational history. Consequently, no specific page reference applies as the ‘one’ source.

It is significant that “legislation in the war years was necessarily limited in scope, the most significant action taken, being the establishment of a discipline committee and the incorporation of the Manitoba Teachers’ Society and the Manitoba Trustees’ Association.”<sup>167</sup> Both of these organizations were to continue to grow and change in size, scope and power over future decades. Their subsequent change overtime was to produce situations in which questions of hegemony, control and professional issues, precipitated both conflicting and compromising situations. Second, the establishment of an act that provided for the “payment of retirement allowances to teachers”<sup>168</sup> was enacted in 1947. Educators across the province who expected to make a life career of teaching, began to work for and acknowledge the benefit of membership in an association of professional educators who could work as a united group to protect and work for the long-term interests of teachers.<sup>169</sup> Eventual association concerns would come to include collective bargaining, teacher welfare, professional development, contractual concerns and other educational issues. However, the control of such issues, such as teacher autonomy, curriculum development, teacher certification, decision-making and the professionalization of teachers were to remain within the jurisdiction of the provincial government.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 108.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>169</sup>James Chafe, Chalk, Sweat, and Cheers: A History of the Manitoba Teachers’ Society (Winnipeg, Mb: Manitoba Teachers’ Society, 1969). Note: \* This work on the growth and development of the MTS clearly illustrates the need to work for their long-term interests.

<sup>170</sup>The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, “The Department’s Amazing Oversight: Teachers’ Professional Rights”, The Manitoba Teacher, vol.73, no.4): 5.

The most significant development that influenced education in the 1960s and 1970s was the implementation of consolidation as encouraged through the findings of the Royal Commission on Education chaired by Dr. R. O. McFarlane. It began its work in 1957. The results later became called the "McFarlane Report." The committee had been commissioned to "study and report on all aspects of education in Manitoba, up to the university level."<sup>171</sup> The report was complex, detailed and considered many aspects of education. Those most notable, for the terms of this paper, deal with consolidation issues about such topics as educational opportunities, redefining school district boundaries, pedagogical and curriculum concerns, salaries and credentials of teachers, and equity issues.

In summary, the McFarlane report proposed several things, some of which have a direct bearing on this paper. First, students experiencing socio-economic or other inequities, and those in rural or isolated communities would be given equal access to educational opportunities like those afforded their city contemporaries. This would be achieved by consolidating better more diverse facilities into larger centers. Included would be technical, vocational, business education and university entrance programs, for example. Second, busing costs and the implementation of bus routes in rural areas would be closely monitored to ensure no students were adversely affected by inaccessibility or prolonged travel time. Third, teachers would be paid according to educational qualifications and experience. They would be expected to hold certificates

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<sup>171</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 108.

that had been validated by the central governing authority who would ensure that standards of employee pay equity were followed. Fourth, specialization was encouraged to provide students with the best 'expertise' available. As a codicil, females were encouraged to avail themselves of advancement opportunities. Fifth, a joint funding arrangement was to be established between the province and local boards to ensure the fiscal possibility of reform since many rural areas were not affluent and could not afford individually to comply with the funding requirements such reform implied. Sixth, inspection and field services were to remain the purview of the provincial ministry, although local boards in some cases could be asked to assist in their selection. Seventh, the Department of Education retained responsibility for defining what texts, educational instructional materials, and curriculum would be authorized for use in Manitoba schools and how, when, and for whom examinations should be conducted.

In short, two repeating themes appear in the McFarlane Report. First, "the commission ... strongly supported consolidation"<sup>172</sup> of small school districts into larger divisions. At its onset, consolidation was concerned with secondary school boundaries, however, it grew to include all provincial public schools. Second, McFarlane's committee indicated that "the Manitoba economy was certainly in a position to support higher levels of expenditure from Provincial general revenue."<sup>173</sup> As a consequence, proponents of consolidation said Manitoba had been "spending very little on education

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<sup>172</sup>Levin, The Struggle over Modernization, 84.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., 86.



compared with the province's wealth"<sup>174</sup> with the result that educational quality had suffered. The committee members were therefore successful in urging the immediate implementation of the changes implied in the McFarlane Report's recommendations.

However, those changes affected the lives of many people including the residents of Hometown, Smalltown and Northtown. The changes also led to many instances of conflict and compromise in Manitoba schools between 1961 and 1975, even as new educational history was being made.

### ***B. A Critical Review of Contemporary Interpretations***

It is necessary to note that the literature does not explicitly state the feelings and thoughts of the protagonists clearly. What did the students, their parents, the teachers, the school district/division board members and the department of education personnel think of education and consolidation? How did the suggestions made in the McFarlane report actually become incorporated into school sites? In order to answer those questions, it became necessary for me to add a dimension to my thesis by examining the historical background of Manitoba and also conducting a critical review of contemporary interpretations. As a consequence, I examined many articles including those written by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Provincial Government, and other contemporary writers of the time in order to examine questions dealing with and arising out of the government's teachers' and students' vision of consolidation, the pedagogical trends of the time, women's

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<sup>174</sup>Ibid.

issues, teachers as professionals, and teaching as a profession. These provide not so much a literature review as a chronological and historical reporting of my findings from other writers' work. Their validity in this work is secured in the methodology which includes document-centered research.

### 1. Government Vision Of Education 1961

While "initially school systems were the product of complex processes of political conflict and negotiation among competing groups,"<sup>175</sup> in Manitoba the consolidation of divisions allowed the department of education to develop a vision<sup>176</sup> of education which permitted the restructuring and redefining of existing district boundaries so that a unified approach to education was established.<sup>177</sup>

Included in the government's vision were such things as "the establishment of vocational high school facilities to provide at least 50 per cent academic instruction in university entrance or general courses"<sup>178</sup> as well as "special classes including occupational entrance students."<sup>179</sup> Also included were schools built "in such a way as to require the least total number of student hours to be spent on a bus or other form of transportation."<sup>180</sup> It also included "the establishment of elementary schools ...

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<sup>175</sup>M. Katz, "Schools, Work and Family Life: Social History," in Historical Inquiry in Education: A Research Agenda, J. H. Best, ed., (New York, NY: American Educational Research Association, 1986), 286.

<sup>176</sup> \*Note: Appendix 1 has definition used in this thesis.

<sup>177</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 137-139.

<sup>178</sup>Editor, The Manitoba Co-Operator, 11 September, 1967, 11.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid.

<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

providing not less than one teacher for each grade taught as well as the necessary support facilities.”<sup>181</sup>

As consolidation progressed and more divisions such as Turtle Mountain, Fort La Bosse, Hamiota-Strathclair and others tried the new concept at the high school level,<sup>182</sup> the government became “convinced that the best way to provide a desirable level of instruction in the public school system [was] to combine all the services from kindergarten to Grade XII under a single board responsible for the provision of all those services.”<sup>183</sup>

The vision of unified divisions operating under the central authority of the department of education enabled the government to restructure and redefine “the roles of officials and branches within it.”<sup>184</sup> Subsequently, the curriculum branch was established not only to set “June examinations in Grades X and XI {and XII}”<sup>185</sup> but also to establish guidelines for “committees of teachers ... the marking of papers, and listing of marks”<sup>186</sup> thereby removing control from local divisions. Additionally, the curriculum branch would be responsible for approving all books and other teaching materials used in Manitoba schools<sup>187</sup> including “modifications in existing courses and programs.”<sup>188</sup> This was a part of the vision of controlling and creating conformity in the new school

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<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 11+12.

<sup>183</sup>Manitoba, Department of Education, Bulletin 9 (60), (Winnipeg, Manitoba, December, 1966), 1.

<sup>184</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 139.

<sup>185</sup>Manitoba Government, Dept. of Education, Bulletin 4 (1) (Winnipeg, Manitoba, December, 1963), 1.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid.

<sup>187</sup>Manitoba Government, Department of Education, Bulletin 6 (1) (Winnipeg, Manitoba, April, 1964).

<sup>188</sup>Ibid.

plan and for improving rural school performance. Both were deemed necessary since the 1957 Royal Commission reported that there were “shockingly bad examination results [in] most rural high schools.”<sup>189</sup> There was a desire by both the department of education and local divisions for “the extension of schooling both in the number of years and the number of students, for a modernized curriculum ... necessary for the provision of quality education”<sup>190</sup> so that the “far reaching social, economic and demographic changes”<sup>191</sup> needed at the time would, in fact, be accomplished. Since the vision of the department of education emphasized student achievement, emphasis on “core disciplines”<sup>192</sup> would continue.

Additionally, at the inception of consolidation, the Department of Education was to be the overseer of all divisional boards and would assume fiscal control and management of the funding of provincial public schools through a joint province-local municipality arrangement involving a grant system and local taxation.<sup>193</sup> Through fiscal control of the funding of schools, the government believed that it and division boards could provide equal educational opportunity to all students in the province regardless of socio-economic background, physical limitations or geographical location.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>189</sup>W. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 167.

<sup>190</sup>Levin, *The Struggle over Modernization*, 78+79.

<sup>191</sup>Manitoba Government, *Report of the Educational Commission* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, King's Printers, 1924) 18.

<sup>192</sup>Levin, *The Struggle over Modernization*, 81.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid.

In sum, the government vision of education was intended to provide for the education of the whole child: physical, mental, social and emotional, at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers of Manitoba since it held that “all education costs are a proper charge on the Province.”<sup>195</sup> It included the intention to help students develop human socialization skills by removing them from “the hands of small school districts”<sup>196</sup> dominated by “rural members who were not particularly interested in improving education”<sup>197</sup> since “such recommendations would change their lives in fundamental ways and they did not want those changes to take place.”<sup>198</sup> This notion of socialization seemed to be supported by the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. One report encouraged socialization in school curricula so that students could be “educated within ... historical and social backgrounds”<sup>199</sup> so that as adults they could face responsibilities of life in a democratic society.<sup>200</sup>

## 2. Teachers' Vision Of Consolidation 1961

The Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees' vision matched that of the provincial department of Education as noted by the government of Manitoba when it expressed “its warm appreciation of the promise from

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<sup>195</sup>J. A. Jackson, The Centennial History of Manitoba, (Winnipeg, Mb: Stovel Advocate Press associated with McClelland and Stewart Limited for The Manitoba Historical Society, (1970), 252.

<sup>196</sup>Levin, The Struggle over Modernization, 84.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>198</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>199</sup>Manitoba Association of School Trustees, Annual Report (Winnipeg, Mb.: Author, 1960), 143.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid.

the Teachers' and Trustees' organizations of their active and enthusiastic participation in the program of information and education."<sup>201</sup>

Consolidation called for 'a general raising of standards ... for entry into Teachers' College.'<sup>202</sup> As well, "grants from the province for teacher salaries ... [took] into account both qualifications and experience"<sup>203</sup> to the satisfaction of the teachers' association which had been working for improved salaries for some time. Teachers believed that improved working conditions and the opportunity for specialization would also result. This would ultimately result in increased power to a growing teachers' association which would eventually direct concerns to teacher welfare and governance issues.

### 3. Pedagogical Trends 1960-1975

The term 'pedagogical'<sup>204</sup> as used in this thesis means "the profession or function of a teacher"<sup>205</sup> that is, "the art or science of teaching"<sup>206</sup> rather than the "teaching ... the instruction of teaching methods"<sup>207</sup> to be learned by teachers.

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<sup>201</sup>Manitoba Government, Department of Education, Bulletin 9 (61) (Winnipeg, Manitoba, November, 1966), 1.

<sup>202</sup>Jackson, Centennial History of Manitoba, 251+252.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid., 252.

<sup>204</sup>Neufeldt, V., Webster's New World Dictionary: Third College Edition of American English (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 995. \*Note: Appendix 1 definition is that used in this paper.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid.

<sup>207</sup>Ibid.

To achieve the educational vision of the Department of Education required progressive thinking, new approaches and attitudes to learning which presupposed new pedagogical trends.

Initially, the curriculum branch retained its mandate for total materials control.

However, in one of the communities discussed in this thesis, to the existing methods of “evaluating ability to remember, recall, ... recognize ... facts”<sup>208</sup> were added evaluation procedures in “devising ways of measuring, or ... assessing the ability to interpret facts, to arrange them in novel combinations, to apply them to the solution of problems, or ... the creation of something new.”<sup>209</sup>

Gradually, high schools began to establish industrial arts classes, general curriculum and occupational entrance courses<sup>210</sup> while continuing emphasis in the core subjects of mathematics, language arts, and social and historical sciences.<sup>211</sup> As well, the use of departmental examinations continued for a time.<sup>212</sup>

The Manitoba Teachers’ Society as early as 1970 was “recommending that the Manitoba Government adopt the life-long or continuous education concept as its philosophy to direct education during the coming years and establish systematic planning procedures to ensure that education moved along the lines inherent in the

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<sup>208</sup>J. M. Paton, Concern and Competence in Canadian Education. Revised. (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, 1973), 43.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid.

<sup>210</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 137-158.

<sup>211</sup>Levin, The Struggle over Modernization, 81.

<sup>212</sup>Manitoba Government, The Department of Education Bulletins (1960-1968).

basic philosophy.”<sup>213</sup> As well, it urged “greater collaboration among educational, health, welfare and other services”<sup>214</sup> so children, particularly those from “low income sectors and those belonging to ethnic, cultural or racial minorities,”<sup>215</sup> had greater equity in education. It further encouraged recognition of a necessity for quality pre-school and primary education since success at the post-secondary and other levels was found to be “largely dependent upon the quality of general education.”<sup>216</sup> The society further encouraged teacher involvement with administration and government in “decision making at ‘all levels of the system’.”<sup>217</sup>

As a result of their aim to revise pedagogical theories, “teams or committees [included] not only teachers”<sup>218</sup> but also others from university and government who worked to “develop and participate in shaping the future of education.”<sup>219</sup> The Teachers’ Society expressed “commitment to work with individuals or groups for the advancement of education in Manitoba.”<sup>220</sup> Therefore, since “teachers and students faced ... many new courses and/or approaches in the school programs”<sup>221</sup> the Department of Education “made additional time available for inservice sessions ... and ... made it possible ... for teachers to spend ... days preparing themselves to teach new or revised courses.”<sup>222</sup> As well, in one of the geographic areas researched for this thesis, this trend led to “the

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<sup>213</sup>Manitoba Teachers’ Society, “Society Suggests Priorities,” The Manitoba Teacher, 49(2) (1970): 1.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid.

<sup>215</sup>Ibid.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Manitoba Association of School Trustees, Annual Report (Winnipeg, Mb.: Author, 1960).

<sup>219</sup>E. Nowosad, “Nowosad Calls for Professionalism,” The Manitoba Teacher, 49 (10) (1971): 1+2.

<sup>220</sup>E. Kowalchuk, “President’s Message,” The Manitoba Teacher, 49 (8) (1971): 1.

<sup>221</sup>Manitoba, Department of Education, Bulletin 9 (6), 1.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid.



gradual shift away from the school centered on subject matter, to the one focused on the child ... [and] brought with it a growing recognition of the need to improve teaching as it bears on social emotional learning and to furnish special means of helping students to face their personal problems.”<sup>223</sup>

These attitudes led to the need for the development of new teaching materials and a look beyond our own borders to find applicable pedagogical trends and philosophies.<sup>224</sup> As the outgrowth of this search, several articles were written by various individuals, including Manitobans involved in education, for professional journals. Some of the articles are interesting, because they discuss issues that led to both agreement and dissent, compromise or conflict amongst educators. It is important to note, however, that although some of these articles serve to show some of the influences affecting educational issues in Manitoba at the time, the writers of them were not always the spokespersons’ for the group(s) they sometimes claimed to represent. Articles written included, for example, those that were looking at the Newsom Report out of England which reported that the “average and below average group ... [would] ... eventually comprise over half the population of the country”<sup>225</sup> with the view that education had to prepare these people to be valuable citizens in that population. Society members wrote

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<sup>223</sup>J. D. Wilson, “I am Ready to be of Assistance When I can: Lottie Brown and Women Teachers in British Columbia,” in *Women Who Taught*, A. Prentice and M. R. Theobald, eds., (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 6.

<sup>224</sup>Romulo F. Magsino, “Professionalization and Foundational Studies in Teacher Education”. In *Teaching, Schools and Society*, ed. Evelina Orteza y Miranda and Romulo F. Magsino (Hampshire, Eng. and Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press, 1990), 262-280. \*Note: I interpret from this article that Manitoba was not unique in considering the professionalization question of teachers and what should be included in the course of studies for aspiring teachers.

<sup>225</sup>Lionel Orlikow, “Jottings from the Educational World,” *The Manitoba Teacher*, 42(4) (1964): 43+44.

short articles about the gifted and talented programs in the Soviet Union<sup>226</sup> although few schools did anything with the information. Issues of mentally handicapped children in New Jersey Schools<sup>227</sup> along with concerns of Black Minority groups and civil rights activists in the United States<sup>228</sup> were also viewed to determine educational trends that might be applicable locally. It can be argued, however, that the writers' of these articles felt the need to voice their opinion about some issue or belief. Some of these were at variance with what they believed should happen. Others were about issues which they supported.

Media reports from the United States discussed new techniques and the problems and solutions evidenced by their use with the result that programs, especially in Language and Science, using innovative technology were adopted for use in Manitoba Schools.<sup>229</sup>

While pre-consolidation teachers were controlled in content, methodology and aims at the local community level and structured education solely around academics<sup>230</sup> after consolidation, in at least one Manitoba school jurisdiction,<sup>231</sup> the direction of new thinking and "the source of educational influence shifted ... to the United States."<sup>232</sup>

From the 1960s to the 1980s, "a concern slowly developed for the ... personal growth of

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<sup>226</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>227</sup>Ibid.

<sup>228</sup>P. Rooke, "From Pollyanna to Jeremiah. Recent Interpretations of American Educational History," Journal of Educational Thought, 9(1) (1975).

<sup>229</sup>R. N. Hurst, "The A-T Technique: A New Approach to Teaching and Learning," The Manitoba Teacher, 49(4) (1970): 6+7.

<sup>230</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 137-158.

<sup>231</sup>Note: \* The jurisdiction is one included in this research.

<sup>232</sup>Canadian Teachers' Federation Publication, Teachers in Canada: Their Work and Quality of Life (Ottawa, Ontario: Author, 1992): 8.

students.”<sup>233</sup> Proponents of change, voicing their demands for change in educational practices, actively worked for flexibility in curricula with the view to motivating students’ personally and socially.<sup>234</sup> At the same time, opponents of change and those wishing to retain the existing ‘status quo’ worked to have things remain as they were.

To put into practice some of the new pedagogical trends educational practices and techniques began to broaden and diversify in a number of divisions. For example, “television started to play a role in education. In at least one geographic area (included in this research), ‘Grades’ changed to ‘levels’.”<sup>235</sup> More options to University courses were established as students, via mass communication, became more aware of the world beyond their own community and began to push for access for increased opportunities.<sup>236</sup> With increased awareness arose comments such as “what every ... community today needs are alternative educational programs.”<sup>237</sup> These programs would consider “personalized programming, matching students and teachers, students developing of curricula, optional attendance, smorgasbord scheduling, individual learning, a twelve month school year, student freedom, individualized progress reports, all day Kindergarten, emphasis on effective domain, five phase instruction, and a graded Kindergarten to grade XII country school environment.”<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>233</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid.

<sup>236</sup>Canadian Teachers’ Federation, “Teachers in Canada.”

<sup>237</sup>E. Glines, “Implementing Humane Schools,” *The Manitoba Teacher*, 50(5) (1972): 8+9.

<sup>238</sup>Ibid., 8.

To address some of these issues, rote memorization and the subsequent examinations, in which repetition of memorized facts was the standard, were being replaced by a blend of academic and humanistic socialization, individual progress and meeting of individual needs of students.<sup>239</sup> The authority and responsibility for educational programming in the province remained with the Department of Education but some of the power to determine local curriculum had been shifted to local school centers to match the needs of students. The “Center for Education Development in Winnipeg”<sup>240</sup> had been reported to be one such center in a Manitoba Teachers’ Society article. However, It was not until 1995, that I discovered that no such center did in fact exist.

As concerns had been raised about the need for change, so were they raised about the changes themselves. For example, the teachers’ society “noted that many innovations were started in primarily American and wealthy school districts where all types of personnel and millions of dollars were poured into carefully designed projects.”<sup>241</sup> In some cases the projects had already been abandoned as ineffective.<sup>242</sup> Therefore, the then president of the teachers’ union asked “are we being reasonable when we ask a Manitoba teacher to individually instruct in a class of 25 to 30 children?”<sup>243</sup> It is interesting to note that during this time, many writers had different opinions as to the

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<sup>239</sup>The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, *The Manitoba Teacher*, 49(5) (1970): 1+2.

<sup>240</sup>Manitoba Teachers’ Society, “Society Suggests Priorities,” 1.

<sup>241</sup>Nowosad, “Professionalism,” 1.

<sup>242</sup> \*Note: I remember one of my male colleagues saying that we always seem to be trying what the Americans threw out because it didn’t work. A further remembrance of the same conversation led to a discussion that in the end it turned out that the teacher in the classroom made the difference. I also remember a comment along the lines of: when we think of the gazillions of dollars spent on these things, we’ve come full circle. I think somehow that all of this seems just like what is going on now even as I’m writing this thesis!

<sup>243</sup>Nowosad, “Professionalism,” 1.

causes and effects of the successes or failures of these changes, and in fact to what promoted the changes and/or their abandonment in the first place.

The government vision of education<sup>244</sup> as centered in consolidation seemed to promise that consolidation would improve educational opportunities and actualization of students, female and male alike. Therefore, parents demanded that schools do so, especially inasmuch “as the increased taxation which these changes necessitated”<sup>245</sup> was borne by taxpayers. Parents of children with a variety of special needs demanded equal opportunity for their children, since they as parents also paid their portion of the levy required by the consolidated system.

Concurrently, the Manitoba Teachers’ Society said “Manitoba teachers must resist any attempt to diminish the teacher’s role in the schools.”<sup>246</sup> This issue arose to prominence as paraprofessionals were beginning to be established in some Brandon schools in positions resembling that of teachers as trustees tried to hold the line on expenses yet provide quality education.<sup>247</sup>

In establishing consolidation and considering pedagogical trends, teachers began to voice a need for and call for a change in some aspects of the educational system.

Consistent writings in educational publications seem to indicate that educators

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<sup>244</sup> Note: \* Several references to contemporary interpretations in this thesis discuss this in detail in discussing the government ‘vision’ of education. As well, Gregor and Wilson’s definition is useful. The references to the McFarlane report recommendations influencing this work also reveal the vision.

<sup>245</sup> Jackson, *Centennial History of Manitoba*, 248.

<sup>246</sup> G. Gordon, “Resist Downgrading Gordon Urges Teachers,” *The Manitoba Teacher*, 50(9) (1972): 1.

<sup>247</sup> W. Drysdale, “Brandon Auxiliary Program Hit Again,” *The Manitoba Teacher*, 49(8) (1971): 8.

recognized that new ideas and needs had emerged and would continue to emerge for which the previous educational system was inadequate. They began to work more closely as a group of professionals, in some divisions, with their local school administrators to select materials and opportunities that would assist in student learning. Eventually, teachers' assistants would be hired to work with special needs students who would eventually, finally be integrated into the school system. Personal involvement in divisions contributing articles to the *Manitoba Teacher* indicated to me the incorporation and use of high interest, low vocabulary materials, and the use of multi-level instruction to assist students. It is my impression that the new found funding formulas made available by consolidation, enabled newer pedagogical trends and learning methods to better assist students who might have otherwise been neglected, left at risk or completely missed, acquire the best assistance possible to acquire an education.

The influences and effects of change of the educational system went beyond the vision of the department of education in Manitoba and the development of trends in educational pedagogy, however, into the profession of teaching itself. There, they had a profound impact on the association itself and on teachers, especially women, as individuals.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>248</sup>The Manitoba Teachers Society, *The Manitoba Teacher*. Various. (1960-1976).

#### 4. Teaching as a Profession 1960-1975

Schools “maintain innumerable distinctions which seem to rest principally on views about authority: not the authority of knowledge or expertise ... nor even the authority of traditional observance, but the fact of being in authority and acquiring rights.”<sup>249</sup>

Consequently, when the Manitoba Department of Education developed and implemented their vision of a consolidated school system, it re-established the notion that the power and control of the schooling of Manitoba children continued to be a provincial responsibility.<sup>250</sup> Very directly, the careers and job responsibilities of teachers, as professional people in a “vocation and occupation requiring advanced education and training and involving intellectual skills”<sup>251</sup> both individually and as members of a group, remained under the scrutiny and control of a central governmental authority which had replaced small district schools and powerful local boards. Even though there were local boards and superintendencies, the contemporary literature<sup>252</sup> seems to indicate that locally both supporters of and opponents of school consolidation believed that control of curriculum, hiring of teachers, and fiscal management, to a greater degree than ever evolved around the continued direction and control of the central educational authority in Winnipeg. This control grew out of the requirements of

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<sup>249</sup>Malcolm K. Skilbeck, “Administrative Decisions and Cultural Values,” The Journal of Educational Administration, X(2) (1972): 130.

<sup>250</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 137-158.

<sup>251</sup>Neufeldt, Webster’s New World Dictionary), 1074. \*Note: Appendix 1 has the definition used in this paper.

<sup>252</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 137-158. The Manitoba Teachers Society, The Manitoba Teacher. Various. (1960-1976). Manitoba Teachers’ Society, “Education Finance Changes” The Manitoba Teacher, 49(10) (1970): 1. Manitoba Teachers’ Society, “Guidelines for the Seventies” The Manitoba Teacher, 51(10) (1973): 6.

using textbooks approved by the members of the curriculum department, to regulating the collection and distribution of all educational funds and to the certification of teachers. It was the reaction to this control that often led to situations involving conflict and/or compromise.

Even as new divisional boundaries and pedagogical trends were being considered and implemented, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, as the agency working and speaking on behalf of Manitoba teachers, was itself undergoing change by redrawing association boundaries and considering teacher issues that would arise within the new consolidation.

Initially, Manitoba teachers supported consolidation since they believed that there would be equity in teaching salaries which would be based on qualifications of experience and education.<sup>253</sup> As well, random firing of teachers would be eliminated. However, both the teachers' association and employers shared fears of increased numbers of incompetent teachers despite the increased educational requirements set for teachers since the requirements did not necessarily separate those who were competent from those who were not.<sup>254</sup> "The decline in rural population and centralization of educational facilities in larger centers ... further removed the education process from the community setting and local involvement"<sup>255</sup> and shifted the power from rural to

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<sup>253</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 137-158. Chafe, Chalk, Sweat and Cheers.

<sup>254</sup>Manitoba Teachers' Society, "Education Finance Changes" The Manitoba Teacher, 49(10) (1970): 1.

<sup>255</sup>Manitoba Teachers' Society, "Guidelines for the Seventies" The Manitoba Teacher, 51(10) (1973): 6.



urban<sup>256</sup> areas within the division with the result that rural families had less power in evaluating the competence of teachers.

As the school population increased into the 1960s<sup>257</sup> board and provincial expenditures for education also began to rise sharply.<sup>258</sup> This led to two developments requiring action. One concerned deleting principals from the collective agreement.<sup>259</sup> The other concerned the use of auxiliary personnel in the schools.

First, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees tried to remove principals and vice-principals from the collective bargaining unit because they believed administrators' "major function [was] supervision."<sup>260</sup> Their action immediately caused the teachers' society to entrench a revised professional code of practice for teachers and principals<sup>261</sup> as it perceived its union authority for member autonomy was under attack.<sup>262</sup> By so doing, the association seemed to reaffirm its claim to autonomy and to state: "educators do not only live in the real world of educational politics; they actually influence its changing power relationships ... for the promotion of particular interests and values."<sup>263</sup>

<sup>256</sup> \*Note: Appendix 1 has the definition used in this paper for urban and rural.

<sup>257</sup> Government of Manitoba, Annual Report of the Department of Education (Winnipeg, Mb: Author, 1966), 25.

<sup>258</sup> Government of Manitoba, "Annual Report of the Department of Education," 1966).

<sup>259</sup> The Manitoba Teachers Society, "MAST Wants Principals out of Bargaining Unit," The Manitoba Teacher 50(4) (1971): 1.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>261</sup> The Manitoba Teachers Society, The Manitoba Teacher. Various. (1960-1976).

<sup>262</sup> Manitoba Teachers' Society, "MAST Wants Principals out," 1.

<sup>263</sup> Helen Simons, Getting to Know Schools in a Democracy: The Politics and Process of Education (Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press, 1987), 14.

Second, teacher auxiliaries were being employed in some schools as substitute teachers despite the government's regulations on teacher certification. The teachers' association viewed this as an infringement on its professional jurisdiction and a contravention of the education act.<sup>264</sup> The passage of Bill 71 section 4(2) of the Public School's Act<sup>265</sup> caused the Manitoba Teachers' Society to issue a position statement on the use of auxiliary personnel in the school in which the association showed support for the use of auxiliary personnel, but not in the capacity of teachers. Rather, they were to work with teachers. Auxiliary personnel were to include teachers' aides, parent volunteers and student teachers. The union argument in favor of the establishment of teachers as the sole personnel licensed and permitted to teach students in the public schools of Manitoba<sup>266</sup> was won despite the fact that there seemed to be a "kind of plot, however unconscious and well-meaning, to destroy the quality of education in public schools... based on the premise that anyone can teach."<sup>267</sup>

As well as questions of auxiliary personnel and salaries, tenure and political concerns originating from outside the discipline were held over from the 1960s and carried into the 1970s. Some are summarized from the Society's Fifty-Second Annual Meeting which dealt, in part, with questions about "pension policy, the re-organization of school division boundaries, amendments to the grant structure, the problem of teacher

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<sup>264</sup>Government of Manitoba, "Annual Report," 1966, 25.

<sup>265</sup>Manitoba Teachers' Society, The Manitoba Teacher, 50(2) (1972): 2.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid.

<sup>267</sup>Manitoba Teachers' Society, "Who Will Teach?" The Manitoba Teacher, 51(6) (1972):1.2.

education and certification, and collective bargaining.”<sup>268</sup> Teacher welfare issues, equity in opportunity, training, employment, and tenure issues were also included.

The pedagogical trends needed to ensure the effectiveness of education after consolidation were also of concern to teachers. There was “the sense that the education experience had itself been more complex than ... previously recognized.”<sup>269</sup> Problems arose as critics condemned “teachers for lacking innovation and creativity in their work”<sup>270</sup> and were “advocating a concept of teaching that required super ideal conditions and personal qualities”<sup>271</sup> without realizing that teachers and divisions were “straight-jacketed by township lines instead of lines reflecting school attendance patterns”<sup>272</sup> so that the tax revenues used to support the system were also affected.<sup>273</sup>

Gradually, the power base of the department of education as custodian of the educational plan came under attack as parents, who had given the province absolute control of their children’s education and knowledge over a decade earlier, began to question that decision. Teachers of both genders were often caught in the middle. Parents demanded accountability and equal opportunity in education from both the department of education and the Manitoba Teachers’ Society. More responsibility of both a pedagogical and non-pedagogical nature began to be placed on teachers by

<sup>268</sup>Manitoba Teachers’ Society, “Teachers Prepare for 52nd Annual Meeting” The Manitoba Teacher, 49(8) (1971): 1.

<sup>269</sup>Harold Silver, “Views from Afar: An Afterword, History of Education Journal, 7(3) (1978): 237.

<sup>270</sup>\_\_\_ Martin, “Report”, The Manitoba Teacher, 52(3) (1973): 5.

<sup>271</sup>Martin, “Report”, 5.

<sup>272</sup>“The Changing Geography of Administrative Units for Rural Schooling and Local Government on the Canadian Prairies,” Prairie Forum, 12(1): 31.

<sup>273</sup>Ibid.

divisional boards. Problems and confrontations surfaced. Many teachers interpreted “confrontation as militancy while others considered it simply part of the development of a professional organization.”<sup>274</sup> Whichever view was supported, teachers began to be observed, judged and labeled because of the publicity raised. Costs escalated. More special needs students became integrated into educational system’s mainstream, and again questions of equity and opportunity in education were shuttled about.<sup>275</sup>

It became evident by the mid 1970s that three major problems confronted education which were to continue to be a problem for the rest of the decade and beyond. They were: “growing disenchantment with education by students and parents; rapidly rising costs of education; [and] demand by the community for equal opportunity.”<sup>276</sup> In viewing current literature, it is evident that these same three problems are still with us.

### **5. Women’s Issues 1960-1975**

By the 1960s many schools had established themselves in society as proponents of equality by having an increased number of women in managerial, supervisory or authority positions.<sup>277</sup> However, “Manitoba society had in fact become not mosaic but uniform”<sup>278</sup> as men outnumbered women in positions of authority and/or responsibility. Women had to overcome many obstacles, such as family expectations or social barriers, for example to hold such positions. However, no such barriers stood in the road of male

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<sup>274</sup>C. Moir, “Warfare by Teachers,” *The Manitoba Teacher*, 50(6) (1972): 1+6.

<sup>275</sup>Ibid.

<sup>276</sup>E. Kowalchuk, “Kowalchuk Alerts Teachers,” *The Manitoba Teacher*, 49(4) (1970): 3.

<sup>277</sup>Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 486-487.

<sup>278</sup>Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 487.

contemporaries.<sup>279</sup> The same barriers were prevalent in schools. "In co-educational systems, ..., women appeared in more restricted roles: they [were] primarily teachers of young children, their number decreased at the secondary level, and they [were] segregated into certain subject matter areas."<sup>280</sup>

In 1973, a number of years after consolidation had been established, a Royal Commission on the Status of Women found that "for every twelve female teachers, there are only seven male teachers in Manitoba. However, there are three and one-half times as many men as women in positions of responsibility."<sup>281</sup> Several reasons, basically related to power and control, were cited in the report and included the notion that "hiring committees generally prefer a male candidate over an equally well qualified female candidate because of various culturally acquired prejudices against women in positions of authority."<sup>282</sup> They also stated "women teachers who have families find it hard to take the evening and summer courses leading to the higher degree required for vice-principal, principal and similar positions."<sup>283</sup> However, male teachers could "rush home after school, eat a quick meal prepared by their wives and rush to University for their classes."<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>279</sup>Ibid.

<sup>280</sup>Patricia Schmuck, "Women Educators: Employees of Schools in the United States," in Women Educators: Employees of Schools in Western Countries, P. A. Schmuck, ed., (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), viii.

<sup>281</sup>J. Schafer, "Where Discrimination Flowers," The Manitoba Teacher, 52(6) (1975): 4.

<sup>282</sup>Ibid.

<sup>283</sup>Ibid.

<sup>284</sup>Ibid., 5.

Schafer goes on to describe the additional sex role stereotyping of the time when married women had to “rush home to prepare a meal, wash dishes, clean the house, put the children to bed, wash clothes and take care of other household chores”<sup>285</sup> so that they hardly had “time to prepare for the next day’s classes, let alone go to university.”<sup>286</sup> It has been argued that “certainly the fact of gender was the crucial factor that limited what these women did”<sup>287</sup> and larger schools and consolidation did not to any great extent or purpose alter either their position in school hierarchy or educational equality.<sup>288</sup> Other factors, such as “age, marital status ... extended family responsibilities”<sup>289</sup> were far more determining.

In newly consolidated divisions, the localism that “ensured the rural schools would become distinctive and reflect the attitude creating them”<sup>290</sup> was simply carried from local schools to division centers especially in communities where the combined rural population numbers were greater than that of the town.<sup>291</sup>

Further, “living arrangements were very important for ... teachers since when and how they lived intimately affected both their work and their private lives.”<sup>292</sup> This was made abundantly clear in viewing the dress code expectations of some division authorities. In a message to teachers, the then Manitoba Teachers’ Society president, Ed. Kowalchuk,

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<sup>285</sup>Ibid.

<sup>286</sup>Ibid.

<sup>287</sup>Allison Prentice and M. R. Theobald, Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teaching (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 275.

<sup>288</sup>Schafer, “Where Discrimination Flowers,” 7.

<sup>289</sup>Prentice and Theobald, Women Who Taught, 275+276.

<sup>290</sup>Wilson, “I am Ready to be of Assistance When I can,” 207.

<sup>291</sup>Ibid.

<sup>292</sup>Ibid., 214.

reprinted a "memorandum distributed to Teachers in a Manitoba School Division"<sup>293</sup> which was entitled "Pantsuits and 'Administrative Fuddling'."<sup>294</sup> The superintendent quoted stated, in a directive addressed to women teachers only, "pant suits would be acceptable provided these were of a standard comparable to other apparel appropriate for teachers at school during the school day."<sup>295</sup> He goes on to add "This DOES NOT mean that slacks and blouses are acceptable. On the contrary, these are to be worn only for such activities as P. T."<sup>296</sup> The superintendent did not appear to have a parallel expectation for male teachers in his division.

As indicated previously, the Manitoba Teachers' Society had pressing professional views to consider after consolidation. The issue of tenure was a definite concern and it became even more serious for women. As well, in the 1970s when teacher numbers increased in Manitoba<sup>297</sup> even as the numbers of women teachers outnumbered men, findings of the 1973 Royal Commission indicated that women still had fewer administrative positions.<sup>298</sup> In Manitoba, in the years immediately following consolidation, the teachers' association was not powerful enough to prevent this from happening. Further, there was no legislation of the magnitude of the "Sex Equity in Education Act in California"<sup>299</sup> which received legislative and court support in

<sup>293</sup>Ed. Kowalchuk, "President's Message," The Manitoba Teacher, 49(8) (1971): 3.

<sup>294</sup>Ibid.

<sup>295</sup>Ibid.

<sup>296</sup>Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Lee, Employment of Manitoba Teacher Society Graduates, page number lost.

<sup>298</sup> Kay Sigurdjonsson, "Equal Opportunity Through Affirmative Action," Alberta Teachers' Association Magazine, (May/June, 1985): 6+7. Schafer, "Where Discrimination Flowers," 5.

<sup>299</sup>J. Kohl, "Women and Political Action: The Sex Equity in Education Act in California," Contemporary Education Journal, LVIII(4) (1987): 210.

removing barriers to both educational opportunities and career advancement. That little attention seems to have been paid to the Royal Commission's findings seems possible especially in the light of a more recent study which reveals that as recently as 1989 males held more positions of power in Manitoba schools than females.<sup>300</sup>

The Manitoba Teachers' Society became more relevant to rural areas with the establishment of consolidation. A number of issues were dealt with in rural areas that had had not previously been addressed. It was also during this time that a Federal Department of Labour report in 1970 showed that "during ... 1969-70 the salary of male teachers in elementary schools was 23.3 percent higher than those of female teachers in elementary schools while male Secondary School teachers earned, on average, 22.8 percent more than their female counterparts"<sup>301</sup> because of a "disparity in paper qualifications."<sup>302</sup> As well, "in the 1960s large numbers of women were still in classes 1 and 2."<sup>303</sup> Because of "home responsibilities ... they had been unable to accumulate the savings necessary to support them during a leave of absence to study"<sup>304</sup> and since "many school boards did not favour the idea of any leave of absence for any reason ... taking a leave for study meant leaving the job"<sup>305</sup> since the center was often far from home. For those who had to leave teaching for even a short period of time and experience, broken service, to raise children, for example, the return to teach meant

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<sup>300</sup> Ruth Rees, "Women in Education: A National Survey of Gender Distribution in School Systems," Canadian Education Association Publication, (October, 1992): 61.

<sup>301</sup> Schafer, "Where Discrimination Flowers," 5.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Shack, Teaching as Growth, 500.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.



“they had to make up the deficiency, or be satisfied with a much reduced pension.”<sup>306</sup>  
 Consequently, the inequities in salary, benefits, and pension<sup>307</sup> left these women both powerless and “economically disadvantaged long after their careers in teaching were over.”<sup>308</sup>

Additionally, because of the low pay and low respect they experienced, women teachers developed “a poor self-concept when it [came] to advancement in the teaching profession”<sup>309</sup> especially where they had been “conditioned by their mother, father, teachers, husbands and others in society at large to play a supportive role”<sup>310</sup> where they would “not need to develop their educational potential.”<sup>311</sup> Instead, they would be expected to work actively to advance their husband’s career. This attitude was further perpetuated by some government leaders who “while acknowledging the worth of teachers and their vulnerability, choose neither to aid nor to help teachers”<sup>312</sup> especially women, attain equity in educational training and career advancement.

Gradually, however, as the “teachers’ association continued to work for greater professionalism by enforcing a code of ethics, strengthening teacher qualification, sponsoring inservice programming and linking teacher education with universities, ...

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<sup>306</sup>Ibid.

<sup>307</sup>Schafer, “Where Discrimination Flowers,” 5.

<sup>308</sup>H. Mah, “Women’s Struggle for Acceptance,” *Alberta Teachers’ Association Magazine*, (May/June, 1985): 22.

<sup>309</sup>Phyllis Moore, “President’s Message,” *The Manitoba Teacher*, 53(6) (1975): 1.

<sup>310</sup>Ibid.

<sup>311</sup>Mah, “Women’s Struggle for Acceptance,” 22.

<sup>312</sup>N. Thomas, “The Need for Healthy Skepticism in Education,” *Alberta Teachers’ Association Magazine*, (May/June, 1985): 55.

higher teacher salaries and greater status<sup>313</sup> were to some degree realized.<sup>314</sup> However, even though women had “been active participants and even founders of teachers’ unions”<sup>315</sup> they were not often in leadership roles since some believed it would be “threatening to their marriages, particularly if the husbands were also teachers”<sup>316</sup> and for a variety of other reasons.

Gradually the number of entrants to teachers’ colleges began to increase as both males and females began to view teaching in a more favourable light.<sup>317</sup> However, this did not come without problems. Inequities in learning existed in the curriculum particularly because of the misconception that females ‘had no ... potential to develop’ an understanding of subjects such as advanced science and mathematics. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in October, 1970 found “the range of occupational choice was much narrower for women than for men - primarily due to many occupations being sex-typed”<sup>318</sup> with the result that women would “find it difficult to enter a field not traditionally regarded as female.”<sup>319</sup>

Further indications of gender inequities that existed after consolidation, despite the government’s aim to remove them, are seen in the choice of government approved textbooks, materials and methods. “Sex-role definition for children continued to be

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<sup>313</sup>Canadian Teachers’ Federation, “Teachers in Canada,” 11.

<sup>314</sup>Shack, *Teaching as Growth*, 485-505.

<sup>315</sup>Schmuck, *Women Educators*, viii.

<sup>316</sup>Shack, *Teaching as Growth*, 505.

<sup>317</sup>Government of Manitoba, *Annual Report of the Department of Education* (Winnipeg, Mb: Author, 1969) 1-6.

<sup>318</sup>K. V. Cairns, “Women and School Administration,” *Journal of Educational Thought*, 9(3) (1970): 165.

<sup>319</sup>Ibid.

taught and reinforced along stereotypic lines by the educational process. For the most part, girls and women [were] depicted as and reinforced for being the 'watchers' and boys and men as the 'doers'.<sup>320</sup> For example, a study of "101 books authorized for use in grades 1-6 ... in March 1973 for the Manitoba Human Rights Commission ... showed that 79 percent of all main characters and 71.6 percent of all characters were male and that 68 percent of all pictures featured males."<sup>321</sup> The girls continued to be stereotyped as "passive, submissive, and fragile characters hardly worth emulating whereas the males were bold, daring, strong and capable of problem-solving."<sup>322</sup> Therefore, in the literature researched, several authors consider it hardly surprising that females would not be interested in pursuing science, mathematics and administrative roles<sup>323</sup> since there had been little or no motivation for them to do so.

Further inequities existed in course assignment to female educators who might have as a timetable "a hodge-podge of French, Latin, Geometry, Algebra, and some English, Spelling and Health"<sup>324</sup> scattered over several grades. Students were subjected to "segregation by sex in certain courses."<sup>325</sup> Girls often took second place in sports and physical education facilities and were subjected "to biased materials used in career counseling for high school students."<sup>326</sup> Because girls were considered fragile and

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<sup>320</sup>L. Cammaert, "Women in Education," *Journal of Educational Thought*, 9(3): 163.

<sup>321</sup>Schafer, "Where Discrimination Flowers," 5.

<sup>322</sup>Ibid.

<sup>323</sup>Cammaert, "Women in Education". Mah, "Women's Struggle for Acceptance," 163. Cairns, "Women and School Administration," 165. Schmuck, *Women Educators*, vii. Sigurdjonsson, "Equal Opportunity," 6+7. Wilson, *I am Ready to be of Assistance When I can*, 214.

<sup>324</sup>Shack, *Teaching as Growth*, 481.

<sup>325</sup>Schafer, "Where Discrimination Flowers," 5.

<sup>326</sup>Ibid.

easily victimized it was believed that "the fear of sexual intimacy and the constant anticipation of it ... combined to deep adolescent fears enslaved by doubts. The school's response ... often consisted of warning about the increase in venereal disease, sterile illustrations of the functioning of reproductive organs and intimidating talks about the danger of pregnancy"<sup>327</sup> which perpetuated the notion that it was part of a female responsibility and expectation to be a mother. No concurrent educational courses or lectures were in effect for males.<sup>328</sup>

Equality in educational opportunities for female teachers and students had not been realized in the opinion of each of the Company for Young Canadians, Canadian University Service Overseas, and the Commission for an Independent Canada who had studied the Manitoba and Canadian school systems thoroughly. "Schooling at all levels was censured for not addressing female experiences or needs. Like their junior counterparts, Colleges and Universities failed conspicuously to provide non-sexist education."<sup>329</sup> Sexist and derogatory remarks were the order of the day for female students and teachers alike, especially teachers who actively sought but were "nowhere given equal opportunities in academic employment."<sup>330</sup> Despite consolidation and a declared commitment to equity in educational opportunities and promotions, the very educational facilities to assist the manifestation of that equity, through better

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<sup>327</sup>K. Maeots, "Education and Women: Old Roles and New Realities," in Must School Fail? The Growing Debate in Canadian Education, N. Byrne and J. Quarter, eds., (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), 149.

<sup>328</sup>Ibid.

<sup>329</sup>Veronica Strong-Boag, "Pulling in Double Harness or Hauling a Double Load: Women, Work and Feminism on the Canadian Prairie," Journal of Canadian Studies, 21(Fall) (1986): 94.

<sup>330</sup>Ibid.

preparation of teachers, were in large measure ill-prepared or unprepared. However, “the 1960’s and 1970’s saw a revolution of rising expectations and aspirations for women, of changing self-concepts, and of consciousness raising sisterhood”<sup>331</sup> as despite the problems, a new awareness seemed to be growing amongst women. Women as students and teachers began to demand justice and continued to move towards self-actualization in career advancement and education.<sup>332</sup> Women began to develop “greater awareness to develop more accurate and all encompassing ... questions”<sup>333</sup> and to evaluate more critically the responses given to them by agencies including school systems and governments.<sup>334</sup>

It can be argued that the Government of Manitoba’s entrenchment of consolidation did in fact bring about many long-awaited improvements in pedagogical trends, professionalization of teachers and increased opportunities in education on a variety of issues. However, where actual issues of females as teachers and students were concerned, many inequities of earlier decades were repeated, compounded or ignored in the larger divisions. The result was that, by 1976, although women had come a long way from the days when they were both underqualified and underpaid and treated as baby-sitters, they still had a long way to go.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>331</sup>Dr. D. Smith, “The Exclusion of Women in Forming the Values and Beliefs of Society,” Socialization and Life Skills, (Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 1978), 198.

<sup>332</sup>Strong-Boag, “Pulling in Double Harness,” 94. Smith, “The Exclusion of Women,” 98.

<sup>333</sup>E. C. Lagemann, “Looking at Gender Women’s History,” in Historical Inquiry in Education, J. H. Best, ed., (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

<sup>334</sup>Sigurdjonsson, “Equal Opportunity,” 6+7.

<sup>335</sup>Shack, Teaching as Growth, 481-505.

### ***C. Description: the people and places***

The individuals and groups referred to and/or quoted in this work are referred to in two different ways. The first are those who represent the individuals who hold a community view or consensus of opinion, such as 'community,' 'a class of students,' 'teachers,' for example. The second are individuals those from whom quotes, as I remember them, are taken or about whom and/or with whom I shared experiences.<sup>336</sup> These come from a variety of sources. However, while some individuals have since passed away and others have changed either their name or address, many still remain in or have relatives or friends who are still alive and live within the geographical areas used in this study.

Anne-Louise Brookes<sup>337</sup> wrote "I use fictional names, for the most part, to protect myself. I also do it to protect others. At no time did I write my stories for the purpose of hurting others."<sup>338</sup> Since I share Brookes' desire for privacy for myself, and for protection for those about whom I write, the autobiographical portions will be written with the deliberate intention to conceal, as best I am able, the names of the communities and the names and identities of those many people who are a part of this story. Additionally, since I had the desire to detach myself from emotional bias, this margin of anonymity was considered as a way to remain objective within my subjective dimension.

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<sup>336</sup> Note\*: Many of these remembrances of conversations are triggered by diary entries, personal letters, old pictures and other personal keepsakes.

<sup>337</sup>Brookes, *Feminist Pedagogy*, 4.

<sup>338</sup>Ibid.

Three geographical areas are considered. 'Hometown' is the town near where my family farmed. I completed high school there. 'Smalltown' is the name assigned to the town in which I held my first teaching position. 'Northtown' is the community in which I learned more about teaching and learning within an educational setting, than I had ever experienced before or since.

### **1. Hometown**

The larger community of 'Hometown' was made up of farm families who had been established for many generations, newcomers, immigrant families, small businesses, and most importantly for the economy of the area, many military personnel. The community cofferers benefited from the employment opportunities made necessary to provide lodging, restaurants, entertainment facilities and other amenities to a constantly changing military personnel. There was even the opportunity for a few farm families to have someone 'work out' and make an extra income. Immigrant farm families were made welcome. Because of the transient lifestyle of military personnel, the residents were used to having a changing population, and viewed the arrival of a new family with what I remember as and interpreted to be genuine good will.

At the same time, there was a strong sense of 'community' among the rural families. While town and rural people respected each other, both remained somewhat segregated and isolated from each other in their social activities and in opinions of matters political, educational, and in some cases, financial. The population of the military base,

even those living in town, existed in yet another social group. This isolation of the three groups from each other was not considered unusual; nor was there any apparent hostility. It was just interpreted as 'that's the way it is.'

Socio-economically, farm families ranged from subsistence farming to affluence. My contemporaries and I viewed town and base families as 'better off' although admittedly, I did not know about the personal financial situation of those individuals. Rural families with whom we associated envied the accessibility to things cultural, social or 'better' than we had. I do not remember a clear definition of 'better' being stated.

The population age ranged from the very young to the very old. There were apartments, a hospital, a seniors' complex, several denominational churches and several established businesses in town. The base was a town in itself, and a place I rarely visited. Farm families tended to live on their own land year round. Those who did move into town were often near retirement, and still came out in the summer while they were able. A few of the more successful farmers wintered in the United States Sunbelt.

High School Consolidation had occurred prior to our arrival. There were mixed feelings about the closure of elementary schools which were moving to consolidation about the time of our arrival. The strongest proponents of consolidation lived in the town. The base population were familiar with Department of National Defence Schools, and usually appeared to be supportive of whatever system the federal government proposed. Rural individuals supporting consolidation were often accused



of supporting the system because of personal benefits they could accrue from such an arrangement. Opponents of consolidation believed its costs were too high and that taxes would increase. They argued that there would be central, not local, control over curriculum, and students would face horrific rides on the bus. My family and other rural families considered education important, however, even as we resented the interference in our lives and the inconvenience that busing and consolidation caused. Many were less vocal in their opposition because they wanted their children to move into better paying jobs that 'better' education implied.

The military base and the constant reminder that things were not the same for everyone served as poignant influences to entice young and old. Many of the students in my High School class intended to go to post secondary education of some type. They considered it 'insurance' for the time and/or day when farming would not be possible. A number looked at University and others looked at technical or trade schools. Local elections produced the same political candidates for the various positions from year to year. I have not yet figured out if that is because they really were the best for the jobs, or no one else wanted to hold them.

## **2. Smalltown**

Smalltown rural and town residents were closely knit because of the socio-economic, family and historical ties that bound the two groups. Socialization and intermarriage between town and rural families was common. There was much less of the isolation of

the two groups from each other that had existed in Hometown. There was no external funding of the town. Most of the merchants were not well off, and had to extend credit to farm families. However, a few of the farmers were affluent especially those who had owned much of the exceptional quality land found in parts of the area. The area was essentially agricultural which meant that the town relied almost solely on the farm income to survive. There were few if any 'off the farm' income workers. Families compensated for costs by having barn raising bees, community hall socials and other fund-raising activities, when one of their group needed labor or financial assistance.

There were few immigrants. Newcomers were viewed with suspicion and often open hostility. Some seniors lived in a few small 'Seniors' apartments that had been built ostensibly to house them. However, several lived in their own homes or with their children. Others had moved away to larger centers where there was better access to medical facilities.

Newcomers or 'outsiders' as they were called were not usually welcomed until they had been 'approved' by the general community. I never found out to my satisfaction exactly what the conditions of that approval were or whether they were unchanging consistent conditions. The strong sense of community seemed to be one of 'our community' (town and rural together) against the world. This attitude tended to create a kind of isolation for the inhabitants. Most of the individuals in the farming community lived on the land year round. Almost all of the children attending the town school came from

the surrounding area. Political candidacy and opinion seemed to be closely monitored and influenced by a small powerful group of community leaders.

Consolidation of the elementary schools had just begun before I arrived. It had been in effect for High School students for a number of years. The parents' educational ethic was fairly consistent to my own family's. Parents generally wanted their children to do well in school; however, most but not all, of the community members seemed to hold a deep-rooted contempt for those who would educate their children. Although a number of parents wanted their children to pursue educational interests beyond the public system, the children did not appear to share their parents' aspirations. Unlike Hometown, most of the children indicated that they were content to stay on the farm or were content to stay on in the occupation held by the parent. Few indicated any desires to extend their studies beyond high school. A number indicated their intention to leave school as soon as they were legally of age to do so. The local school board was made up of a powerful group of all male community leaders from both the rural area and the town. Some were related to each other. Two were also very wealthy. The same school board had been in place for eight years prior to my arrival. It was still in place when I left.

The children I taught were respectful and courteous to everyone. They ranged in age from ten to fifteen. Unlike the situation that existed in some of the other rural communities nearby, the close-knit community that enclosed Smalltown enabled many of the community residents to look after 'Their Own' in times of trouble which reduced

any dependency on government assistance. This "looking after Their Own" attitude extended into considerations of school issues as well. Additionally, because of a kind of 'extended family concept' some of the community members held, there were no single parent families except widows or widowers (some with children). Some of these single individuals were looking actively for spouses. (This active 'search' led to an interesting experience which will be discussed in the research portion of this thesis.) Several families, however, were very poor. Two of these were immigrant families whose parents held menial jobs. They lived in a poorly heated house on the furthest edge of town. It had been given to them rent-free by one of the few friendly families in town. The building would have been condemned anywhere else. However, no one else offered them accommodation although there were several reasonably decent vacant houses. The two families were related and left the year I did. I presume they went together. Outside of a short session of practice teaching, Smalltown was to be my first and only contact with teaching in a rural setting as a qualified teacher.

### **3. Northtown**

Since I had lived and worked my entire life in rural settings, teaching in Northtown was a new and unique experience to me. First, immigrants were very numerous in the community as young families came from all over the world to avail themselves of high salaries and what seemed to be a relatively certain and financially stable future. Second, most, but not all, of the population were young people who had not yet realized their aspirations and dreams, nor been defeated by life. Third, the town was relatively

new historically. Few seriously entrenched ideas served as the norm for all. Fourth, the town was a closely-knit community. One identified oneself as a 'Northerner' first and anything else second.

There were single family homes. People married at a young age. Divorces were not encouraged, but were a fact of the community. Apartment buildings and a variety of housing units were available along with a trailer court.

Despite the strong sense of community, individual groups or 'areas' of the town became almost identified with a socio-economic group. For example, one area of town was the almost exclusive domain of the chief executives of the major industrial business of the area. By virtue of its geographical location, Northtown was isolated from the rest of the province as effectively as socio-economic issues isolated farmers from business and base personnel, and attitude separated Smalltown residents from the rest of the world.

Over a number of years, I taught a variety of grades and children. Included were the children of new non-English speaking Canadians, Aboriginal children who had moved in from abandoned Cree villages, the children of business people, the industrial community's children, rich, poor, single parent children and children of mixed or broken homes. People came from Indonesia, Malta, Java, Siam, Nepal, Portugal, Greece, South America, New Zealand and other far away places. Characteristically, the school and community both were like a mini-United Nations. Often Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and Hindi children and parents socialized together. Political candidates

relied heavily on the Aboriginal vote for success in federal and provincial elections. School board and urban elections were more dependent on what the majority of the community wanted.

The population change over the years was dynamic and rapid. One staff member used three registers, each one capable of recording about forty names, in one school year because of the constant transferring in and out of students. Some students would leave in the fall, move back in the spring, or simply disappear with their families.

Canadians, including farmers, also came North to supplement their incomes. As a result, men greatly outnumbered the women. Socialization in many forms was pursued to stave off loneliness by male and female, married or single alike. Many Northtowners became interested in and actively involved in school activities. Because of the highly transient nature of the population, it was difficult for me to assess attitudes dealing with post high school education. However, subsequent communication has indicated to me that a number of my former students, did indeed go to post secondary educational schools.

Each of the three communities discussed has experienced isolation. However, it is in dealing with this isolation that issues of power and knowledge become key as my research will illustrate. However, I did not think of myself solely as one who was 'isolated.' I used my time to learn, to question, to observe, to record data for an autobiography, and to become aware of various points of view, socially, politically,

economically, and educationally. It was not until I began to examine the human population of my rural experience and compare them to those of my urban experience, and to consider their views, involvement in and reaction to consolidation, that I realized how much I had learned about their attitudes to power and knowledge issues. It was at this point that I began to realize that conflict and compromise had been very dominant in the Consolidation of Manitoba schools.

## **V. Analysis of my Experience**

### **A. Introduction**

Although autobiography, that is the meticulous retelling and re-experiencing of experiences, is the primary method of presentation of this thesis, it is necessary to remember that accounts can never coincide exactly with our experience. As a consequence, at various points throughout the analysis, I may be speaking in the present tense. Also, I will, from time to time without necessarily indicating that I am doing so, share experiences without specifically citing an explicit source. However, in each and every case, the reader should be cognizant of the fact that regardless of what ever sources I used that triggered the sharing of those reflections, they are my present recollections of my thoughts, feelings and concerns as each of a student, a beginning teacher and a more established teacher. Further, it is necessary to recognize and remember that when someone reflects on something, those reflections are made over time. They are made as reflections of a total being who has evolved to hold those

reflections and interpretations of experiences, because they held them and also held a set of emotional responses to them.

Therefore, I can only reflect now, as an adult, on the experiences I had in the past. To do so now solely from the voice of a student, a novice teacher or a more experienced teacher in the jurisdictions considered, is no longer possible because part of the reflections of me *as* each of those *is* me now, as an adult who has grown and matured.

In essence, my present use of autobiography is that of perception and reflection of past experiences as I now view them as a mature person. In sum, these are the reflections of my years as a student, a beginning teacher and a more experienced and established one. It is the sharing of this autobiography, of part of my life as I saw it and as I see it today, that enables me to recognize that my experiences led to my understanding of the past and were affected by it.

## **B. Hometown: Recollections as a Student 1961-1965**

### **1. Local Vision of Education**

Rural schools may be defined as those “characteristic of the country, country life or country people ... having to do with farming”.<sup>339</sup> In Manitoba, during my highschool years (1961-1965), they were undergoing consolidation. The community in which I spent part of my senior high years was no exception and the division shared, to a degree, the vision of the Provincial Department of Education. The consolidated high

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<sup>339</sup>V. Neufeldt, Webster's New World Dictionary: Third College Edition of American English, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 1176, s.v. “rural.” Included as Appendix 1.



school I attended was formed as the result of two factors: the amalgamation of rural schools from local districts merging under one unified division with a Department of National Defence (DND) school. There was a shared community belief that the staff employed therein would be professional because of the involvement of three tiers of government in hiring. It was also believed that students' educational instruction would be more equivalent to that of students in large urban centers since the choices offered to both male and female would be broader than those offered in a strictly university oriented curriculum. In fact, early local general views, especially from people in the town in which the school was situated, generally matched "a survey of 331 adults and young people conducted in rural Manitoba by the Manitoba Department [which had] given education a positive rating."<sup>340</sup>

In our area, "almost all small schools were closed and the students were bused ... to town."<sup>341</sup> Initially no one questioned "the effectiveness of the school system"<sup>342</sup> that resulted or whether indeed it had "fulfilled local needs or provided the best possible education."<sup>343</sup> Instead, because the financing became a joint venture of federal, provincial and municipal governments and the local division, the system was deemed 'an improvement' by prominent community representatives. The resulting facilities were more comfortable and larger than the rural schools had been. But, they were also further away. However, the move to reform the system was viewed differently by the

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<sup>340</sup>The Manitoba Teachers' Society, *The Manitoba Teacher*, 49(6) (1971): 6.

<sup>341</sup>G. Friesen and B. Potyondi, *A Guide to the Study of Manitoba Local History* (Winnipeg, Mb.: University of Manitoba Press for Manitoba Historical Society, 1981), 63.

<sup>342</sup>Friesen and Potyondi, *Guide to the Study of Manitoba*, 63.

<sup>343</sup>Ibid.

various players. The view that “ the greatest shortcoming of the government was not to see that larger school districts had to be carried by the provincial legislature but that they must include elementary as well as secondary schools”<sup>344</sup> seemed to be the one held by division trustees who worked to consolidate elementary schools into larger centers, too. Those schools were in many cases far from the children’s homes. As a consequence, buses were used to transport them while local schools “ ‘closed’ because of centralization.”<sup>345</sup> The move met with opposition from some community members who did not want their children to travel so far. Boycotts of buses and heated arguments ensued. However, eventually the concept of consolidation became a reality for all public school students in Hometown.

In actuality, busing was both tiring and inconvenient to farm families who represented the majority of the residents. My own personal perspective may help to illustrate this. I lived only eight miles from the high school but was at the end of the bus ‘run’.

However, in order to arrive at school for 9:00 a. m., I had to catch the bus at 7:10 a. m., or earlier in the winter and 7:20 in the summer, after walking with an armful of books, on an unlighted, often poorly maintained road for a distance of almost a mile. My situation was not unique. We arrived at school, if on time, by 8:50. The end of the day was no different. After dismissing at 3:30, I usually arrived at the ‘bus stop’ about 5:20 to 5:30 p. m. and walked home, with the innumerable books, changed, did my farm chores (which had to be completed ahead of homework), ate, did homework and went

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<sup>344</sup>Morton, Manitoba: A History, 499.

<sup>345</sup>Residents of Elm Creek and Wingham, A Brief to the Minister of Education (Elm Creek, Mb., August 7, 1967): 1.

to bed at 11:00 p.m. or later. In this way, a school day which was nominally about five and one half hours long was transformed into a dreaded ordeal. In order to fulfill obligations to my family and meet my own educational goals, I had to get up at 4:45 a.m., every morning, year round. We were not affluent enough that I could afford a vehicle to ease the physical strain I endured.

Friends of mine (referred to herein as Colleagues 3 and 4) had similar experiences. Both indicated that the average length of a bus commuter's day was greatly increased by using the school bus to school. They were not unique in finding alternative methods to arrive at school. Additionally, I remember colleague 3 indicating that after he was old enough not to, he never took the bus. He hitched a ride rather than ride on the bus because it was a long trip to school on the bus. He left early, at 7:00 a.m. or so in order to use the gym before school. He became very adept in sports as a result. However, it was more beneficial to him to take a risk hitch-hiking than to sit for 1 1/2 hours on the bus. In a moment of reflection, Colleague 4 and I shared experiences of our small communities. I remember him stating that in his community the move to consolidated schools killed incentive to attend. Students and parents simply did not like the idea of travelling for several hours every week to a central location to participate in an educational system over which they felt they had no control. To those of us who rode the buses, and to our parents who needed our help so desperately just to stay alive, the vision of equity in education was, in fact, a farce. We viewed the notion of change as simply another political event in our lives.

The urban and DND students who lived closer to the high school did not have to endure the same hardships. Although I have no hard figures to support my belief, and I am not aware of any studies having been done in this area, from my own personal experiences it is my opinion that they did not share the same chronic fatigue, increased rate of illness, inability to concentrate and lack of enthusiasm suffered by rural students either. The problem for elementary children was as bad, or if one considers age, possibly even worse. But, the routes were shorter than for the high school students.

Travel to and from academic institutions meant travel on country roads, which were often poorly maintained if they were maintained at all. Snow storms, roads made rutted and slippery with mud, or wash-outs (with the inevitable seemingly endless detours), were simply another inconvenience of living in a rural environment. We were expected to attend school whether it snowed and the roads were impassable or not, so long as the bus ran. Male students bragged to us girls about the benefit of long pants and appropriate winter underclothing to help stay warm on the long bus rides. Few if any of us females, including myself, were so equipped. However, little consideration was given to female students who had to catch and ride the buses on cold days or to the fact that the passengers sometimes had to disembark and push the bus through mud or snow. We were expected to push just as hard, and wade through snowdrifts just as deep as our male contemporaries who had the benefit of "long winter woollies" and jeans even if we did not. I, and most of my friends, were not wealthy enough to have a closet full of clothes for all situations. Since we were encouraged, though not forced, to

wear skirts to school, for the most part we wore skirts. No parallel dress code requirement was in place for males.

Town students went home for lunch. Bus students were expected to leave the school at noon or go to a study hall. It should be noted that study hall was a tiny room, and housed very few students, given the population of the school. There was no cafeteria or student lounge and no other facilities were made available for them. A number of the more affluent rural students went out for lunch everyday. However, noon-hour for a number of my schoolmates was spent outdoors, regardless of the weather. Many simply sat or stood right outside the school door until the 'noon break' had ended. There did not seem to be any interest or compassion on the part of the teachers' or urban dwellers who had so vociferously advocated consolidation to end any discomfort or inconvenience caused these individuals.

"The shift of power began as the rural-urban population density began to change, began to move more heavily towards urban control."<sup>346</sup> With this urban swing the rural voices in our division became greatly muffled. Local people who protested about the long bus routes were shouted down by those advocating the benefits consolidation gave for 'equitable' and 'greater selection' of programs because they believed consolidation would lead to what one prairie writer living in a small community indicated was termed

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<sup>346</sup>Class Lecture, History of Education in Manitoba, (Winnipeg, Mb.: University of Manitoba, January, 1993).

“better co-ordination of services”<sup>347</sup> even though the services offered were all in urban settings.

Further, in my high school, which I believe was representative of the times, the curriculum subjects offered after consolidation included core sciences (chemistry, physics and biology), history (geography ended at grade ten), language arts, trigonometry and French. Physical education, typing and shorthand were offered as electives. There were no industrial arts, home economics, art, music, graphics or other occupational courses. Both a political and a cultural struggle emerged. The provincial views of curriculum were not compatible with the curriculum expectations of the federal government which, I understood, had put the greatest portion of money into the school's construction. It is my understanding that the federal government consequently denied approval for occupational courses and therefore none could be included in the school curriculum. However, in subsequent years, when comparing notes of our ‘youth,’ other individuals indicated a similar resistance to change occurred in their Hometown schools even without the influence of the DND. Some indicated that their curriculum subjects were limited. In discussing opportunities with urban dwellers, there is evidence of a great difference in curriculum choice and career development as urbanites allegedly had greater selections and opportunities to choose from the range of subjects as the government suggested.<sup>348</sup> As I look back at the substance of those

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<sup>347</sup> Allan Artibise, Winnipeg: An Illustrated History (Toronto, Ont.: James Lorimer and Company, 1977), 184.

<sup>348</sup> Colleagues 2, 6, 8.

discussions, there is no doubt that I and some of my colleagues from rural environments felt short-changed even after consolidation was established to change this situation.<sup>349</sup>

Additionally, although drop-outs were common, especially by grade 12, most of the parents of my friends expected their children to take university entrance programs. Few expected anything other than lecturing which required rote memorization and reproduction of facts for departmental exams. Only if a student was deemed 'not likely to succeed' in a matriculation course would he/she be encouraged to enter non-university entrance courses at one of the provincial trade schools. I also remember from a lengthy conversation with him that Colleague 4 mentioned he was the only one of 29 students who began country school together to finish high school. He indicated that the average drop out rate was two out of three by grade twelve in his home town. Additionally, it is worthy of note that several colleagues, friends and I noted that services and educational and/or employment opportunities in hospitals, major parks, recreation and cultural facilities which were accessible to urban students, were not accessible to us, without tremendous capital cost, whether our divisions were consolidated or not.<sup>350</sup>

After consolidation, divisions such as Hanover and Rolling River experienced problems of financing and organization<sup>351</sup> that they had not previously experienced. In some rural

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Artibise, Winnipeg: An Illustrated History, 184.

<sup>351</sup> J. Schellenberg, Schools- Our Heritage: From 46 School Districts to Hanover Unitary School Division, 1878-1968 (Steinbach, Mb., Derksen Printers for the Board of Hanover School Division, No. 15, 1985), 256.

divisions the secretary treasurer had to be “receptionist, typist, payroll clerk, keeper of minutes, transportation, maintenance supervisor, and a lot of other things”<sup>352</sup> in order to reduce expenses while carrying out the duties provincial responsibilities required within the tax and grant allotments. Consequently, the consideration of hiring additional teachers, adopting more courses and providing for trips for students to institutions outside of their immediate area, were not easily addressed. In actual fact, the implementation of consolidation had implications upon some of the cultural, economical and social conditions of the area as well as the academic ones. For example, Colleague 4 indicated that consolidation killed a lot of smaller rural communities in which school and church activities were the central hub. He felt that the financial damage done because of consolidation has had long term effects even to the present.

## **2. Pedagogical Trends**

I knew nothing about the then pedagogical trends.<sup>353</sup> However, in retrospect I remember a number of pedagogical practices being followed which in later years colleagues referred to as pedagogical trends. Among them were few allowances being made for individual differences except for one close personal friend who was allowed a longer time to write departmental examinations because of cerebral palsy. No provision was made for her to do oral exams despite the fact that she found speaking less difficult than writing. Personal, family cultural traditions and attitudes, not social

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<sup>352</sup>Ibid.

<sup>353</sup>V. Neufeldt, Webster's New World Dictionary: Third College Edition of American English, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1988) s.v. “pedagogical.” Included as Appendix 1.



responsibility for personal achievement and success were carried into the school. For example, we did not do group projects. There were few academic competitions such as science fairs. Field trips were virtually non-existent. Intramural sports competition was high but there were only limited numbers of inter-school competitions for select teams because the distances to be travelled were long and the costs were high. Dances, socials and in-school clubs were popular since teachers, I now realize, used their own time to provide opportunities for socialization to students that class instruction did not. Parents and community members were involved in curling bonspiels, sports days and academic challenge days.

There was no move to redefine or integrate knowledge or to bring personal experience into the classroom setting. Teachers lectured, we took notes, completed assignments, studied, handed in reports and memorized material for tests and examinations. Every teacher diligently checked up on every student to verify assignment completion. Calls to parents of students who had incomplete work were made unless a note was provided from the parent stating why work was not done. Too many 'incompletes' led to an office call and suspension. The strap was considered archaic and inappropriate discipline for high school students.

We sat in straight rows, the teacher's desk was invariably at the front of the room, and in some classes, girls sat at the front and boys at the back of the class. We spoke only when and as directed to by the instructors. All students were taught basically in lecture style: there was no allowance made for special needs students. Few students asked

questions and there was no student feedback as to appropriateness of method or material under study. All students took university courses. Physical education, typing and shorthand were electives. Unlike some schools where physical education classes were segregated, all of our classes were co-educational.

Another friend, Colleague 1, who was a graduate of high school after having been in one of the earliest consolidated systems in the province, attended a school where there were separate classes for girls and boys in health, (of which physical education was then a part) and guidance. When we compared notes one day concerning school organization surrounding such classes, he indicated that it was his impression other schools within the same educational district were also so organized. He had lived most of his pre-adult life near a small rural town whose educational organization was heavily regulated by church teachings, religious leaders and elders.

We had no courses in drug education, sex education, alcohol or tobacco abuse. Classrooms were well equipped with supplies and materials. We paid refundable damage deposits on books. Teachers, for the most part, used a variety of materials and core texts. The three disciplines in science laboratories shared space with each other but were large and well equipped. Classes were also large. I was always in a class of thirty-four or more. All classrooms were closed. We had a school library but no resident librarian. The senior history teacher (male) was in charge, despite the fact that the senior language arts teacher (female) was rumored to have library science courses. I was the student librarian for all the years I attended that school. This privilege enabled

me to do some homework at school and also to be guaranteed quick access to books for research since I had some control at the circulation desk.

Basically, the educational practices or pedagogical trends I experienced in pre-consolidation days were no different than those in the consolidated high school. It was simply the transfer of district teachers' ways of doing things to town teachers' ways of doing things. Looking back, I see no differences in the teaching trends except that perhaps, in town, there was a greater emphasis on examinations. They and tests were based on reproduction of memorized facts- no opinions were asked and I gave none. I do not remember writing achievement tests in high school. All students, including those with learning disabilities, wrote the same examinations. Although it was necessary to stay on occasion for assistance after school, I tried very seriously to avoid this since it caused enormous problems for my family. Teachers were willing to help, however, and many did give extra sessions in their own subject after 3:30. The texts used, in some cases, for my classmates and I were unchanged versions used ten years earlier. No one ever suggested to me the kind of creation and recreation of knowledge to which Freire and Giroux have given voice. It is my impression that even if any teachers had entertained such sentiments they would have been discharged for holding and promoting such notions. The retention of the 'way things were' with few superficial changes remained.

We had few films, and I do not remember seeing television or listening to radio programs. I do not recall specific provision being made for students of exceptional

ability, but staff always did help those who were interested to apply for bursaries and scholarships when and as they could.

In summary, my remembrances of pedagogical trends and educational practices is basically as I experienced study in rural classes. The teachers lectured, I memorized, and I reproduced data on examinations. I believe that it is nothing short of a miracle that I learned as much as I did.

### **3. Teaching as a Profession**

As a student, I knew nothing about the then current pedagogical trends or educational practices. I knew even less about the Manitoba Teachers' Society except that every now and then I could escape classes because of a teachers' convention. I also remember that every educational issue mentioned on radio (we did not have television) or via the press seemed to have some reference to either teachers of a particular division or teachers in general. In some cases, the reporting was not very complimentary.<sup>354</sup>

However, I remember visitors to our home enunciating similar references about educators and implying that they held them to be true. However, no one including myself, questioned the validity or morality of such discourtesy or even if there had been misunderstandings surrounding the teachers' roles.

However, in my family, education was viewed as something precious and not to be squandered. No matter how tedious and taxing the bus rides were, the price was deemed worth paying since my family believed knowledge to be more valuable than

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<sup>354</sup> Magsino, "Professionalization and Foundational Studies", 277.

gold. Like the rest of my family and others sharing our cultural background, we equated schools and knowledge. This sentiment endured despite the fact that some years earlier both my family and I had suffered seriously from the incompetence, negativism, and cruelty of some individuals who were also teachers. However, because of my family's views considering education I continued to regard teachers as the custodians of knowledge and never questioned their methodology or purpose.

Corey voices a number of sentiments appropriate to my situation. "Isolated bits and pieces on non-meaningful information"<sup>355</sup> became knowledge to study and reproduce diligently. In Hometown, no one considered it unusual that the teachers taught material not students. Teachers and parents alike appeared to view learners as "objects not persons"<sup>356</sup> so that the learning about "historical events, parts of speech, mathematics exercises, science formulas"<sup>357</sup> was more important than education that viewed "consideration of the self of the learner."<sup>358</sup> I became "product oriented instead of process oriented."<sup>359</sup> I remember Colleague 3 lamenting the fact that in his situation, both as a student and as a teacher, learning facts and memorizing were most important, even more important than caring for kids. The facts themselves were super important. However, my experiences with education made me interested only in "obtaining the answer."<sup>360</sup> At the same time, no one helped me learn how to ask questions, or to even

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<sup>355</sup>G. F. Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1973), 23.

<sup>356</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>357</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>358</sup>Ibid.

<sup>359</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>360</sup>Ibid., 19.

offer the idea that I could or should. Instead, as a student in the new consolidated school system, I very quickly learned my place and role “in relation to teachers.”<sup>361</sup> To me, as Corey says, “teachers [were] powerful people”<sup>362</sup> who controlled the pass/fail system and directed thought process for years. As one with my classmates, the “desire to please ourselves [was] relatively unimportant”<sup>363</sup> as we learned “unconsciously to develop the strategy of quickly assuming what the [teacher] wanted and to give ... back on exams what (s)he fed us during lectures without questioning.”<sup>364</sup> Rather than offering me the team support as teachers who worked with me to help me avail myself of equal opportunity in education, I lived in terror of not making the grade and therefore not being able to go to university. Even the fact that teachers chaperoned dances (which I could not afford to attend anyway) and tutored at extra classes did not help me overcome these fears. To me, nothing had changed. The preconsolidated high schools my brother had attended were little different than mine; they were just physically smaller, or older or colder, or all three!

One myth I learned very well was, as Corey states, that “there are right answers to every problem”<sup>365</sup> and the teachers knew what those answers were. In other words, there was always an authority down the hall to whom one referred. A second was “the idea that teachers possess the gift of infallibility”<sup>366</sup> and consequently I never questioned

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<sup>361</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>362</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>363</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>364</sup>Ibid.

<sup>365</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>366</sup>Ibid., 14.

methodology, purpose or content. It was not until I myself became a teacher that I recognized what had happened. It was upon recognition of this and other facts, that I finally became motivated to ask questions and to not stop asking them.

My friends and I compared teachers to other community adults we knew or had known in district schools before consolidation and found the new group to be cold and uncaring, despite the 'extra' efforts they appeared to expend on our behalf. One individual, a high school teacher who taught a University entrance course, Mr. M. seemed to have a need, as Corey says, "for power, personal competence, for being needed, for security, for being appreciated."<sup>367</sup> It is my opinion he became a teacher because he was a man whose needs were "based upon basic feelings of inadequacy."<sup>368</sup> He could not teach and all his students required reteaching by another individual, whom Mr. M. appeared to resent, before June departmentals. I know I would not have passed my final examination if the reteaching had not occurred. Mr. M. did not appear to know the material well enough to explain it to us in a way I and many of my contemporaries were able to understand. It appeared to my family and I that he felt threatened in his position- his 'authority' and the 'power' that went with it had been undermined. While publicly some parents called for his dismissal, because of the loyalty to their members and with reference to his credentials (which appeared impressive) politically the Manitoba Teachers' Society refused to consider charges of incompetence against him. However, his contract was not renewed by the local board.

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<sup>367</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>368</sup>Ibid.

Feelings of conflict and anger were directed towards the 'consolidated' school over an incident many adults said would have been handled differently, (and therefore by implication more gently), in small local schools than it was in the politically powerful organization of the consolidated High School system. The way the incident was handled also generated feelings of mistrust by students and their parents towards the state educational system and its employees since the 'state' was viewed as having taken over the powers traditionally left to church and community. It promoted in my friends and I the view that educators were somewhat cold-blooded and unfeeling. The experience, in summary is as follows. When three grade twelve students were killed in a road accident by an intoxicated driver on the weekend prior to "Easter" examinations, the division and school authorities proceeded with examinations on Monday morning, two days after the accident, as if nothing had happened. This transpired despite the fact that a number of us, untrained, unprepared, unsuspecting students, were called in to assist in body identification because the parents of the victims were out of town and could not be reached. No one told the students whether or not the school had to follow Department of Education procedures; nor were we told if they had tried to alter the schedule. Marks went down; I was severely stressed: my best friend had died in the crash; she sat in front of me in the examination room. I did not believe the teachers cared about how or even if the survivors could cope. There was no counselling, no compassion, no closing of schools. There was only a massive funeral in the school gymnasium, the flying of flags at half mast, and closed coffins. The school day following the funeral it was 'business as usual.' No one asked the students what they



thought or felt or even if they had any thoughts or feelings. There was a high failure rate in the grade eleven and twelve departmental examinations that year and it is my understanding that school marks were graded on a 'curve' to enable students to attend university. It is my personal opinion that any good consolidation did to Hometown up to this point was in danger of being 'undone' by this one experience alone.

In summary, most of the students with whom I associated in my high school either made fun of or were terrified (yes, terrified) of the teachers. Perhaps this terror arose out of misconceptions about the teachers, or perhaps it arose out of our cultural backgrounds. I do not believe many of my friends respected them as individuals. I hold this view now, because of the derogatory remarks made of them as people, which I now believe, went beyond the typical rather juvenile behaviour in which it seems adolescent youth need to indulge. It is also interesting to note now, that none of my friends became teachers, although I have not, until now, stopped to wonder why.

Frankly, I was terrified of them even as I respected them for their knowledge, authority and apparent power. The terror persisted, as it still does, of people in positions of power and control, who have such an influence over the lives and futures of others. Then, as now, I knew I needed their knowledge to help me gain skills to direct my own knowledge acquisition. I had been raised to expect to pay a reasonable price for knowledge. I respected a few teachers as people, but very few. The residents of Elm Creek and Wingham expressed this view well when they wrote "when a young person looks around him and feels that nobody really knows him then he will assume that

nobody really cares. It is a small step, then, to decide that there is not much reason for him to care about himself or society.”<sup>369</sup> Self-esteem was at an all time low in Hometown after the accident. However, recollections of conversations with teachers, male and female both, younger and older than myself, who have also experienced the consolidation years, have revealed to me that the lack of knowing about students and providing for their needs that the government of Manitoba believed was common in rural district schools, had, by all appearances, simply transferred itself on a larger scale to newly consolidated schools. Other individuals have confided sentiments that can be précised as: ‘instead of educational years being the best years of our lives, the consolidation of small friendly family communities into mega centers made going to school more of a living hell.’

As discussed in The Critical Review of Contemporary Interpretation section in this thesis, the proponents of consolidation, including the Manitoba government, believed consolidation would help promote more and better secondary and post- secondary educational opportunities. Proponents also felt such opportunities would eventually reduce school drop-out rates. My own experience, and that shared by a number of colleagues and friends with whom I have shared memories found, in our limited spheres of involvement, the opposite situation. For example, many of the people with whom I and former teacher associates went to school, either dropped out, were asked to leave, or failed from the consolidated system. One example comes from Colleague 4 who

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<sup>369</sup>Residents of Elm Creek, “Brief to the Minister,” 1.

alone was the survivor in grade 12 (1 of 29) of those who had migrated to a consolidated setting. Corey states "most students fail because they are afraid, bored, and confused."<sup>370</sup> I believe this to be true in the case of fellow students. In my own situation, out of a graduating class of seventy-five, only twenty-four went on to university.<sup>371</sup> However, I also believe that the stress and inadequate preparation for coping with stress and change led to an increased rate of failure in my high school in my graduation year. Consolidation could have provided for that preparation. It is my opinion today that it did not. Some may argue that rural schools could not have prepared students for the stress discussed either. However, in the experiences I have cited, the perception I recall holding, and that I now believe others held, is that they certainly would have done no worse.

#### **4. Women's Issues**

After consolidation, despite some protestations from individual parents in our division, physical education classes, taught by a male instructor, became co-educational along with the core subjects. I also enrolled in typing, which was taught by a female. There were no male students in either the typing or shorthand class, which was taught concurrently in the other half of the same room, by the same female teacher.

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<sup>370</sup> Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference, 17.

<sup>371</sup> \*Note: I learned this a number of years later when taking a course with a former teacher. That individual's involvement as the chairperson of the yearbook committee made this individual privy to information of this type. I had assumed a much higher number, because there were a number of super intelligent students in those classes. I regret now, that at the time I did not ask about the other statistics. However, from remarks I remember this person making, the number of drop-outs seemed higher than anticipated or 'normal' whatever 'normal' was.

All of the grades ten, eleven, and twelve sciences were taught by males despite the fact that there was a grade nine female science teacher who could and was willing to teach upper levels of science. Despite the intervention of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, my grade twelve chemistry teacher was later replaced, after being found incompetent, so the rumors went, by the local division. He was replaced by another male hired from outside the division despite two local politically sensitive factors. First, all of the 'Chem12' students needed reteaching over a two month period before June departmentals. No teachers already on staff would teach us, we found out later, out of fear of union action which might result if one teacher were to complain that another had infringed on his personal workspace. Consequently, a university student teacher graduate, who was a brother of one of my classmates, taught us without pay daily for two hours after our regular dismissal. However, he was not hired by the board as the replacement the next year despite the fact that he had covered the entire curriculum and all of us who had studied with him passed our exam. Second, the principal, vice-principal and department heads were all male. The staff of sixteen teachers was composed of twelve males and four females. One of them, the female science teacher who could have replaced her colleague had, I have been led to understand, a master's degree and was working on her doctorate. The principal and person hired to replace her, had not yet finished their arts and/or science degrees.

The division administration had not, to my knowledge, even considered replacing the male principal with anyone other than another male. No female had ever held that role.

Remembrances of conversations with adult friends of my family, (who were involved with hiring a replacement), lead me to believe that the atmosphere of the meeting held to find a replacement subtly suggested replacement of a male with a female would not be considered. First, the influences of the immediately visible military hierarchy, where a number of males were in positions of power, seemed to reinforce the idea that males should be in power. Added to this, there was support for the recruitment of a male since most of the families, whether rural or urban, had males as the head of the household. Therefore it seemed normal that a male should succeed a male. As a student, however, it never occurred to me to question the hierarchical order of things in the school. It seemed to me that within the political site of the school, there was a fear that males would refuse to work under the direction of a female despite her qualifications. Conflicting ideologies and personal values systems were given political precedence as the covert curriculum, defining and implementing knowledge by manipulating power issues, came into play.

Clashing community expectations surrounding traditional cultural issues also arose after consolidation was entrenched in Hometown. None of the women teachers ever wore pants to school- a rather loosely enforced dress code for women was in effect. Males wore whatever they wished within the expectations of decency. There were 'mutterings' in the rural community about the apparent foolishness of such a practice and female students whose families who had more 'liberal' views, (or could afford to purchase added wardrobes) in each of the mini-communities did wear slacks.

However, no parent association existed to voice any discontent over the relatively low numbers of female senior high staff. The knowledge that the local economy rested heavily on the federal government military base situated nearby also tended to silence dissenters and to discourage them from working “substantially to change entrenched institutions”<sup>372</sup> and by implication established traditional attitudes and expectations.

Additionally, even though many of our friends held the same educational view as my family, hegemonically the forces encouraging compliance were too powerful to oppose. The opponents of consolidation and/or federal government involvement grew to accept as legitimate and necessary the things that could not be changed. They grew to believe consolidation would in fact lead to a ‘better future’ for children, so the annoying but bearable concerns of low numbers of female staff as role models, and dress code, no matter how sexist in nature, were endured. Although these views are not necessarily those held by all segments of the population they are those that were and are viewed as concerns by families, such as mine, whose cultural and/or traditional backgrounds were used to seeing more women as teachers. The fact that most of those women would normally teach elementary school children did not seem to be a factor to those of us who had grown up with established ideas. My family, and many of our friends and associates, were disappointed that there were so few women high school teachers to be almost like pseudo mothers to the ‘girls’.

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<sup>372</sup>Carlyle, “The Changing Geography,” 31.

Males and females had a limited number and scope of separate school teams in competitive and intramural sports activities. Our student body elected males for all or most of the executive positions of president, vice-president and treasurer. A female was elected as secretary each of two years. One year there were no female students nominated for any position! Nor do I remember a female as student council president! A male always represented students on the principal's council. A male always served as the editor-in-chief of the year book committee. Female students, to my recollection when involved, were always in the capacity of second in command, if such a spot existed, or as 'auxilliary help' to the male leaders.

Educational reform and political power remained closely tied together. For example, there was little or no career development or planning and few non-university type courses in the curriculum despite the promised revisions by the department of education. The view that "in general children and their families make their own choices by reference to the constraints which determine them"<sup>373</sup> seemed to be in effect. For many of my female friends, that choice was 'marriage to an airman' and if there was the need for a career, that could be 'arranged later'. It seemed to me, the university system shared a similar sentiment as illustrated by the following personal experience.

One of the few 'career days' we had was a trip to Brandon College for a tour of its facilities. Several college professors and students were available to assist and answer

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<sup>373</sup>P. Bourdieu, "The School as a Conservative Force: Scholastic and Cultural Inequalities," in Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education, J. Eggleston, ed., (New York, NY :Methuen, 1974), 115.

questions. Two details of that day stand out sharply in my memory. First, one science professor said “you FELLOWS will be very interested in our science department which has some of the most up to date equipment in North America.”<sup>374</sup> Second, when we approached the education facilities (the new building had not yet been built) housed in the multi-storied building (which is presently used as an administration building) the same professor said “you LADIES will be happy I’m sure to see the benefits of all these stairs to maintaining your womanly figure- I’m sure your male friends will, too.”<sup>375</sup> The details are noteworthy because this professor exemplified the sexism that I later (as a student) I grew to recognize at the university. Moreover, by his actions he seemed to sanction them. Yet, at that time not one of us anxious to please, eager, interested students, male or female had the temerity of a reply!

It is interesting, in fact, that the greatest and to some degree the only opportunity for equity I ever experienced in high school occurred at my own graduation, when I and the members of the Barbershop Belles Choir sang after the convocation exercises. It was an all ladies choir, of approximately 52 voices, of which I was the only student. The choir sang at the convocation because of a discussions I had with my principal in which I was able to convince him of the excellence of the choir. They were a success, and it was in that moment, that I felt closest to being ‘equal or ‘accepted in the school as a person of talent and ability.

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<sup>374</sup>Recollections of the tour by Doctor X. “University Tour.” Brandon, May, 1965.

<sup>375</sup>Ibid.



Another personal experience provides a further example of stereotyping. As stated, the library was under the control of the male history teacher. I was the student assistant for three years after successfully replying to a position where females were to be given preference "because of better organization skills and penmanship."<sup>376</sup> Stereotyping of expectations was evident in physical education classes as well when girls were given "two minutes extra to change because it naturally took them longer."<sup>377</sup> In analyzing these frames of reference, it is alarming to me to note that these power issues were mixed in with knowledge issues and were helped and promoted as fact, and to some degree, as established traditions within the auspices of the school.

I agree with Freidenberg that schools are a part of the social class structure.<sup>378</sup> Some of the traditional views with which I and my friends had been raised linked class structure and gender issues. As a consequence, in my experience women teachers, including those of the 1961-1975 period, were viewed as homemakers and mothers before they were considered professionals. I both accepted and was comfortable with this view, since I had grown up with it. Although there were some 'off the farm' jobs at the base, most of the males of my acquaintance viewed this as an assault on male competence to support a family. In the social context of community a man whose wife worked would be viewed as a 'poor provider'. This political sentiment continued into the 'knowledge' spheres, such as the school. For example, I never heard of female teachers being

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<sup>376</sup>Library Memo. In school Communication. 1963-1965.

<sup>377</sup>Personal papers. 1963-1965.

<sup>378</sup>E. Z. Freidenberg, "Free Schools, Academic Goals and Economic Opportunity," *Interchange*, 5(3) (1974): 15.

encouraged to apply for administration or being seriously considered if they did. I never attended a school where a female was a principal or a vice-principal or the teacher of a senior science program. Furthermore, it seemed women were the rule as elementary staff and the exception in senior education. As we were discussing feminist issues one day, I remember how seriously Colleague 4 emphatically stated that in his hometown environment, commonly most women were at home. There was the real stereotyping of the wife and mother role. They were expected to stay at home, be a wife and raise babies. When we were comparing memories one day, I recall him mentioning that by the time he was teaching, there was still a lot of 'sexist stuff' going on in schools- women expected to wear skirts, to stay at home, or if in teaching to leave it as soon as marriage permitted.

I did not know the organization of the salary schedule of teachers and I did not have the skills necessary to interpret that information even if it had been available. However, because of financial concerns, it was necessary that I find a job as soon as possible. Therefore, despite being told often by peers and distant family members that "those who can; do, those who can't; teach,"<sup>379</sup> I enrolled in the one year educational program for teachers at Brandon University. My parents supported my decision since to pursue medicine, my first love, was neither financially feasible, nor to their way of thinking, practical, since few people we knew had daughters who had become doctors. Additionally, I had absorbed unknowingly the subliminal messages that medicine was a

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<sup>379</sup>Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference, 42.

'male' profession. Overt stereotypical views of the time did not lead me to even consider law, business administration or other 'male careers'. Social pressures on my family would have forced my abandonment of any of these. So teaching it was. Looking back on it, perhaps all in all, despite the agonies of studying seemingly meaningless material at college that once I graduated, proved its inadequacy and valuelessness in its remoteness to what I had to do and did in my work, teaching was the best career choice. Teaching seemed to be the career of choice my teachers deemed appropriate. The male students I had considered friends seemed relieved to find their masculinity and apparent power was not going to be challenged by a female competing in a Bachelor of Science program for limited places in pre-medical science. Conversely, my female friends considered me just slightly insane for throwing away the chance to get married to a serviceman and 'see' the world.

To me, however, the career upon which I had embarked was one in which I grew to believe I could help healthy minds grow and develop. In some ways that became more satisfying than the dream I had once held of helping injured minds and bodies to heal.

The counter-arguments that one could now pose questioning whether in fact more students over-all in the province completed high school or had the opportunities to learn from a better or at least more diversified academic curriculum with better educated teachers, never once arose, as far as my memory serves me, with the individuals with whom I discussed consolidation. Perhaps this had to do with the nature of the question initiating the discussion. Perhaps it is whom I chose as colleagues. For whatever

reasons and despite the fact that the McFarlane commission was rather scathing in its comments about the serious short-comings of non-consolidated school systems, most of the individuals with whom I shared experiences or confidences, seemed to indicate that to their way of thinking, 'rural schools were better.'

### ***C. Smalltown: Recollections as a Novice Teacher 1966-1967***

#### **1. Rural Vision of Education**

My first teaching position was in a small rural town in Southern Manitoba which had maintained what I would call 'old world' views with regards to education and to females. Furthermore, the tandem relationship of educational reform and political power with which I had grown up and lived through in Hometown (and other small communities earlier) was reinforced in Smalltown. A number of the community members and local board representatives believed and acted out its belief that the best way to retain a measure of local control was to outwardly comply with the provincial regulations concerning consolidation, and then manipulate them to local ends. For example, consolidation provided the local district school trustees with enough financial support to begin the construction of a new school. The primary and intermediate classes were lodged in a two story wooden and brick building with high ceilings, steam radiator heating, and huge halls that in themselves could, and in fact did, accommodate classes of students. The junior high classes were temporarily lodged in two portable units. All students and staff moved from the old facilities to the new one after "Easter holidays." However, the move was only a physical manifestation, as will be discussed,

since the ideas from the old building were transferred across the yard to the new building and rigorously transplanted there so that the retention of the traditional ways of teaching and learning and reasons for doing so, continued.

After consolidation, contrary to the recommendations of the McFarlane report which advocated short bus trips, the boundaries of the division were such that high school students from one side of town attended school in a town eight miles away while those from the other side travelled about twenty-three miles to a second one. Opponents of consolidation and some rural families had their children live with grandparents or cousins to avoid the long bus trip. The elementary school children I taught were for the most part from rural homes and many spent an hour on the bus twice daily.

Despite the government desire "to provide not less than one teacher for each grade taught as well as the necessary support facilities,"<sup>380</sup> three of the total of five teachers taught combined grades. Additionally, despite the government move to equity in professional opportunities, there were no male teachers on staff. Classes were large. I had the largest enrollment in the school of 40 students in a combined class where boys outnumbered girls. I was only two years older than some of my students, many of whom were taller or stronger than me.

There was a gymnasium but no specialist teacher. Each classroom teacher taught her own physical education, music, art and all other subjects. There were no music facilities other than radios for Glen Harrison broadcasts and the old Manitoba Schools

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<sup>380</sup> "Editorial," The Manitoba Co-Operator, (11 September, 1967): 11.

Songbook from which both my mother and I had studied! Clearly, the move to invite a changed approach to knowledge, such as that advocated by reformist educators, was not in vogue in Smalltown. I did not question the decision at the time since it was the same life experience I had endured for most of my educational experience.

Our principal, who did not have a school secretary or assistant, was also the grade 8 teacher. Art supplies were very limited and restricted to limited packages of drawing, crêpe and construction paper since, locally, art was not considered an educational priority. I solicited supplies from more visionary parents and spent from my own meager salary for material.

There was a conscientious effort on the part of the board to use rigidly only the texts and materials that were approved by the department of education especially in the area of mathematics, language arts, and science. In what I interpreted as an assertion of both their positional authority and their power base in the community I was told explicitly in my interview prior to hiring that “no extraneous materials of any sort would be tolerated or excused.”<sup>381</sup> No one ever told me exactly what they thought ‘extraneous materials’ were and I did not, I believe wisely, ask.

During the year in which I was to be evaluated for “tenure,” I never once saw the inspector who was to assess my competence. Knowledge and power issues mixed in the site of the school. Parents and members of the board walked in unannounced on any of us and asked to see daybooks, lesson plans and tests. Each had his/her own

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<sup>381</sup>Recollections of “Employment Interview.” Manitoba, Summer, 1966.

frame of reference and expectations of education, teachers and women. For example, I vividly recall one parent, a young farm mother of four children remarking that I must have been better than the last 'one' that was here because I was further along in the reader. 'The reader' had been used in pre-consolidation days by myself as a student and was used for a number of years thereafter in several Manitoba schools.

The emphasis of the community was definitely on core subject competence. But, unlike the provincial government's aim to educate the total child there were few local moves to increase the socialization of students in school. Instead, the educational policy was "like a net pulled by a crowd"<sup>382</sup> in the direction of core competence and only core competence.<sup>383</sup> The church and community influences were accepted as the only socialization needed by the children.<sup>384</sup> Parents and board alike were concerned that the teachers as Kirst says "assess only the most academic, the most intellectual, areas of learning"<sup>385</sup> and leave many of the values, citizenship and life skills questions unasked. The board also behaved as if they believed that "while a central authority might design a coherent and cogent curriculum, a local council ... [had] the best chance of implementing one."<sup>386</sup> They therefore presented a united front to oppose the

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<sup>382</sup>M. W. Kirst, *Who Controls our Schools? American Values in Conflict* (New York, NY: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1984), 111.

<sup>383</sup>Note: It is firmly implanted in my memory from dealings with these people that locally this sentiment was more closely linked to or identified as academic excellence and only academic excellence. I think now, looking back, that core competence is a more accurate description.

<sup>384</sup>Magsino, and Long. "*Towards the Intrinsic Good*", 82+83. Note\* There seems to be an indication here that what I observed in Smalltown was not really unique.

<sup>385</sup>Kirst, *Who Controls our Schools*, 94.

<sup>386</sup>*Ibid.*, 135. \*Note: It is interesting for me to remember how closely the community view of Colleague 3 matches this. I recall his view is that consolidation destroyed small communities in which schools and churches had once been the central core.

socialization aims of the department of education as they understood that the department of education intended them. In recalling informal visits with members of local families, I remember being told how they compromised some of their own views since they thought locally educational boards had a clearer idea of social and moral expectations than did some elected politician miles away. Therefore, while they privately liked some of the department of education's suggestions as interpreted by them, based on whatever data served as its source, they gave in to the local system because local 'board members' said they should!

Teachers were expected to attend to recess yard duty, bus duty and lunch hour supervision. As the newest staff member, I was assigned Friday by the principal since in our school division few, if any, teachers' conventions fell on Friday and there would be no way for me to escape my "full share of responsibility."<sup>387</sup> I remember being secretly amused at this evident show of power.

As well as the busing issue, there was additional resentment in Smalltown over the provincial government imposition of consolidation. The "rural schools expressed community conditions, initiatives and reliance on local material. They were manifestations of local and particularly family control"<sup>388</sup> and many families felt that this control was forever lost. "By contrast, multi-roomed ... schools dotting the landscape ... represented state power, the architectural designs bespeaking a uniformity

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<sup>387</sup>Recollections of "Principal's Conference." Manitoba, September, 1966.

<sup>388</sup>Prentice and Theobald, Women Who Taught, 207.



that extended beyond the structure itself<sup>389</sup> into a world controlled by 'urban dwellers' that was not appreciated by the second generation farmers of the area. Additionally, locally the attitude most commonly held seemed to be that learning about the world was more valuable than learning from the world.

The division association of the Manitoba Teachers' Society had achieved with consolidation a pay scale for female and male staff that was to be based on qualifications and experience. However, local districts within the division were still able to negotiate salaries and contracts with teachers. In my first contract, the salary agreed to was written in with pen, with my knowledge and consent, after my interview. However, it is my analysis that my upbringing coupled with the covert curriculum effected in the school system, inhibited me in my first job. Although the average annual salary of Manitoba's 9088 teachers was \$5,103,<sup>390</sup> my starting salary was only \$3,200 and, at the time, I was delighted to have it. At the time I did not know, but it has been suggested since, that this was because of a beginning salary for an inexperienced teacher. However, I subsequently learned, after hiring, but I do not know if it is true, that one of my colleagues (also a graduate of the same institution as I, with exactly the same experience) was hired for almost \$500 more. In all other respects the contracts appeared the same. HE was a teacher in a neighbouring town which shared many of the attributes of Smalltown. I was never offered any explanation as to the disparity, if any, in salaries. It never occurred to me to ask why I was paid less than the provincial norm.

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<sup>389</sup>Ibid.

<sup>390</sup>Government of Manitoba, "Annual Report of the Department of Education," 1966, 1-6.

Powerful people who would be my 'bosses' indicated its appropriateness. Therefore, I accepted the decision. However, I believe that being consistently paid less, meant teachers stayed only a short time and the district was as Freidenberg says, "less effective in promoting equality of economic opportunities"<sup>391</sup> to anyone wishing to permanently reside in the community.

While the community members and district officials seemed opposed to consolidation, they seemed happy about the financial largesse the affiliation awarded. Parents and board wanted educational opportunities for their children but believed they, not educators and the department of education, knew what was best for their children since it had been best for the parents when they had been children. As a result they retained control over the aspects of education that they could. To this end, they did not have classes for or integration of special needs students, alternative programs or specialists. This resulted partially from the fact that there was no perception that such needs existed and partially because the traditional methods of teaching had always generated their numbers of 'passes' and 'failures' in each class. Teachers were expected to seek out the rules of the local community and conform to them.

In sum, the vision of school in mega divisions held by the department of education was interpreted by Smalltown parents as children learning the same material parents had learned in the ways parents had learned them but, in a newer, warmer, roomier building of closed classrooms where children still sat in rows.

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<sup>391</sup>Freidenberg, "Free Schools," 15.

## 2. Teachers' Vision of Education

We were a small and entirely female staff who met, shared ideas, and tried to remain current with pedagogical trends and educational practices, especially open area classrooms, peer coaching and team teaching. We did this despite the fact that we had been categorically refused permission by the local board acting, I assumed, on the orders of the community, to use any but locally approved materials and methods from pre-consolidation days. We all knew we would move on to other communities and we wanted to be prepared to incorporate the changes we predicted would evolve in education.

Like our contemporaries in other schools in other parts of the province, country and world, my impression is that we believed "staff co-operation ... and interest in the children"<sup>392</sup> were the most important factors in enabling us to provide the best educational opportunities we could. At the same time we were trying to follow the vision of the province and, at the same time, comply with the expectations of the community despite the personal and emotional conflicts we experienced because of some of the decisions. We saw no need to challenge the decisions or authority of either, since we were voluntarily in their employ and had agreed to those terms prior to hiring. While I personally felt constrained by the prohibition placed on experimentation, I also felt relieved, to an extent, at the content emphasis since I was young enough to remember my own school days and did not have to relearn all of the material in order

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<sup>392</sup>National Education Research, Annual Report (New York: NEA Printers, 1964): 39.

to teach it. However, I did not like the rigidity of application. I believe my colleagues were even less content with the local view, since they had taught for several years and were anxious to 'try out' new materials and styles. However, we all compromised with local decisions. Looking back it seems likely that some of those directives placed us in conflict with provincial guidelines.

That we all felt to a degree 'restricted' is borne out by the fact that, as of June 1967, all of us had tendered our resignations. Teaching in a consolidated school had not provided any changes from the education systems I had experienced as a student. To remain where I was would not give me the chance to try any of the things I wanted to try. Although I was not sad to leave, I have always remembered that first year. It made me appreciative of the years to follow, as I grew to recognize first "the disparity between small and large schools [that] was becoming evident in terms of both curriculum and physical environment."<sup>393</sup> Second, I grew to realize more fully that such disparities continued even further into large communities wherein individuals and groups each had their own preconceived definition and expectation of teachers and schools and that sometimes these conflicted with each other.

### **3. Pedagogical Trends**

The progressive planning of new approaches and techniques envisioned by the Manitoba Department of Education was, in my opinion, poorly achieved in Smalltown. There were no specialist teachers who had the expertise or knowledge to determine

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<sup>393</sup>Canadian Teachers' Federation, "Teachers in Canada," 10.

which skills were the most important in specialist subjects. Part of the available funds left after construction and related expenses from the “75 percent of funding from consolidated revenue of the province and 25 percent ... levy on property”<sup>394</sup> was allocated to purchasing continuous series of textbooks for the school. There was, however, no school library and the only books in the one shelf classroom library were those from the old school, and those I and others loaned for the year. Established learning methods and political agendas were retained. The idea that “student work and assessment- or curriculum and program evaluation- are for the purpose of improving teaching and learning”<sup>395</sup> was taken seriously by parents and trustees. Tests were to be conducted on a regular basis in all core subjects. Trustees and community members could ask to see our tests and/or examinations. Despite unannounced visits to my room, no one came specifically to look at examinations. Perhaps that was because I had three of five trustees’ children in my room, so they saw the tests anyhow. Despite the trauma these ‘visits’ caused me, I never questioned their occurrence. It seemed ‘normal’ that powerful people should expect subservience from employees. I had been educated in a system where questioning was not encouraged even if it was not openly frowned upon. How then was it possible to upset the established cultural, political, moral, academic, social and perhaps even fiscal applectart by asking “why are you doing this to me?”? So I continued to ‘test’ students, and endure visits. Tests were, for the most part, based on memorization and reproduction of facts and data. That they were requirements was

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<sup>394</sup>The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, The Manitoba Teacher, 49(10) (1971): 2.

<sup>395</sup>The Manitoba Teachers’ Society, The Manitoba Teacher, 50(7) (1972): 2.

stated by the school trustees. Achievement tests were issued three times a year and it was anticipated and expected by both parents and trustees that all students would improve greatly. A few concessions were given for the 'slow' children in the room. I was grateful that none of the trustees' children fit into that category.

Year-end divisional examinations were issued to all students. Colleague 3 and I shared reminiscences when he indicated one day that departmentalization became a strong issue in his consolidated school, too. With it exams and the necessity to do well on them became a concern. Exams became the end point towards which all students began to work. These were marked outside the school itself by teachers selected by the board, and we were told only how well our class did in terms of a general scale. In this system "the child with special learning disabilities"<sup>396</sup> became a child who received only lip-service in education. For example, two students in my class, twin sisters, suffered agonizingly over work I knew was too hard for them to learn and inappropriate for me to teach to them. I had no choice, however, since there was no provision for other curriculum materials for them and I was neither encouraged nor permitted to improvise. To me it was apparent that changes were "urgent if the needs of children with emotional and learning disorders were to be met."<sup>397</sup> But, since the necessary move to license specially trained personnel was several years away, and I was unable to change the established order of things, I assisted the girls to the best of my ability. Despite their efforts and apparent agony, I had no alternative but to hold them back in June. To

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<sup>396</sup>Y. M. Henteleff, "The Child with Learning Disabilities," The Manitoba Teacher, 49(11) (1971): 4.

<sup>397</sup>Ibid., 5.

do so conflicted with my personal sense of morality and justice. To not do so would, I believe, have initiated serious personal and/or professional problems meted out by the board which served as the vector for voicing community views. Once again knowledge was placed at the mercy of power as powerful individuals thrust their values and expectations into the political site of the school.

Because the busing of students demanded ending classes promptly, it was not possible to have rural children receive remedial help after hours. Though homework was required by parents and trustees, I always felt badly assigning it since I remembered my own hours of travel on the school bus and the exhaustion that followed. Consequently, because I could not ignore the rules, I gave out workbook pages, sheets or reading assignments. This enabled me to maintain my own integrity yet not conflict with policies of the board. From the changeable state of handwriting, I suspected some of the children were doing their work on the bus.

The school continued to be a site in Smalltown of educational development and political relations wherein interrelationships of power and knowledge issues were played out as they mixed with or formed a part of the frame of reference held by individuals or groups. For example, all textbooks were paid for by the division, but children paid an annual refundable deposit that was forfeit in the case of loss or damage. Texts used, including those for the science course I was asked to pilot, were often too difficult for children to read. However, without access to a town or school library, research projects were almost impossible to assign. As well, I was asked to

teach the Concepts in Science 6<sup>398</sup> which had been released as the most innovative science book written in years. The text was wonderful- I was to use it with another division for many years. There was one major problem in Smalltown, however. I received only the texts. There was no science equipment with it and no supporting material to enhance or illustrate the concepts under study. Needless to say, neither I nor the students did very well on it, but since it was being 'piloted,' no one took the less than encouraging year-end scores too seriously.

As another example of the political nature of schools the following reflections surface. We did not have access to guidance counsellors despite the fact that, as I now realize, some of my students needed help I could not give. No nurses were in our school unless there was an outbreak of a contagious disease in which case one came as needed from a community about thirty miles away. No support personnel of any type were accessible to staff or students since the community and division view that school was for academics and not socialization was strictly enforced. Those students needing services of doctors, clergy or other support personnel had, in the trustees' stated opinion, "parents to take them for it and school was not to interfere."<sup>399</sup> The local community members were not about to relinquish whatever control of education they could hold on to from either the government or its agents, the teachers.

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<sup>398</sup>P. Brandwein, K. E. Cooper, P. E. Blackwood and E. B. Hone, Concepts in Science 6 (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace and World, Incorporated, 1966).

<sup>399</sup>Recollections of "Employment Interview," Manitoba, Summer, 1966.



Additionally, teachers were not involved in decision making or determining what curricula to teach or school functions to have. Those were mandated by our employers; we taught the material not the child.<sup>400</sup> School self-evaluation which “encourages a high degree of participation in the conduct of evaluation and the sharing of knowledge”<sup>401</sup> was not advocated. I refrained from offering suggestions, from problem solving and from decision making in any capacity not immediately linked to the classroom. As Rooke states, “standardization was thought to be the only viable means of creating a unified school system”<sup>402</sup> and the local community was determined to retain its authority to set standards. That I was a ‘servant’ to that authority was evident on a daily basis and I did not expect to be “recognized and rewarded for the creation and implementation of innovative approaches to achieving excellence”<sup>403</sup> or “for exemplary performance of a specific job or duty.”<sup>404</sup> On the contrary, had I showed such initiative, I believe I would have been asked to vacate the premises before the end of the first term, or possibly even the first month!

The strap was still regarded as the ultimate disciplinary action. I remember my fifteen and sixteen year old boys passively receiving it from the principal (who was half their size) over some petty issue I have long since forgotten. These and the other students

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<sup>400</sup>Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference.

<sup>401</sup>H. Simons, Getting to Know Schools in a Democracy: The Politics and Process of Education (Philadelphia, Pa: The Falmer Press, 1987), 198.

<sup>402</sup>Patricia Rooke, “From Pollyanna to Jeremiah. Recent Interpretations of American Educational History,” Journal of Educational Thought, 9(1) (1975): 26.

<sup>403</sup>J. Lewis, Achieving Excellence in Our Schools (Westbury, NY: J. L. Wilkerson Publishing Company, 1986), 140.

<sup>404</sup>Ibid.

behaved as if they believed “passive acceptance was more desirable than active criticism and self-initiated learning”<sup>405</sup> and that they should “not even ... question authority.”<sup>406</sup> Again, so inured was I to accepting as normal or just, such archaic practices, because of my own experiences as a student within both the overt and covert environment of both pre and post consolidation eras, that I did not even question the morality, justice, necessity, legality or intent of the strapping of these unwitting victims.

Students did not participate in inter-school sports even at the junior high level since it was considered the responsibility of the town recreational league to provide socialization opportunities and team competition. Again these attitudes were in contradiction to the mandate of the department of education and in conflict with my own views. However, the attitude prevailed despite the fact there were students whose parents could not afford the tuition of club sports. Sports’ days for ‘in-school’ activities were acceptable, but field trips to other than approved establishments or for specific academic purposes were not. Children were expected to learn about the rest of the community and the world from their association and activities with their parents. The only socialization children had at school was at Hallowe’ en and other ‘approved’ parties. I caused quite a furor when I approached the trustees for permission to take my students Christmas carolling after hours to homes around town. Support was given grudgingly so long as we “were not out too late.”<sup>407</sup> No one told me what ‘too late’

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<sup>405</sup> Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference, 17.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>407</sup> Recollections of Interview with “Committee Spokesperson.” Manitoba, 1966.

was. Again, power issues took precedence over knowledge and educational issues as newly defined by the government.

No provision was given to gifted and talented students and there was no question of optional attendance at school. Television was not encouraged as an educational medium although the radio music school broadcasts with Glen Harrison were enthusiastically endorsed by the district whose trustees bought a radio for every classroom. We were not encouraged to use the "Let's Write" series, however, since it was not totally in agreement with purchased textbooks. There was no move towards individualized progress but instead a movement towards entrenching conformity and uniformity.

Professional development days to learn the new trends, then called 'teachers' conventions' were few and far between. We were mistrusted for attending them by some trustees and encouraged to do so by others. The fact that the department of education "made additional time available for inservice sessions ... and ... had made it possible for teachers to attend ... days preparing themselves for new or revised courses"<sup>408</sup> was viewed as an edict requiring mandatory compliance by trustees and was further considered by some as nothing short of interference in the running of their school. Some community members told me they disapproved of my attending a convention when I was paid to teach.<sup>409</sup> They had preconceived notions of what

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<sup>408</sup>Government of Manitoba, Department of Education, Bulletin, IV(3) (1966): 1.

<sup>409</sup>Recollections of "Conversation." Manitoba, Fall, 1966.

educators were to be doing and I clearly did not fit the bill if not in the classroom every day.

The pedagogical trends and educational practices I employed under such direct and close supervision in my first year were far from innovative, even though test scores were good and children were able to reproduce memorized information. If one considers the pedagogical trends and educational practices used to support only the view that the "primary purpose of schools is to impart knowledge to the next generation"<sup>410</sup> it can be argued that the trustees of the school district, with my help, achieved their goal. Since socialization was almost non-existent, the pedagogical trends used to prevent socialization were again successful. However, when one considers the visionary goals of the province, provincial trustees' and teachers' associations with regards to education, the pedagogical trends and educational practices employed were more reminiscent of one or two roomed schools. There rote learning and simple transmission of knowledge were the norm<sup>411</sup> without the benefit of socialization or the acquisition of knowledge.

To me, it was a highly stressful year and one in which I felt as if I was walking on eggshells, afraid to make the slightest mistake. Although I had used pedagogical methods that been used on me by my own teachers, I had yet to learn about 'teaching.'

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<sup>410</sup>D. Davies, "American Professor Identifies "killers in the Classroom'," The Manitoba Teacher. 53(3) (1973): 5.

<sup>411</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba. Note\*: several of the chapters have elements of this. I can attest to his accuracy-- I have remembrances from my early and middle childhood years that were spent in such establishments.

#### 4. Teaching as a Profession

Despite the fact that our principal was a very competent female, I was told that the board had looked for a male candidate but none was forthcoming. She was an avid proponent of the rights of principals to be considered members in the provincial union despite government and the Manitoba Association of School Trustee attempts to separate the two.<sup>412</sup> Our division association headquarters was at a town some seventy-five miles away and, while I was notified about my fees, I had little or no contact with division association executive. I did not know who they were or even if we had local representation at meetings. I received no publications including 'The Manitoba Teacher' although one copy came to the school. I heard little or nothing of the workings of the group except via hearsay. Nothing I had studied at the one year teachers' training program prepared me for dealings with them. Because of their apparent lethargy in promoting professional contact, I came to know little about them with the consequence that later when issues developed wherein I could have used their help I did not know if they were friends or foe!

Conventions that were held were of a curriculum and/or textbook nature. It is my understanding that the conventions I attended were not sponsored by the association. The question of 'who should pay' for convention days was hotly contested by the board, teachers' association, and province.<sup>413</sup> This created additional friction in which to work, and I, and I believe others, were subjected to objectionable language on the part

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<sup>412</sup>The Manitoba Teachers' Society, The Manitoba Teacher, 51(4) (1971).

<sup>413</sup>The Manitoba Teachers' Society, The Manitoba Teacher, 50(2) (1972).

of some community residents who held misconceptions about teachers, conventions and the activities and demeanour of attendees at such conferences.

I was paid on the last teaching Friday of the month. My July and August cheques, while received in June, were post-dated. On checking with my colleagues, I discovered mine were the only ones to be so dated. Upon inquiry to a Manitoba Teachers' Society voice somewhere in Winnipeg, I discovered that the procedure was somewhat irregular but not illegal and that I should not worry about it. I never heard any further word despite assurances I would be contacted by a division representative to discuss the incident.

My initial impression of my union was not positive so that when questions arose where association insight might have been helpful, I chose to forget about asking. I knew that my salary would improve over time, especially if I studied but I did not know my union was negotiating this. My college student advisor had explained pension and other deductions and what he could about income tax. Consequently, I had few questions about those issues. Besides, my mother's office experience qualified her easily to help me with my tax reports and budgeting.

Over time I became aware of such activities as mentoring after discussion with colleagues. Although I was interested in establishing a Mentors' Club, none of my colleagues were willing to consider such a move. One cited fear of local board disapproval for such a venture in Smalltown. Since I did not know anyone well enough in the next town to approach them about starting a club, I approached my principal and

solicited her advice. I was told to forget the idea since 'they' were, for the most part, permit teachers and the association members hoped they would not be engaged for the following school year.<sup>414</sup>

As another example of poor communication, the society had not sent out, to my knowledge, any information about scholarships or bursaries to help defray financial costs of further study.<sup>415</sup> Consequently, although I did study the following summer, it was a great hardship to me. I stayed home with my parents, studied, and daily commuted many miles to class. I was already beginning to question the pursuit of another career even as I wrote letters for a teaching position because the lack of any support in a rigid environment had already left me disillusioned and unhappy with my career choice. I did not know how long I could continue to work in a career (I had by then ceased to call it a profession) that treated me, as I gradually came to believe, (once my naiveté began to become eroded) as an ignorant, untrustworthy, dependent almost moronic individual who obviously could not be trusted to work without constant surveillance by some 'authority' or another and about whom my own association seemed to care not a whit. Additionally, there were no local association seminars, newsletters or other regular communiqués to individual members. However, from Smalltown our staff did drive to our association headquarters one stormy evening to vote for members to elect representatives for the next year and as delegates to the Annual General Meeting. I have never understood why the mail was not used for the

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<sup>414</sup>Recollections of "Conversation." Manitoba, 1966.

<sup>415</sup>The Manitoba Teachers' Society, The Manitoba Teacher, 49(1) (1970).

ballots. As it turned out, none of the delegates showed up because of the weather, and the association staff collected telephone ballots.

As part of its political process, Smalltown historically worked its teachers hard. I religiously tackled each and every expectation given to me without once questioning, except myself once in a while, if what I was doing was sustainable or reasonable. No one, not even our association representative offered an opinion or advice to guide me or told me what the norm should be. For example, there was a tremendous workload in my classroom especially since I taught health to grades three and four to make up for one of my mathematics groups being taught by the principal. 'Preparation periods' did not exist. I did not know it was 'okay' to ask for volunteer parental help and no one suggested it. The matter only surfaced when one of the trustees who was a teacher advocate kindly asked why I was leaving after I had done "such a magnificent job for one so young and inexperienced."<sup>416</sup> I told him the numbers and workload were too high. In surprise, he commented that his wife (a former teacher) would have given me a hand but she did not know help was needed.

In my opinion, looking back now, the benefits to me of membership in my local association and to some degree the Manitoba Teachers' Society as a whole in that first year was not worth the fees paid and did not alleviate the agony I suffered both as a teacher and as an individual. The association that I later learned was concerned about educational reform on a provincial level seemed as ignorant of human and individual

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<sup>416</sup>Recollection of "Conversation with Mr. D." Manitoba, Summer, 1967.



issues as had the teachers and board members in Hometown surrounding the funeral of my friends. They seemed to value the 'collective good' only and were not interested, I thought, in the plight of individuals. To one whose family had escaped the collectivism of Eurasia, I was not impressed. The complexity of demands and issues facing me were enormous to begin with, and consolidation did not lessen them nor did the Society help to make them less painful. The only benefits I recognize from my association were as follows.

First, I knew I had service 'tenure' and that would make it easier to find a new school, if I wished to, in a different division and hopefully permit me the chance to study either for a permanent certificate or for another career. Second, I realized that if I stayed in teaching I had already acquired one year towards my pension, which to one who had just turned nineteen, was an 'eternity' away anyhow. I remember this had been one of the issues that so impressed my parents as a valuable asset in my 'old age' since they had no comparable opportunity. Third, I knew I had benefited from the 'resignation clause' negotiated into my salary by someone somewhere in a teacher association and no one in Smalltown, no matter how political or powerful, could prevent my resignation. Fourth, I knew, from discussion with fellow staff, that salaries and working conditions were better elsewhere. One member had received a newspaper clipping from a Northern community and I had made up my mind to apply there, if indeed I applied anywhere at all. Last, I knew things would not change locally very quickly. I was not sure I would be able to survive the stress of another year in the same spot,

especially when I had the potential opportunity to try somewhere else, choose another career, or just stay at home and help my parents.

Subsequently, during the course of that summer, the best advice of a professional nature came from three people, two of whom were not active in the teachers' association. One individual, a good friend and university student in my class at Teachers' College, later became involved in monitoring and recording the use of auxiliaries in Brandon schools.<sup>417</sup> He encouraged me to try at least one more year, and give myself a chance to see if 'it' was as bad somewhere else. Both my former high school history teacher, of whom as a student I was afraid, but who as an individual I continue to respect,<sup>418</sup> and a male elementary teacher, for whom I had student taught, encouraged me to study, obtain a degree if possible, and stay in teaching at least for a while since they believed conditions and salaries would improve. I had been on the receiving end of political power struggles in a 'traditional' learning environment. I felt betrayed as a female, and as a human being. I did not know if I could survive further misconceptions of females and live through more abuse or stereotypical attachments ascribed to females and/or teachers. I did not even know, so thoroughly had I been conditioned by the covert curriculum, that I should ask questions, never mind what questions to ask and how to

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<sup>417</sup>The Manitoba Teachers' Society, *The Manitoba Teacher*, 49(8) (1971).

<sup>418</sup>\*Note: I believe it is possible to have a genuine fear of someone or something and still respect it for a specific reason; in fact I still do. I still have a fear of educators who are teaching me, because of the tremendous power they hold over my transcript. That does not mean I dislike them, nor does it mean I do not respect them. It simply means I recognize their value as human beings, contributors to the learning and/or knowledge of others, and that I still regard them as custodians of knowledge that, in many cases, I myself do not yet, nor may ever, hold.

ask them. However, because I admired these individuals and knew them well, somewhat reluctantly I followed their advice.

It is interesting to note that these three men provided me with information neither my female colleagues nor local association representatives either could or would. I believe now that my colleagues did not have the information I wanted, or if they did, did not share it because they believed it was not their responsibility to do so or perhaps because they were afraid to do so. The attitudes of both seemed to match that of the trustees and the community in the area of teaching as a profession. There “the emphasis was on service, service as sacrifice, on idiosyncratic ways of teaching, over theories of learning, on discipline, and on respectability”<sup>419</sup> to such a degree that teachers as individual members of a profession were lost as the concerns of the ‘group’ took over.

Consolidation in Smalltown had not made, as far as my limited of reference was concerned, any improvement to my status as a teacher any more than I had perceived it making a change on any teachers’ lives as a student. Teachers were still viewed as authority figures by students and as servants by employers. Equity did not figure in. Holt, in How Children Fail<sup>420</sup> cites several reasons why children fail in school. He says failure occurs “because we as teachers fail to be honest with them; we tell them what values to hold, what to think. We hide our own emotions and we let them believe us

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<sup>419</sup>Rosa del C. Bruno-Jofré and Colleen Ross, “Decoding the Subjective Image of Women Teachers in Rural Towns and Surrounding Areas in Southern Manitoba: 1947-1960,” in Issues in the History of Education in Manitoba From the Construction of the Common School to the Politics of Voices, R. del C. Bruno-Jofré, ed., (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 590.

<sup>420</sup>J. Holt, How Children Fail, (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1964).

infallible. Further, we don't trust them."<sup>421</sup> In this context, I believe I was the student, the Manitoba Teachers' Society the teacher, and the 'school' was my initiation year in teaching. I also believe that in that first year of teaching in a consolidated school, professionally, the Manitoba Teachers' Society and my local association failed me dismally and did a great disservice to me as a professional because of their poor communication and seeming lack of interest in teachers as individuals. It seems to me now, that their interests were more concerned with those of teachers of the province as a whole and especially Winnipeg and other urban centers.

### **5. Women's Issues**

As indicated, our school principal was a female who had been selected after no males had applied. All the rest of the staff were unmarried females unlike several neighbouring towns where both male and female teachers, some on permit, were employed. There was only one approved teacherage in town and the four other members of the staff, two of whom had cars, lived in it. That left me, who had no car, 'odd person out' and in a position of vulnerability in foul weather or if I needed to carry things. There was no local taxi or bus service. Consequently, because no other accommodation was available, I had to live with a family that had been 'cleared' by the school district officials. Here again, I grew to accept the idea that my 'person' was a custodial object of my employer. The school was over a mile from the house.

Although I had no car and no other transportation to work, unlike virtually every other

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<sup>421</sup>Holt, How Children Fail, 6.

occupation, as a female teacher I was expected to wear a skirt on all days including outdoor duty days. Needless to say, this caused extra hardship for me. I had either to carry books along with a change of clothes, or purchase cold weather wear I could not afford. I chose to wear slacks under a skirt. While this action raised a few eyebrows, no one said anything about it to me. I complied with the dress code because I had agreed to abide by it when I was hired.

I believe, now, that my pre-service interview was typical of that held in the same offices for innumerable years. My recollections of it are as vivid as if it occurred yesterday. At it I was critically evaluated by the local board who, it could be argued “undertook to ensure that their teacher was the proper, upright, and moral person to direct their children’s education.”<sup>422</sup> This code of morality was impressed on me in part when I was told that a previous single teacher had been ‘let go’ because ‘she’ had been seen on occasion in a bar in a nearby town in the company of a gentleman who was not her husband. It was further indicated that if I had any thoughts of marriage or pregnancy during the year, I should leave the meeting forthwith. Smoking in public or within the view of children was not acceptable, but I was told that what I did behind closed doors was my own business. I found the interview to be somewhat intriguing as well as intimidating and terrifying. Later, upon discussion with my colleagues, I found that to a greater or lesser degree they had experienced the same situation. Looking upon it now, and comparing the stereotypical expectations attached, causes me to reflect that cultural

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<sup>422</sup>Patrica Schmuck, “Women Educators: Employees of Schools in the United States,” in Women Educators: Employees of Schools in Western Countries, P. A. Schmuck, ed., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 77.

traditions had remained unchanged in Smalltown for many years. Expectations were more in line with Carnoy's view of culture than that of culture as redefined knowledge.

I was then told the district's philosophy was "somewhat at variance with that of the division and the province."<sup>423</sup> The board then indicated that if I agreed to the terms and conditions and followed their code of morality, they would be prepared to offer me \$3,200 gross pay for teaching a combination grade 5/6 class for one year. After that time, my contract could (not would) be reviewed. I was informed that this was more than the dismissed teacher's salary had been. I was also told that, had I been responsible for school teams (who would be intramural only, not inter-school) or male, I would have been paid more since "most males had families to support"<sup>424</sup> while I "had no one else."<sup>425</sup> I was not told, however, that this was below the provincial average nor that, given their comments re: school teams and my future involvement in them, I should have been paid more. I naively did not ask. It never occurred to me to do so. I had been taught to obey and I did it very well. However, I was both amused and annoyed by the assumptions made about my single status but, once we discussed their academic expectations, I accepted. I had received no other offers (and, indeed, did not that year) and because I needed the money badly, I agreed to the salary. It was clear to me at the

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<sup>423</sup>Recollections of "Employment Interview," Manitoba, Summer 1966. \*Note: the community was able to retain its original school area name complete with the word 'district' in it. However, it and several other smaller communities, including one or two room rural schools, were all set within a larger 'division'. In some parts of the division as a whole, the proponents of consolidation were meeting with greater success in implementing consolidation than they were in the local district area.

<sup>424</sup>Ibid.

<sup>425</sup>Ibid.

outset, that the trustees were clearly in the position of power and no union or teacher would be able to alter their views.

An experience soon after my arrival in Smalltown clearly connected power and knowledge issues for me. In sharing this experience I hope to illustrate how some of that power was employed and how apparent misconceptions and holding stereotypes of female and/or education initiated it. At the same pre-service interview indicated previously, I remember being told children were expected to study strictly from approved provincial texts and no other material, no matter how supportive, was to be used. Pictures to “pretty up the classroom”<sup>426</sup> were fine but should be “used in moderation so as not to distract students.”<sup>427</sup> However, support material needed clearance from local trustees for use. It was anticipated that I would take work home or stay late to prepare. Children were expected to sit in rows and “none of those new-fangled groups or circles.”<sup>428</sup> It was expected that “the only talking would come from, or at the direction of, the teacher.”<sup>429</sup> I was informed that promoting the elements of “fun, neighbourliness and other society trends”<sup>430</sup> was not a part of my job. Those individuals saying such things might as easily have said “feelings have no legitimate place in the classroom.”<sup>431</sup> Consequently, the students I taught learned “that obedience, compliance were rewarded with approval, good grades and honours”<sup>432</sup> but they never

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<sup>426</sup>Ibid.

<sup>427</sup>Ibid.

<sup>428</sup>Ibid.

<sup>429</sup>Ibid.

<sup>430</sup>Ibid.

<sup>431</sup>Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference, 26.

<sup>432</sup>Ibid.

really learned how to think or form values or have ideas<sup>433</sup> since that was not permitted. Clearly the fact of my gender and youth led the trustees to explain in great detail, as a father to a reluctant and/or troublesome child, the expectations of my behaviour. Further, they made it clear that the trustees were the total authority figures I was to obey.

The consideration of culture as a site for struggles over values and political agendas is illustrated, to a degree by a subsequent experience. When the principal, the grade seven teacher and I coached intramural school teams, we were applauded and thanked. However, despite their previous allusions to monetary compensation for coaching, none was forthcoming. Ostensibly, because we did not compete with other schools, we had not worked as hard and did not need any. Nor were there any 'costs' as far as the trustees could see. When my principal allegedly talked to teachers' society officials about it, their comment was to the effect that verbal contracts were not really binding and the society could do nothing. Ironically, I was verbally bound by agreeing to abide to the board's philosophy and educational practices. The area association representative allegedly told the principal we should obey these requirements even if not in writing. I say 'allegedly' because I was not present and have only their affirmation that such did occur. If it is as had been reported to me, it is clear that contradictions did not seem to bother the association representative. However, I learned at a later date that he was being paid for coaching.

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<sup>433</sup>Ibid.



Female teachers were expected to be discreet and ladylike in all things. We had a joke amongst ourselves that before one of us died we had better get permission. Little escaped the watchful eyes of a number of the residents of town and community. Their tongues were eager to wag at real or imagined indiscretions. With this in mind, I was careful to be circumspect in my activities. Only on one occasion, towards the end of April, after I had already submitted my letter of resignation (effective the end of June of the same year), did I join my colleagues on 'an evening out.' We travelled almost one hundred miles so they could have a cold alcoholic beverage with their meal. I did not drink.<sup>434</sup> Ironically, despite our attempts to be discreet, the next Monday the whole town knew we had ALL been away. They had suspicions why, but they did not know where. The family with whom I lived was more than curious however, and relentlessly questioned me until I flatly told them it was none of their business. As a consequence for my independence, I received the 'cold shoulder treatment' from them until term's end. When I left in June no one wished me good luck or said good-bye. I had broken the stereotypical model of a passive, fragile, little girl needing direction<sup>435</sup> by refusing to report my behaviour to my 'foster' family. For that, I believed, neither they nor the community would ever forgive me. I was both glad and relieved that I had already resigned for I am sure otherwise I would have been fired on some pretext or left with no accommodations in the fall. Their behaviour closely resembled that I remember of the trustees at my pre-service interview- another manifestation of power in the community.

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<sup>434</sup>\*Note: The death of my high school friends in the alcohol related automobile accident from my senior year at high school had left me with still painful memories each time someone suggested a 'social drink.'

<sup>435</sup>Schafer, "Where Discrimination Flowers". Strong-Boag, "Pulling in Double Harness," 94. 14.

Along with stereotyping, sexism and inequities persisted on a personal and individual level. One of my student's parents asked me to go to her and her husband's home on the weekend. They knew I was homesick and missed my parents' farm. I was delighted to accept and so informed my principal. She acted as if she had been struck by lightning and hurriedly advised me to phone the secretary-treasurer of the district without delay to obtain his approval. In obedience, I did. I also had a wonderful weekend. I was angry, however, and beginning to feel somewhat insecure and was as Shack says about some of the teachers of her day, "suffering ... from a persecution complex"<sup>436</sup> which was made even greater as I realized that had I been male, no such restrictions would have been imposed.<sup>437</sup> It was becoming abundantly clear that educational activities and the personal lives of teachers were deemed one and the same thing in Smalltown. Consolidation was to reform educational ideas, curriculum and enable all people, including women, to avail themselves of educational opportunities, to progress, to grow. However, no such change occurred in the lives of the female teachers in Smalltown. Life as an educator, especially a female educator, was, I conclude, unchanged from pre-consolidation times.

Even worse, it seemed as if the community and trustees believed students and women had no "thoughts, no opinions, no substantial views of their own,"<sup>438</sup> but were to be

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<sup>436</sup>Sybil Shack, "The Neophiliacs," in *Concern and Competence in Education*, D. A. McIver, ed., (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto, Faculty of Education, Guidance Centre, 1973): 91.

<sup>437</sup>Note: \* This is a gentle version of what I really wrote and said about the incidents and subsequent emotions, as noted in my personal files. However, I don't think they let us use words like the ones I attached to the situation, in university papers.

<sup>438</sup>Corey, *Teachers Can Make a Difference*, 18.

well-schooled and obedient to the expectations and customs of the community.

Moreover, previous educators seemed to have adopted this opinion of themselves as well. I have not noted nor do I remember that there was even the glimmer or hint of an idea from community members and/or teachers that students and women, including teachers, would react anyway except passively, to the suggestion. An example to illustrate this point involves a fellow staff member. Miss S, a teacher in the same school, was about my age, single and attractive. She came from a wealthy family who believed that all girls should have an education even if they planned to get married. She was greeted, as were we all, casually and usually pleasantly by a number of both male and female area residents. On more than one occasion she was greeted by the same male, a gentleman some ten or fifteen years older than she. He began to call her at home (the teacherage she shared with the rest of the staff) often. The personal encounters grew in frequency and intensity and he began to wait for her at various places to talk to her, follow her and in general make his presence known. Soon gifts began to arrive at school and the teacherage with no other identification other than those of a 'secret admirer.' In desperation, because she was becoming afraid of both him and the situation, and because intervention by the principal had not been successful, Miss S took her case to the board. They allegedly told her it was not their problem; that somehow she had probably given an 'incorrect message' to this gentleman, perhaps inadvertently, and should not bother them with her 'love life' problems. I understand the union told her they could do nothing to help her, but that she should seek legal action. She filed a complaint with the police. However, as the

situation deteriorated and the whole situation became more public she was told, I understand, that she was fortunate to have already resigned because the notoriety she had brought upon herself and the district was “unseemly of a lady and a teacher.”<sup>439</sup> She was also apparently told that she would not have had her contract renewed. The trustees and community had found her guilty of some imaginary impropriety but, short of a court order to stay away from her, nothing happened to the male. It is my understanding he married a matron with children a few years later and, as far as I know, his family still lives in the district. The trustees denied Miss S a reference when she left. She had a great deal of difficulty in finding a new position and returned to university the following fall.

Not unlike the attitudes that persisted in the 19th century, in this small rural town women teachers’ “behaviour was under constant scrutiny and jobs could be terminated simply because of infighting in the community. Teaching was considered a job for those of inferior ability.”<sup>440</sup> I grew to believe we were considered very inferior because we were teachers and especially because we were women. It seemed that no one dared to or felt a need to question the ideologies held. Inconsistencies, misconceptions, stereotypes seemed to be accepted by male and female alike as ‘the way things are, because they have always been this way.’

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<sup>439</sup>Reflections on “Conversation.” Manitoba, 1967.

<sup>440</sup>A. J. King and K. J. Peart, Teachers in Canada: their work and quality of life (Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 1992), 6.

It was to be several years before the women's movement of the 1970s became "involved with many issues of more than passing interest to teachers. These issues included objections to the stereotyping of women found in school materials, the discrimination in the appointment of people to decision making positions or bodies, and the lack of attention paid to the views, needs and works of women."<sup>441</sup> In the meantime, the attitude of non-teachers continued to view women in the profession as very inferior, incapable and mindless people despite the fact that teaching had "been one of the few professional fields open to Western women in the last century."<sup>442</sup>

Dr. Sybil Shack was extremely accurate when she said, in comparing teachers of the 1960s to their predecessors, "nor is this generation of young women much different. Its opinion of itself is pretty low and its aspirations not much higher."<sup>443</sup> I believe I fitted her description. It was not until women's issues became a real concern in later years that my inferiority complex was to be, to some degree, healed.

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<sup>441</sup>S. Gold, Introduction to Socialization and Life Skills, Publication by Federation of Women's Teachers' Association of Ontario (Toronto, Ont.: Ontario Federation of Women's Teachers' Association of Ontario, 1978).

<sup>442</sup>Patrica Schmuck, "Women Educators: Employees of Schools in the United States," in Women Educators: Employees of Schools in Western Countries, P. A. Schmuck, ed., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), v11.

<sup>443</sup>Sybil Shack, The Two-Thirds Minority (To Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto, Faculty of Education, Guidance Centre, 1973), 35.

## ***D. Northtown: Recollections as an Established Teacher 1967-1975***

### **1. Local Vision of Education**

Upon leaving Smalltown I secured a position as a grade six teacher in a Northern urban mining community where I taught more or less continuously from the fall of 1967 to the spring of 1975.

My experiences in the North had similarities to urban teachers elsewhere. For example, a number of years had passed before Colleague 7 mentioned to me that although men had dominated the system in which she worked, there was the inkling that it was possible and conceivable that females could rise to positions of power. It was rough, however, for women who had responsibilities such as small children to be able to justify time spent to work towards those positions of power. However, once they did attain such roles they were held in awe by their peers. In a similar conversation, I recall that Colleague 8 voiced similar sentiments, but also indicated that although she knew of women who had opportunities to advance they refused them and refused to discuss why. I believe, however, that given the same opportunities now, if these women were younger than they now are, both they and their female colleagues would probably accept such positions. Both were too close to retirement to consider a career change. However, to me in Northtown I remember that my experiences were as diverse and exciting as my experiences in Smalltown had been inflexible and tedious. As well, the geographical and educational climates were markedly different.

There were four large elementary schools and one high-school for grades nine to twelve. Grades seven and eight were housed in the elementary schools. Two additional elementary schools were being constructed and one was in the planning stages. The school population was very large for three reasons. First, the town's adult population was made up of relatively young people with young families. Second, "The Company" was the largest employer and needed able-bodied mine and operational workers who were young and strong to meet the growing world-wide demands for their product. Third, there were a great many new Canadians who brought with them cultural traditions of large families. These together with local aboriginal communities, who left their own villages to find work in town, increased the local population.

Unlike the general North-South, East-West grids of most rural communities, Northtown's urban plan was that of a circular core in which businesses, school administration office, library, high school and recreational facilities were located with semi-circular pods, resembling the petal on a flower, around it. Students generally walked to the schools located within each of these pods. As the town grew in size, buses were added for collegiate students because conditions of extreme cold combined with long distances created actual dangers to the health and safety of students.

Most children walked since there were no bus services of any kind. Children with severe learning disabilities were housed in separate school facilities. However, the provincial vision of equity for all in a normalizing setting was not yet addressed since not all children were integrated.

Initially, the schools were closed classroom facilities. There was provision for physical education, art, and music specialization in all schools. The High School had a very well-equipped industrial arts facility including electrical, mechanical, wood-working and home economics departments. French was taught at both the junior and senior high levels. The teaching population was large with many teachers at all grade levels in the system. It was not uncommon for the division to hire new personnel during the school year as well. Classes were large. For the first five years I never had a class of fewer than thirty-two students and usually the number closely approached forty.

In tune with the Manitoba department of education's vision of education, the school district system was "structured to give the students maximum responsibility for their own education, [and] to help students build more positive self-concepts."<sup>444</sup> As well it was established "to provide a climate where the student could develop attitudes and values which were more open, tolerant, flexible and accepting; to create a degree of creativity and diversity; and to provide a place where the student could initiate, define and evaluate his own learning projects."<sup>445</sup> To meet these visionary goals not only were curriculum subjects added at the high school level, but also reading clinicians, consultants, resource teachers, teacher-librarians and specialist teachers were added to all school staffs. The junior and senior high students had access to a guidance and career counselling program. However, for the years I was on staff, no guidance personnel were available for elementary level children. There was also a public health

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<sup>444</sup>Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference, 168.

<sup>445</sup>Ibid.



nurse who rotated between schools. The principals were full-time administrators, not teaching administrators, as they had been in all my rural experiences. Within each school there was at least one full-time administrative secretary. This educational practice more enabled administrators to conduct staff evaluations, interact with students and the public as well as the board members so that ideas were, in my schools at least, more freely shared amongst interacting community members. Personal and political agendas became more observable as when, for example the demands for research and library services increased from both teachers and students, library budgets were expanded so that a vast variety of materials and resources became available. To assist in the organization and distribution of these materials, library clerical personnel and parent volunteers became a part of the school system.

“The Company” played a large role in local education by supporting programs implemented in schools, and in donating an entire printing system to the school district for use in mass producing excellent copies of materials prepared by teachers for student use. Further, cultural interaction between school and community continued. Scholarships and bursaries were offered to collegiate students by organizations, service clubs, “The Company” and other businesses. The rapid growth of the town that required additional or renovated schools placed a high financial burden on the community. Consequently, the provincial formula coupled with “The Company’s” contribution was appreciated in keeping the level of taxation from sky-rocketing as might otherwise have been the case.

The local board members and school administration were cognizant of both the department of education's expectations of educational reform included in school consolidation, local parental concerns and expectations surrounding learning and knowledge issues. To work to satisfy these expectations, a number of educational practices were in effect. The schools added were, for the most part, a combination of closed and open areas. Children under grade four were usually housed in closed classrooms. Others, except specialist subjects, were in the open area. In several elementary schools, science laboratories were also available, and they were closed facilities. In all cases, to try to meet the expectations of the department of education, local trustees were generous in their allocation of funds and materials to the schools.

With the establishment of open-area classrooms, the new superintendent, (a female classroom teacher who was promoted to the position following the accidental death of the current superintendent), followed the trend of California schools by purchasing equipment, furniture and materials that were in tune with the teaching style that the open-area implied. She also introduced new pilot projects and encouraged staff members to try out new materials and techniques and if possible to provide feed-back as to their relative merit. Even as this 'experimentation' was underway, core programs were still maintained and teachers were expected to review and/or test students as appropriate for skill development, rather than content, based on the curriculum. Basal programs in reading, mathematics and other subjects were continued. However, no 'one' reader was selected as 'the text' for every student at a specific grade. However,

all schools opted for the same selections of materials to maintain some continuity between schools within the district. This proved beneficial to transient families who changed lodging often within the town. It also recognized, like Brookes, that the experience and perspectives learners have often affects how well they are able to learn to deal with new situations.

Educational trends were examined with the result that radios, listening stations, overhead projects, movie and film strip projectors, tach-x machines and many more were considered by trustees as a part of the material needed by schools to run an effective educational program. Televisions were added once transmissions became available to the community as a whole. Teachers received not only encouragement and support from the school administration, union representatives, and the board to try out these pieces of equipment, but also funds to follow up on programs where necessary. The superintendent's department considered it not only permissible but also absolutely essential that teachers did supplement all basal programs with additional materials as she noted they had done in the United States schools she had visited. The belief that the more exposure children had to knowledge and information, the richer were their opportunities to learn added to the notion that can be best stated as the "participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities."<sup>446</sup> Feedback from students at all levels through an evaluation process such as evaluation sheets determined if the students believed their objectives and those of the teacher had been

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<sup>446</sup>J. M. Paton and D. A. McIver, Concern and Competence in Canadian Education (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, 1969), 72.

met. It was expected by the school administration and the superintendent's office acting in tandem together that such student/teacher interactions as goal establishment and evaluation of learning would occur. For me the process was useful and informative. Children tended to be honest and, once they had learned how to set objectives and evaluate success, the information became very meaningful to program improvements.

Socialization, as illustrated by a few examples which follow, was encouraged in a variety of ways. It was viewed as a necessary component of education as parents and educators publicly seemed to adopt the attitude that knowledge was not limited to processing information from printed texts and materials. My personal experiences surround personal involvement in intramural and inter-school competitions and activities included poetry competitions, spelling and geography matches, science, geography and history fairs and team sports which were viewed as both healthy and necessary to produce socially mature students. Children were not expected to sit quietly in desks in rows. District educators recognized that learning opportunities exist in all parts of an individual's natural environment. Changes of seating plans were encouraged and, in my case, the furniture in the classroom lent itself to experimenting with grouping, unique arrangements of seating and ultimately, socialization. Talking was not limited to teacher instruction only, as peer-coaching and teamwork was encouraged. The open area provided opportunities for interaction as common grades were in proximity to each other. As a result of some such arrangements, older students

inadvertently were placed in positions of role models for younger ones. Parents and the community as a whole were made a part of the education system and were not simply tax-paying supporters of it.

To further fulfill some of the recommendations consolidation was to encompass, teacher auxiliaries were introduced to the schools. Their arrival occurred shortly before I left as support staff to teachers for basically clerical jobs. They had not yet begun to be attached to specific special needs students who were finally being integrated into the classroom. The discussion of how to increase their auxiliary staff numbers was underway. Parents were encouraged, however, to participate in the school and on several occasions other teachers and I had help from parent volunteers. Perhaps this was the result of timing and circumstance. However, it is my opinion that even without the influence of timing and circumstance Northtown progress would have been remarkable, because of the positive attitude people had towards working together to find solutions.

Along with other contractual obligations and educational practices all teachers were expected to rotate supervision at recess and, since most students went home for lunch, for only a short time at noon hour. To his credit one of my administrators also took his turn. I initially had three preparation periods which eventually totalled about 180 minutes per six day cycle. I valued greatly the generosity of the board in providing this mechanism to teachers. It was an example to me of yet another instance where the trustees and parents viewed education positively, and considered the benefits of

consolidation as an excellent means to ensure their children the best education possible.

I interpreted their active participation in all areas of the education process as more a balance or sharing of power rather than the imposition of power as in my previous experience.

I concluded that, in Northtown, the vision of education matched and in some cases was more advanced than the vision of progressive education of the Manitoba Department of Education.

## **2. Teachers' Vision of Education**

I found myself one of several rural teachers who had moved to the North. I recall finding the new 'freedom' to make choices exciting but also rather intimidating at first. This intimidation arose, I now believe, because I was forced by circumstances to re-evaluate my own educational experience, visions of pedagogical trends, educational philosophies, and my entire values system, especially as it encompassed education. This implied I needed to ask myself questions. I had never been allowed to. I scarcely knew how. As a consequence of my fear and self-intimidation, for the first year or more, I found myself teaching much as I had been taught<sup>447</sup> and much as I had taught in Smalltown.

Only slowly did I begin experimenting with new ideas, half expecting as I did that I would be told to stop. I learned from participation in workshops that the use of open

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<sup>447</sup>Corey, *Teachers Can Make a Difference*, 6. Note:\* Corey suggests that this is not an unnatural reaction to someone experiencing the terrors of the classroom, whether as a student or a teacher.

classrooms was advocated as a beneficial environment in which to encourage cross-grade, cross-age groupings in our district. As time grew on, I continued to experiment with new methods of teaching within the open area. I grew to recognize that by emphasizing the importance of thinking through work projects and instilling inquiry skills in children, I was able to assist them to broaden their own linguistic skills.<sup>448</sup>

This system helped me to grow, too, as I learned to use new skills and to develop techniques for use with my students.<sup>449</sup> It was apparent to me that if learning was to occur then children had to become thinkers and analytical inquirers. The success rate of new Canadians, in the positive nurturing environment, to learn a new language and adapt to a new culture indicated linguistic and academic achievement was high. It is my view that the multi-cultural nature of the community accepted the worth of all people both in the schools and community provided a broader understanding of cultural ideologies and differences and that consolidation as defined in this thesis was a complete and total success. Partially, the demographics, histories, habits and career choices of the population allowed for the definition and articulation of a hegemonic principle I call a "positiveness." As well, the broadmindedness I remember that ensued was in part necessitated by the newness of the community itself. In a community that was as far removed from urban Winnipeg as Northtown, it was necessary that a belief in social progress permeate the fabric of the community and the schools since the area was small and people were to a large degree dependent on each other for survival.

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<sup>448</sup>M. M. Holmes, "The New Middle Class and Organization on Curricular Knowledge," Theory and Research in Social Education, X(2) (1982): 35.

<sup>449</sup>Note: \* I still have notes of many of these, and from time to time look at them to kindle a new idea.

The equity envisioned for students by proponents of consolidation was extended to teachers as the Inter-Universities North program became available. Teachers including myself were encouraged by the school board, who bore the costs, to attend both local and provincial inservices. Substitutes were provided as necessary and the board seemed proud of its ability and willingness to assist educators. This attitude provided additional reason for parents and community members to be supportive of the educational system.

It is my assertion that the eight years I spent in Northtown represented the realization of the vision of consolidation. The reasons for its success are varied. Only a few have been cited in this thesis. However, I believe one of the basic reasons it survived is because everyone: teachers, local teachers' association members, "The Company," parents, business people, students, paraprofessionals and others worked *together* to provide the best learning environment possible. As such, in Northtown schools were the sites of educational development and political relations wherein knowledge and power issues were played out as they mixed with and formed part of the frame of reference held by individuals and groups. However, the sites remained positively motivated wherein struggles for change were viewed as changes to make things better, not as a threat to someone's positional authority, traditional religious or cultural habits or to control the mind and actions of others simply for the power that doing so implied.

### **3. Pedagogical Trends**

Many trends were a part of my educational experience in the North. Some stand out in my recollections more than others, but all were significant for a variety of reasons.



First, it became apparent to me that the government's vision of education was a good one since it promoted educational equity. Second, I quickly grew to recognize just how different the needs of each of my students were in all social and academic areas. Third, I became more willing to take risks and make decisions about how I taught curriculum and in selecting materials I used to do that teaching. This risk taking and decision making ability grew, I believe, partly out of the newly learned personal skill of asking myself, and others, questions. And, fourth, I believe exposure to many of those trends, and 'answers' to those questions whether positive or negative, provided me with ammunition for dealing with future teaching experiences and removed from my mind the bitterness and soul-searching I had endured after one year in Smalltown.

There were basal programs for core subjects and teachers were expected to follow the curriculum using the basal texts in their teaching and to incorporate several of the textbooks which were available at a variety of reading and skill levels. In a long conversation one day, Colleague 8 indicated that, in the schools of her post consolidation experience, basics were very important and it was important to set goals higher than students could reach them. In early years, basal texts were the norm in her experience. As she moved into teaching junior and senior high classes, however, less emphasis was placed on a clearly specified text book.

Children succeeded with the material since the materials were selected to meet the needs of the children, not the children selected to suit the material. Use of additional support materials was encouraged. Resource teachers, consultants and librarians were

expected to help teachers obtain and prepare materials for all students at all levels.<sup>450</sup> 178

No damage deposits were paid by students.

Continuous and individualized progress as modeled in United States schools became established. Colleague 6, now in poor health and retired, after a lifetime of teaching, stated publicly and on several occasions that the greatest influence in her teaching experience was the individualized progress program advocated by proponents of Maria Montessori. However, trends came in very quickly. One would be popular one week, another the next. Trends came in, then went out very quickly. Every concept was about the same. She indicated that someone would read about a new 'happening' in the United States and feel duty-bound to try it out in Canada even before he/she knew whether it would work. Colleague 7 echoed the sentiments, but seemed to find more positive elements about this diversity. It enabled her, with administrative permission, to select and retain elements of educational trends she found useful, especially in dealing with special education students. She cited open-area as being the greatest influence to affect her teaching and indicated that it came to Canada via the USA.<sup>451</sup> This individual is still excited by new challenges and educational trends and still credits part of that excitement to the reformist ways of thinking prevalent in post-consolidation Manitoba.

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<sup>450</sup> Government of Manitoba, Department of Education, Annual Report (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1967).

<sup>451</sup> \*Note: I have discovered during the writing of this thesis that the whole open-area concept was originated in the United Kingdom.

It was expected children would be taught how to set individual objectives for themselves, would work to meet those objectives, and would evaluate their progress. I still have many samples of lesson plans that grew out of this process. Teacher input was to occur at every step. Having each student in a different spot in the core subjects was a time-consuming and demanding task. It was received with mixed feelings. For example, although he did not go into detail, I remember Colleague 4 on more than one occasion crediting Piaget with helping him to be a better teacher, while stating that implementing the individualized progress Piaget's philosophy implies was difficult. When I was trying to figure out where I stood on the status of individualized progress, I recall Colleague 7 giving me her opinion. In brief, her remarks of individualized progress can be summarized as a unique kind of segregation wherein groups of children who could do things were separated from those who could not. As well, I remember her stating her belief that it was the rare individual who used individualized progress to do what it was intended to do- help children learn as individuals within a larger group.

Not everyone liked the new pedagogical trends, however. Teachers left the system because it clashed with their individual educational philosophies or values system, or because they either did not believe in the open-classroom teaching concept, or because they could not cope with the stress that resulted from trying to make it work. For example, the open area is what one friend accuses of causing her husband to leave teaching due to stress. She said something like she "never had to work in it, thank God!" Her husband's school followed a method of 'family grouping' in which the

teacher kept the class from junior to the start of senior high school. His class was horrific. He suffered stress-related health problems that nearly ended his life. The program was discontinued shortly after he left teaching. From this, it could be argued that conflicting political and educational philosophies or poor implementation of a pedagogical trend more than the trend itself were at least partially responsible for her attitude. She attached it to consolidation, but possibly it would have turned out the same way regardless.

I used pretests, activity block programming, and post tests. Students were asked individually to complete specific work strands as learning opportunities and knowledge were continuously created and recreated. Advanced students had enrichment, problem solving, analytical strategies and decision making components built in to their activities. Those struggling with basic skills had a very structured basic set of activities developed to build upon existing knowledge and reduce weaknesses. Unlike Smalltown where "middling to poor students were neglected"<sup>452</sup> or forced to struggle with inappropriate material, my students and the students of many of my contemporaries had material selected and developed carefully to meet their individual needs. Moreover, they had a voice in determining to some degree what they wanted to learn and, because of it, the attitude problems that might have occurred did not. Enrichment activities in my room included such items as research in our well-equipped library, preparing video taped productions, writing stories or novels as plays and producing them, developing and

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<sup>452</sup>Z. Gamson, Liberating Education (San Francisco, Ca.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1984), 4.

testing scientific hypothesis, answering questions in advanced mathematics, discovering and providing solutions for community and/or world social and economic problems and many others. The move gradually became one in which the individual student's needs, as addressed by the curriculum, became the pivotal point around which learning activities were structured. Textbooks became more and more a reference tool around which to structure lessons rather than serving exclusively as the source of 'the material' or 'the knowledge' to learn. Educational materials which tended to remove barriers to educational opportunity and human equity<sup>453</sup> were encouraged.

Even though there was on-going dialogue between teachers, principals and the superintendent on one side and the trustees on the other, unlike Smalltown the decision of what methods and materials to use was left essentially to teachers doing the teaching. No parent ever came to see what page I was on. Although they had the power and authority to do so, no trustee ever came to demand a look at my day book or tests, reviews or materials. The implied assumption was principals, superintendent, and school inspector would do whatever evaluation of staff was necessary. I only saw the inspector often when I was piloting a program for special education students and he wanted to assure me of his support for both myself and the program. The parents who came did so either as volunteers or to participate in learning or to lend support to me.

Teachers were not expected to lead after school activities but when they did administration was quick to recognize their efforts. Children were able to stay after

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<sup>453</sup>Kay Sigurdjonsson, "The Hard Part Begins: New Directions for the Women's Movement," Canadian Teachers' Federation Publication, (1978), 6+7.

school for help because there were no bus schedules. It is interesting to note that from time to time children in my class actually asked to stay after school- they wanted to do homework, or to be assured teacher assistance was there if needed. There were no imposed divisional examinations but I tested students on skills and concepts learned. Occasionally, I would even use a standardized test. Results were almost always impressive, and I believe it was because the children were involved in decision making about their own learning.

As additional goals were developed "to encourage student involvement in the school and community ... student awareness of the pressing problems in contemporary society and the world, as well as ... possible solutions to our own local ... problems"<sup>454</sup> grew as I pioneered the design and implementation of a community awareness program in Social Studies. Students and I took part in the Junior Red Cross, UNESCO, UNICEF and CAMR<sup>455</sup> associations and visited both public and private business agencies to research and integrate data into meaningful units of study. Interaction became a necessary part of my teaching style to ensure socialization of students. The usefulness of the program became apparent as children began to use newly acquired skills within the educational site of the school to question the practices of government agencies and businesses and to compare our local community to the world beyond. The division support for my activities was positive. Business people involved said they felt a closer

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<sup>454</sup>Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference, 168.

<sup>455</sup>\*Note: The since renamed "Canadian Association for Mental Retardation"

bond to the school. Parents were pleased to see some 'hands on' components built into academic learning.

In order to provide equal opportunities for learning, massive expenditures of money were made for the purchase of 'high interest low vocabulary' material and special materials for children of both exceptional and limited ability. As the cultural pattern of the town diversified, the materials purchased for educational use reflected the cultural disparities. Geography and history fairs and science fairs were common. In many cases these activities made up a large component of the 'homework' students had and monitored some of the educational practices that were advocated by leading educational researchers of the time.

Unlike my Smalltown experience, those of us piloting new programs were provided with all of the equipment necessary to pilot the program properly. 'Time off' from regular classes was given to teachers to prepare, to meet with resource or consultative staff and/or to attend meeting outside the home school for updates on the program. The community seemed to consider it normal that teachers attend and no paradigm to establish frames of reference or expectations of behaviour from educators or teachers seemed to need defining. The division provided coverage and assumed all costs resulting from such activities. No hostile looks or discourteous remarks resulted because of these. Learning centers, team teaching, the use of television, of tach-x reading machines, group learning strategies, integrated study and many more educational practices arising out of pedagogical trends were tried as teachers realized

the support would be there to sustain the experiment. In many of the programs there was a high student success rate because the students did “not feel the strong need to please adults but pleased themselves.”<sup>456</sup> Teachers also succeeded because they were encouraged to experiment and did not feel intimidated if they were less than successful. One educator friend said that as a teacher he was encouraged to use experimentation and discovery techniques. He noted that the influx of techniques and materials from the USA, amongst other places, came so quickly and with such volume that it was virtually impossible to try one out before another arrived hard on its heels. However, he hastened to add that it was okay to change, to try, to be different. Still another colleague mentioned that there was a variety of methods, but she taught with a view for education, an opportunity for students to climb out and up from opportunities.

One illustration of experiences may help to broaden this picture. As a member of a team teaching junior high, (after grade seven and eight students were moved from elementary schools to the collegiate), three colleagues and I pioneered the integration of thirteen special needs students into a pod of 132 grade seven students. The pod was built upon the continuous progress model where students were encouraged to use “learning as a process, not as a product.”<sup>457</sup> Manipulative techniques and ‘hands on’ activities were viewed as positive since we believed “children do learn because it is a basic human need and because it is fun”<sup>458</sup> and that “curiosity, exploration, the need to manipulate, the need to discover how things work, are part of the growth of healthy

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<sup>456</sup>Corey, Teachers Can Make a Difference, 17.

<sup>457</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>458</sup>Ibid., 15.



children.”<sup>459</sup> One of my closest teacher friends, and an individual whom I have admired for a number of years said often that the magical name that helped him put things into perspective was Piaget. It was through using Piaget’s ideas that he was able to rationalize the idea that learning was fun and a natural element of living.

The strap was still regarded as the ultimate disciplinary force but it was eventually abolished in Northtown schools. In its place, working with the child and parent to determine the inappropriateness of behaviour and how to correct it was encouraged.

Pedagogically, while many trends seemed popular in the period from 1967 to 1975 the ones I best remember as being useful to me were those dealing with team teaching, individualized progress, teaching to individual needs and student integration. There seems no doubt after my conversations with colleagues that I was not the only one to think this way. Colleague 1 agrees with me that the principal ingredient for educational success, however, is the teacher.

Teaching in the open area was an experience with both good and bad aspects. Several recollections come to mind from a discussion with Colleague 5. I do not remember her ever having one good thing to say about open classrooms from her experience. She was surrounded by closed rooms but the school design was such that the noise of areas funneled the sound into her room. Escape to the library did not provide relief either, because it was in the centre of the open area. However, I found the same to be true in closed classrooms. I believe that the success of learning does not depend solely upon

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<sup>459</sup>Ibid.

the pedagogical trends of the time. She seems to still believe that a great deal of learning was interfered with because of poor planning and designing of open classroom facilities. Instead, active involvement of the total community in learning and teacher autonomy<sup>460</sup> are key elements. She also implied that she lived and worked in 'a man's world'. She as a single lady believes she has been passed over for several career changes. This follows from a continuing attitude from her post consolidation days wherein began her belief that men were considered superior in all things, women had no autonomy and women teachers had even less.

If what results is the "orderly development toward expansion and organization of subject matter through growth and experience"<sup>461</sup> then learning will be truly a "continuous process."<sup>462</sup> The extent to which we were involved as employees in determining as Hunter says, "the way work [was] organized and what type of decision making strategies [were] required"<sup>463</sup> to do that work was, I believe, unprecedented in most divisions in Manitoba either before or after consolidation. It may be that there was less of a struggle to move to change the definitions that 'knowledge' and 'educational reform' held in Northtown, because the community's history was not decades old as Hometown's and Smalltown's had been. It may be that visionaries who

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<sup>460</sup>Hugh Sockett, "Accountability, Trust, and Ethical Codes of Practice," in The Moral Dimensions of Teaching, J. I. Goodlad, R. Soder, K. I. Sirotnik, eds., (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 224-250.

<sup>461</sup>Paton and McIver, Concern and Competence, 72.

<sup>462</sup>Ibid.

<sup>463</sup>R. J. Hunter, "Administrative Style and Staff Morale," The Journal of Educational Administration, xx(1) (1982): 89.

came as the initial settling pioneers brought in the attitude 'new town, new ways of doing things' and that the attitude remained.

However, things did begin to change eventually with tremors that perhaps some reincarnation of the established ways of other communities would return. For example, as budgetary considerations began to be a concern despite the generosity of "The Company," there were fewer moves to purchase 'bandwagon' types of materials to try out additional pedagogical trends. Even as I was preparing to leave the community in 1975, the open classrooms were being closed in and a return to basal readers and the way things were before open area classrooms were established was being encouraged. I remember colleague 7 ( who has always worked in an urban school) agreeing with me that once educational leaders and parents realized the things they were paying for (music, drama and so on) were not possible in the open area walls were erected. As well, many parents and trustees became alarmed at what they interpreted as deteriorating learning attributed to poorer test results and the like and found fault with the reformist tendencies that had been encouraged. Hence, I understand that there was a cry to return things to the way they had been. I don't think there is any doubt that this sentiment was echoed in other parts of the province as well. All pilot projects not already underway were put on hold. However, I left knowing that I had done my best and appreciative of the fact that I had been able to try out new ideas. Further, I was convinced that I had done a good job and because I had availed myself of opportunities consolidation provided. My conversations with colleagues over the years, who viewed

the changes and opportunities as positive elements did benefit from the skill development that occurred. To them and me, it was a shift in paradigms that was to continue beyond consolidation. I believed my students had really learned a great deal.

In comparing the two sets of pedagogical trends, my small town experience reflected negative trends while the Northern experience reflected positive ones. I am grateful the sequence of employment had not been reversed! I do not believe my physical and mental systems would have endured the shock. I also believe I would have permanently left teaching at that juncture!

#### **4. Teaching as a Profession**

Over the summer months after leaving Smalltown and only after much soul-searching, I completed sixteen letters of application as I decided to give teaching one 'last' chance. I received thirteen offers of employment and had only a telephone interview from Northtown. I had not submitted a resumé and indeed did not even have one to submit had one been required. Moreover I did not know how to produce one since no course I had ever taken had prepared me for or suggested that I might need one. My parents, like myself, had never heard of them. I was later to discover that teachers were in short supply and that I was one of several that had been hired to Northtown the same way.

The superintendent, members of the administrative board and trustees were all males. When the superintendent was killed in a tragic boating accident, he was missed by association executives and local membership greatly because of his reputation of

integrity, justice and honour in dealing with the society as a body and the individual members of that society. His replacement, Mrs. I., had been an elementary school principal. She too believed it was necessary to work with teachers to achieve department of education goals. Throughout the years I worked under her direction, she maintained a fierce loyalty to promoting the vision of education of the provincial body while at the same time maintaining a positive professional balance in working with teachers. In so doing, the integrity of schools being more sites of educational development rather than political development seemed to be maintained. It has been suggested to me, in the course of this research, that perhaps the success I interpret Mrs. I. achieved, occurred because she and others were working seriously to develop and follow standards or sets of guidelines for superintendencies, which were to replace the more traditional role occupied by chairpersons of a board of trustees, for example. The latter were the kind of educational 'leadership' evident in both Hometown and Smalltown, with only minor variations to numbers, structure of organization, and assigned or assumed responsibilities. However correct assumptions are about her success, it is definitely a part of my recollections that she never once swerved from her self-imposed goals.

I received an allowance to compensate for moving. My salary was based on the local collective agreement which was based not on gender but on education and experience. A bonus for Northern allowance was included. There were other benefits as well which had not been available in Smalltown. My basic salary was just over \$4,500 for the first

year. We were all paid on a twelve month schedule and received our cheques on the last teaching day of the month.

I became aware of processes and procedures that were previously unknown to me. I became aware of a hegemonic process in teaching itself and another interpretation of conflict and compromise as I observed the activities of my local teachers' union. For example, on a regular basis, newsletters and other communiqués were distributed from the Teachers' Association office. Since the headquarters were in the same town, representatives were highly visible. We were kept informed of proceedings of provincial meetings and I began to become more aware of a whole professional side of education I had never known. Questions surrounding tenure, pension issues, and salaries, for example, were answered carefully and analytically. Support documentation was provided as requested. Manitoba Teachers' Society representatives were encouraged to state provincial views of issues and suggest ways the local association and teachers could be proactive.

I became aware that in many ways the Manitoba Teachers' Society had a governing system and organizational structure much like that of a government or large corporation. My opinions and perspectives about my association began to change from the negative bent of Smalltown. For example, I noticed with some surprise that instead of the almost adversarial attitude I had experienced in Smalltown, my local association appeared to me to be on the side of the teachers. For example, when a male teacher was accused of flirting with his high school female students, the association intervened.

Through a solicitor they appealed to the local board and the certification branch to suspend their decision until all of the information had been considered. While not jeopardizing their autonomy, nor the rights of the teacher, the association cooperatively worked with the investigative team to determine the facts of the situation. It is my understanding that he treated his students more as he would a sister of about the same age. We were informed that the committee found that, while it was inappropriate, his behaviour was neither of a sexual nor a threatening nature. It is my understanding that he was disciplined by the board and province but at the same time he was assisted in learning how to better handle similar situations. Rumor had it that when he left in June the division gave him a reference for future employment. I could not help comparing how compromise had been used to defuse a situation similar to one in Smalltown which had conversely resulted in such conflict and turmoil. While I did not then realize it, what I believe I came to do was to begin to ask questions. I began to ask myself how experiences, cultural practices of my upbringing, and expectations influenced how I identified myself and took stock of myself in time and place.

My confidence in the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the local association was so improved that I became actively involved in the association in several areas. I was impressed with small things that to others might seem trivial or the result of extreme (I admit it) naiveté. Included were the agenda setting of the meeting and the following of parliamentary procedure, the fact that elections were not haphazard but were held according to the by-laws of the association, and that school representation was actively

solicited and deemed necessary for the survival of the association. All meetings, including executive meetings, were open to any local association member. Over the eight years, we had both male and female executive members in all positions.

It was during this time also that I became aware, through the Manitoba Teachers' Society publications, of the professional attitude of teachers towards each other both in Canada and overseas. I was surprised that the society as a whole supported educational programs for students overseas, since, as a student, I had not believed teachers cared very much about students. Smalltown contact with the association had not changed this view. Additionally, I became aware of and impressed by the society's Hilroy award and other awards which seemed to say "people should be recognized for exemplary performance of a specific job or duty,"<sup>464</sup> and should furthermore be "recognized and rewarded for the creation and implementation of innovative approaches to achieving excellence."<sup>465</sup> The knowledge that my own professional associates did so gave me a great sense of pride.

As an association representative, I became caught up in the political activities of the association. I dealt with current issues and trends in education from a professional's point of view. Auxiliary personnel, length of school day, leaves for study, salary, teacher governance issues, teacher welfare issues, a growing awareness of the coming teacher surplus<sup>466</sup> and a forewarning of the new trends in educational pedagogy that

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<sup>464</sup>Lewis, Achieving Excellence, 140.

<sup>465</sup>Ibid.

<sup>466</sup>Linda Lee, Employment of Manitoba Teacher Education Graduates: A Historical Overview 1974-78, (Winnipeg, Mb.: Department of Education, Research Branch, 1979), 2.



would take us by early 1975 into issues of “elementary drug and alcohol education,”<sup>467</sup> for example, were concerns we reviewed. It was during this time that I became aware of some of the many government and Manitoba School Association of Trustees’ committees and panels which included teacher representation.<sup>468</sup> As the years progressed, I realized more and more how powerful the teachers’ society could become in and of itself. In effect, my early years as a teacher in Northtown were years when I was learning a great deal about the profession of teaching both in the classroom and within the professional organization.

Educational development and political relations were manifested within the school sites as interaction between teachers took a different tack. For example, mentoring and peer coaching were encouraged by the local union which paired off new teachers with established teachers to help newcomers become established in the system, and to inform new teachers about local customs and ‘expectations.’ Since the superintendent’s office, board and local community approved, this system also freed me of the necessity of approaching my administrator for what might be trivial issues since my mentor was in my school. She became a very good friend and we were fortunate enough to work in the same school for several years.

In 1972, as teacher numbers in Manitoba began to rise in relation to available positions,<sup>469</sup> local conditions began to deteriorate and become more inhospitable to

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<sup>467</sup>Government of Manitoba, Department of Education, Education Manitoba, (Winnipeg, Mb.: 1975): 15.

<sup>468</sup>Government of Manitoba. Department of Education, Bulletin (Winnipeg, Mb.: 1968-1975).

<sup>469</sup>Lee, Employment of Manitoba Teacher Education Graduates, 2-14.

teaching. Grants were reduced. Several talented teaching friends left teaching for good. Others took time off to return to school or start a family. However, attrition took few in the North because like the parents of the children they taught, teachers were for the most part all very young people. Few had experienced career interruption. "The Company" was being cautious financially, and the local community felt they had enough schools and enough taxes. Teacher militancy grew and tensions and issues that were usually easily solved became contentious. As a result of the increasing tension, one example of hegemony as a process wherein one group (or individual) is able to convince another to a particular way of thinking stands out in my mind. A large association meeting to discuss the state of affairs and what course of action might be necessary began one afternoon and reconvened for a second equally long session. Heated discussions, arguments and counter-arguments were voiced by a large number of the membership. A strike vote was called for and on the first call achieved a small majority. However, our provincial representative, a lady of tremendous leadership ability (who later became a principal in the district and eventually a superintendent in another province) prevailed upon the crowd to maintain the desire to negotiate, or arbitrate,<sup>470</sup> since not only were strikes costly but also they were extremely unprofessional. She spent a great deal of time illustrating the positive dialogue that had existed between teachers and employers in our unique community for so long. She noted how one strike, even a short one, would undo many years of positive working

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<sup>470</sup>Recollections of "Union Meeting." Manitoba, Spring. 1972.

relationships enjoyed by local educators. So eloquent and convincing was she that when the membership held a second vote, the call for strike action was defeated.

I was impressed by her references to the education of children, the professional image of teachers and our ability to work positively with employers to reach a working agreement. A less skillful speaker, and a less professional individual, might have spent more time on salary and working conditions issues. The experience of that meeting has remained with me for many years and is especially fresh in my memory whenever teachers begin to discuss 'working to rule.' The meeting was noteworthy for two additional reasons. First, it was in sharp contrast to the view of teachers as professionals I had experienced in a rural consolidated school where no other issues other than elections were publicized to membership. Second, the issues discussed and arguments used were those that appealed to teachers as both individuals and as members of a group.

Professionalism became a high point in my 'after consolidation' years in the North when I compare the attitude of community members and business people towards teachers. Several of "The Company" personnel had spouses who were teachers. Teachers, businessmen, "The Company" employees, and spouses socialized and participated in community and church events together. Teachers were invited to participate in joint sports or business ventures. Teachers in Northtown were not considered as unempowered, mindless individuals who could not be trusted. Instead, they were recognized as valuable contributors who could help young minds grow.

The last example of the professionalism of teachers that stands forth vividly, was the attitude to adult and teacher education. The local association supported the Inter-Universities North program which was well received by educators who would otherwise been unable to study. As well, the school division, after negotiating with the local association of teachers, set up a bursary program to cover tuition of teachers studying summer school courses to a maximum of \$200 per summer. The bursaries were forgivable if the candidate passed the course and worked for one year per \$100 received. The implication seemed to be that those whose youth were educated wanted to be sure the educators had every opportunity to prepare themselves to do so.

Just as my experience in teaching in Northtown was in sharp contrast to that of Smalltown, so was my experience with teachers as professionals. I grew to realize that the strength of the organization lay in the strength of its leadership and the support of its members. In 1973, research in the United States echoed by similar research in Canada suggested "that about 50 percent of teachers and principals, if they were to choose their life's work again would not enter teaching."<sup>471</sup> I came to believe that the advice I had received from teachers after my first year of teaching had been the best I could follow, at least for the years I spent in the north. In 1975, when I left Manitoba and teaching, I was not sure I would return either to the province or the profession. Neither was I sure I would not. However, I did know that the years in the North had affected my life deeply as a teacher in the classroom and as a member of the profession of teaching. The

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<sup>471</sup>C. Bjarnason, "Edutopia: The Great Hangup," *The Manitoba Teacher*, 51(7) (1973): 7.

effects were indelibly marked in my mind. I also suspected that the progressiveness of education and the professional attitude of union members locally would have occurred even if consolidation in Manitoba had not occurred for two reasons. First, the superintendent was a strong-willed individual who believed in the Montessori principles and extended them beyond early childhood. Second, the union had strong leadership, dedicated members and worked in a community striving for success. However, having consolidation, as understood by the local educational administrative body, implemented served to speed up the process. Further, it removed criticism and much conflict from the local environment, since all individuals worked to achieve success. As well, it gave purpose, meaning and direction to all those interacting in Northtown to continue the process of cultural development through the educational development and political relationship manifested in Northtown schools. The combination of effort made by the union, the administration, the students and the parents made the actualization of the department of education's goals possible. In Northtown, from 1967 to 1975, I believe the teachers were a very talented and exceptionally professional group of individuals.

##### **5. Women's Issues**

As indicated, one of the superintendents for whom I worked was a female. However, upon her resignation from the division, she was replaced with a male. She has been the only female superintendent for whom I have worked. As well, once I began to exercise observation and take note, as well as to reflect upon the number of women

administrators or educational leaders I had known or shared educational space with over the years it became very apparent that Dr. D. Smith's words have validity. She states, "though women are more than half of all teachers they are very under-represented in the ranks of principals: there are very, very few women superintendents."<sup>472</sup> This statement was true in Northtown and has been true in the years I have experienced as a teacher and as a student and illustrates, to a degree, the political nature of schools and the positioning of females in power relationships. Inasmuch as the trend has not apparently changed significantly since Smith's work,<sup>473</sup> it can be argued that knowledge and talent may not be guarantee enough to secure a position. Perhaps the following example will serve as an example to illustrate this more clearly.

My first principal in Northtown was also a female. I worked for her for only one year before she was replaced. She was, in my opinion, a competent, skillful and respected administrator. However, she did not have a degree and the local division requirements stipulated all administrators needed one. She had approximately three years to retirement but the division authorities would not waive their requirements, despite intervention by the local teachers' association, although they did guarantee her employment as a teacher. Early retirement was not an option. Miss W. chose instead to move back to her parents' home in a small rural community and taught there until

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<sup>472</sup>Smith, "The Exclusion of Women," 17.

<sup>473</sup>\*Note: Ruth Rees in "Women and Men in Education: a national survey of gender distribution in school systems," in a Canadian Education Association publication, (title unknown) (Toronto, Ontario: October, 1992), 16, 17, 61, 88. Rees' work, borrowed from the Manitoba Department of Education, Personnel department shows, using data from 1988-1989 school year, males consistently held more administrative positions, and position of power and responsibility than females. This is almost 30 years after my initial observations! It is saddening to see that equity is still an issue.

retirement. As has been stated, one of the aims of the provincial government was to open the doors to women to hold leadership roles in education. However, it seems that the vision of the department of education to place aspiring females into leadership roles did not have much of an affect on the local board. They replaced an excellent administrator with an adequate one. I am not aware if in fact any female did apply for her job. Her successor was a male and, in a short time as other female administrators faced the same situation, there were no female principals at all. (It was to be a number of years after I left Northtown before this situation changed.) Miss W. had secured several male teachers on the elementary staff in both primary and intermediate positions. This was unique in Northtown elementary schools, since in most of the others the female teachers greatly outnumbered the men.

In the high school more males were employed than females. Two friends, Colleagues 2 and 4 were in educational situations where very few females were a part of their educational experience as either students or teachers. However, in all three of our experiences there seemed to be some additional similarities. For example, at the junior high level, there seemed to be a closer balance between the two until the junior highs were incorporated into the collegiate at which time males began to outnumber the female teachers. In my case, the ratios remained relatively constant during the period of time I was employed. There did not seem to be any move or process in effect by either the local association or the school government to alter this situation.

The salary scale was not gender specific. However, since most of the principals and department heads were males there was some disparity in salary. A colleague from another division shared experiences from a similar situation. She told me of her frustrations in working in an environment where equality specifically did NOT exist in all things, not the least of which were salary and advancement issues. Men were paid more than women. Colleague 2, who did not work in Northtown, frequently complained that there were no female department heads in her school. There seemed to be an underlying frame of reference that this was the way it should be. I understand however, that despite these conditions, many of the single female teachers earned enough during the school year to afford to study in the summer. This was especially so when the division bursary program became established and the Inter-Universities North program offered classes.

Women did not face dress code problems. There was no mandated policy on teacher attire and most teachers dressed in a way that befitted their position as adults responsible for helping to develop the morals of youth. While teachers were asked to behave with decorum by the association, women were not singled out for specific lectures or treatment by trustees with reference to behaviour or lifestyle.

The male population of the community outnumbered the women greatly. 'Cat calls,' 'hoots,' and 'sexist remarks' were common. At a public gathering, such as a curling bonspiel or baseball tournament, for example, men far out-numbered women. It is my understanding, from experience in the teachers' local association in capacities involving



representation on teacher welfare panels, that several women teachers experienced stereotypical put downs and sexist remarks.<sup>474</sup> “The double standard demands of and attitudes towards teachers”<sup>475</sup> and women that I had experienced and witnessed in Hometown and Smalltown reared their ugly heads in Northtown. Smoking in public was not condemned. Teachers of both sexes were accepted at most parties and social functions although most female teachers I knew did not attend them unless accompanied by an escort. It seemed that a subtle silent voice cautioned exercising feminine ‘care’ lest some real or imaginary interpretation evolve and lead to unpleasant personal and/or professional consequences. Again, it was common for males to outnumber females at such functions.

Many female married teachers had the responsibilities of family and home resembling their counterparts in rural settings. Consolidation of schools did not provide for changes in those responsibilities. Colleague 3, in the years after her children were grown, told me how tough it was to be a teacher and a parent, while many of the others just discussed what it was like to be a teacher, and/or a female. Her comments closely echo those quoted by other female parent teachers in my Critical Review of Contemporary Interpretations. In her past and present experience, most of Colleague 8’s administrators were individuals who either had no children or whose children were secondary to their career. As a consequence, she often expressed the idea that to be an

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<sup>474</sup>\*Note: I remember that colleague 2 often mentioned sexist remarks were the norm. I have already written what I remember that Colleague 4 indicated about his community’s thoughts about women’s roles.

<sup>475</sup>G. Ens, “Quality Education Demands Freedom from Harassment,” *The Manitoba Teacher*, 51(10) (1971): 4.

administrator or person in a position of power requires time and commitment a working 'mother' is unable to give either because of social or personal constraints. Swing shifts for miners left women with the choice of either quitting their job or finding baby-sitters and trying to maintain a balance between home and career. There were no day care centers, no nurseries, and few if any grandparents to look after children.

As in Smalltown I lived with a family for a short time. However, they were a family I chose not one chosen for me. They were kindly people and since the lady of the house had been a teacher she recognized some of the anxiety I felt in new community. She was able to offer advice and support to me on a professional level and to discuss her own reaction to educational developments and political relations and situations as they had occurred in her schools with respect to knowledge, power and other issues. Her assistance was wonderful. Unlike my rural hosts, they never probed into my somewhat erratic hours or imposed any standards on my behaviour, nor did they imply, by word or deed, that I was a 'fragile, irresponsible girl in need of constant supervision.' I, by the same token, did not abuse them or their home and tried to be circumspect in my behaviour. Additionally, I never felt misused by teaching colleagues or parents as a female teacher.

Men and women appeared to be equally represented in the local teachers' association. I had a secure position in the community and profession of teaching because of my community involvement, my acquired tenure and my association with friends who worked in professions beyond teaching. The school board appeared to be willing to

discuss conditions of contract with regards to pregnancy, personal time, and other personal issues with its employees as equitably as possible. Given the trends and traditions of the times, their behaviour was viewed positively by the association and the public, since it appeared that there was a willingness to share power and to establish models or guidelines for political relations.

Despite this apparent good-will, however, there were weaknesses in the system. When I wanted time off to get married in the middle of the term, I received only one day off with pay. Considering I had to travel over 600 miles each way, the time given was, as far as I was concerned, a little short of ludicrous. I discovered later that a male teacher had been granted three days off with pay to attend his sister's wedding as the groom's man! Subsequent conversations with colleagues convinced me that although this was probably granted because he presented a more assertive 'male' image. Gender discrimination was alive and well. However, because of the nature of my husband's job, and my own integrity, I did not make an issue of the situation even though the incident rankled me for years.

That there continued to be more males appointed as principals and department heads clearly indicated the inequities in teaching opportunities that existed for women wanting to pursue leadership roles. Most of the individuals with whom I casually spoke, indicated such inequities existed in other divisions as well. One close friend is very bitter after having been emphatically told that women were the 'child bearing and rearing person' and should be content with that. I recall her note of bitterness when she

recently indicated to me that she now is probably 'too old' to enter that phase of a career. She noted also that now there are daycares and facilities to look after children. She reflected that in the 1960s and 1970s this was not the case, at least for her, and so even if she had wanted to attend university again, or seek administrative roles, she would have not been able to, because of fiscal, physical and social constraints placed on her. Ironically, in my opinion at least, she would have made a far better administrator than the person who made the statement initiating her bitterness. However, because she is not politically active or powerful, she probably will never have the chance. Another colleague faced many of the same opportunities in a larger urban centre. She was able to move from elementary to junior high positions, to work with special education students, to move from senior high and back again. Today she holds a very responsible position, and should she want it, is qualified and capable for an administrative role. However, she loves 'teaching' as she calls it, and says she would not dream of leaving the classroom.

In Northtown, like the schools of my early childhood, and like Hometown many of the principals were much older than their staff. They tended, in some cases, to treat female teachers like their daughters. As a case in point, one of my principals was almost like a grandfather to me. He was startled and surprised when I told him I had called a substitute because I was to be married on the weekend. He hurriedly cautioned me to be sure I came to him if I ever needed help if things went sour and I needed a friend<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>476</sup>Recollections of "Conversation with Mr. V." Manitoba, 1968.

because many marriages in Northtown soon ended in divorce. He went on to say he hoped I had chosen a person of good character since he felt as responsible for me as he did his own daughter.<sup>477</sup> Ironically, he had not seen the engagement ring I had worn for months nor heard the conversations in the back of the staff room. Even more ironically, he did not wish me happiness nor suggest I apply, with his support, for more time off. I do not know if he did not think of it or was worried about the repercussions of asking. At that time I was not yet involved actively in the local association, and did not know. But, suddenly, just before the wedding, he had an attack of paternalism. However, his concern was genuine and when we bought a house across the street from him and his wife I transferred schools to work with him again. He finally became convinced I was 'all right.'

Another of the implications of political power and indication of inequities to females existed in the area of school transfers themselves as the following discussion of experiences will show. I was moved often, usually without notice, as enrollments shifted or the need arose for a qualified staff member to be an unpaid leader to novice teachers. There were males on staff to whom this did not happen despite the fact that I had more seniority than they did. I had been teaching at a school close to whom where I had transferred with Mr. V. Upon his retirement, exactly one year after a new male principal came in, I was transferred out. No one in positions of authority paid any attention to my protest. The teachers' society officials with whom I discussed it

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<sup>477</sup>Ibid.

shrugged discouragingly and indicated there was no protection against this sort of thing in our collective agreement. A new female, single teacher with much less seniority than me, was given my position. I was told I was needed as the most experienced member of a team in another school. What had really happened was a personal power issue being manifested in political arena of the school. I discovered later that the real reason for my transfer was an alleged affair the teacher was having with the married principal. He left the district shortly after I did as the result, I have been led to believe, of publicity from a similar incident allegedly pursued by someone who was harder to 'push around' than I had been.

The team in which I was to work included two young women who had been hired by a rather red-faced board which discovered it had over-hired and there were no classes for the two ladies to teach. The superintendent assigned them a team teaching program between several elementary schools on a rotating cycle. Their schedule meant they saw each class approximately once every two or more cycles. It is my opinion that more experienced teachers might have recognized the futility of such an endeavour. I recall that within a short space of time their situation became so desperate that, with intervention of the principals and the association, the trustees and superintendent had to rethink the situation. They reduced the number of classes taught although the schools remained the same. The women had no car and they were not always able to find a ride. However, because they could not change any other aspects of their situation and because they were relatively powerless, these two young women continued to try to do

their assigned job even though often twice daily they walked a distance of three miles, in some cases in terrible weather. I recall their situation well and at the time I was able to sympathize totally with them because of my similar experience in Smalltown. They soon became ill and tired. Needless to say the hodge podge system Sybil Shack used to describe her own situation aptly describes these young women.<sup>478</sup> One of the two left teaching forever after that, her first year. The other has remained in teaching and works for a metro board. She too left Northtown at the end of the term. It is my considered opinion that no male teacher would have been subjected to or stood for such treatment but, because they needed the money<sup>479</sup> and had agreed to teach, they were placed in a position from which they could not fight back. As well, since the human equality that the department of education hoped would surface out of consolidation obviously did not extend to teachers, did it really extend to students?

Despite the move to replace inappropriate curriculum material on a province-wide basis, teachers continued to use what I began to call 'archaic' material. Inequities in some materials existed where stereotyping of role issues was still a problem. However, because of the attitude of the division towards teachers having some say in decision making on materials used, there was the opportunity for educators to choose alternate material as desired. I did and I believe many others did as well. Staff room facilities were not segregated as to sex, unlike some larger urban centers and no barriers, physical or other wise existed. In her metro school, for example, Colleague 2 was one of a

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<sup>478</sup>Shack, Teaching as Growth, 485-505.

<sup>479</sup>Recollections of "Conversations." Manitoba, 1968.

number of staff who experienced the added restraint of two separate staff-rooms: one for the men, and one for the women. While she and I continue to titter over the absurdity of such an arrangement, the then local school board did not apparently see any problem with this arrangement!

Timetables were based on academic specialty where appropriate and on the basis of academic preparedness of the teachers. Although in the collegiate males outnumbered females, both males and females taught all subjects. (Most of the individuals with whom I spoke, whether herein noted or not, seem to indicate that this is so.)

There was not the rigidity of subject specificity according to gender I experienced as a student. Home economics was taught by a female teacher, however, and the industrial arts teachers were male. Male and female students alike were enrolled in all programs. Physical education and art were co-educational. Family life programs were not yet in place and for the most part general health classes were co-educational. Courses on human sexuality in elementary classes were taught to classes separated by gender.

As in my Hometown experience despite the existence of industrial arts classes there was a balance of parental preference for senior matriculation preparation for both university and non-university studies. Girls were not exempt. A great number of female students with whom I communicated planned to leave the town permanently upon graduation because they believed there was no career future there. They had appreciated the educational opportunities their schools had provided and felt secure in



pursuing academics beyond the community despite the fact that no one came out, to my knowledge, from any university to encourage students to attend. Female high school students who had access to career counsellors had no opportunity to delve beyond the initial contact into actual real-life experience in business, science or medicine. In contrast, some female teachers indicated they had come to work in the North because they were "looking for a husband."<sup>480</sup> In this way, I believed, little had changed in post consolidated Northtown from the traditional roles of wife and mother the preconsolidation era of Hometown and Smalltown had shown me. I believe this attitude may have had a serious effect on young female students. I hold this view because for the size of the population there was a large number of teenage pregnancies and marriages.

Like many other women, I left the North because of a career move of my husband. While we mutually agreed it was what we wanted to do, (and I am glad we did), I know of no woman whose husband followed her because of a career. My colleague friend who eventually became a school superintendent was divorced from her husband long before she left Northtown. Her ex-husband still resides in Northtown. It is my understanding that he did not remarry.

In the case of promotion to department head or administrative positions there were what Sigurdjonsson referred to as no apparent "fair and objective promotion procedures to ensure that all candidates [were] given appropriate and serious consideration"<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>480</sup>Recollections of "Conversations." Manitoba, 1967-1975.

<sup>481</sup>Sigurdjonsson, "Equal Opportunity," 18.

promoted by the superintendent's department despite the fact that the female superintendent had endured hardships to retain her own position. Female teachers still did not have much authority. We were still controlled by a system where males and females were declared equal but in fact the equality was largely lip-service as justice and equity to women was largely ignored. I remember the frequent laments of Colleague 6 who claimed that women allegedly had the same opportunities as men, but in fact they were not treated equally. She still says that it's the same thing as now. Further conversations indicated that she felt women were constrained by cultural, hegemonic, value and philosophical restraints men did not have to experience or explain.

The power of the superintendancy seemed to supersede justice to teachers, and females specifically. In this case, the politics of political decision making took precedence over educational concerns. This was compounded by the fact that administrators made more money than teachers and since few women were in positions of authority either as principals or department heads, the imbalance of salary was weighed in favour of males. As well, since they held the power, it appeared they could and did pass power on to other males who moved into vacant positions. While I did a job equivalent to that of a team leader (department head) for many years, I received little recognition and no monetary compensation because it was not a payable position in 'elementary' schools.

"It takes courage to try to change a situation that has become impossible."<sup>482</sup> It was to be many years before equity in administrative opportunity became a reality in Northtown. By 1975, career symposiums for anyone wishing to attend had become a reality in other urban North American centers, but because of its geographical position our district was not easily included even after tele-communications became a reality.

While I believe there was less discrimination towards women in Northtown, especially when compared to Smalltown, I still view it as an imperfect situation. That sexism existed has been demonstrated from the numerous examples used. The "predictable failure of ... reform existed in large measure, on existing power relationships in schools."<sup>483</sup> In Northtown, contradictions existed in questions of equity where power relationships were weighed heavily in favour of an employer where males dominated the board of trustees and the management and leadership positions in the schools, community, "The Company," and businesses. Although after 1975 some women teachers did become principals, I believe that women as educators "may have to fight very hard to hang on to the kinds of progress"<sup>484</sup> they were able to make. When one looks at the school as a site of educational development and political relations many of the issues relating to knowledge and power of the 1970s are in many cases the issues of today and "the struggle is not over. The battles are not won; the hardest part may lie

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<sup>482</sup>B. Nickerson, "Free our Youth From the Shackles of Conformity," *The Manitoba Teacher*, 45(2) (1966): 17.

<sup>483</sup>Kenneth Leithwood, "The Move Towards Transformational Leadership," *Educational Leadership Journal*, (February, 1992): 8.

<sup>484</sup>Sigurdjonsson, "New Directions for the Women's Movement," 2.

ahead.”<sup>485</sup> Female educators who are constantly in contact with young females must, in the name of equity and justice, continue the fight. Otherwise, the examples of success that followed the struggle for equity fought by such teachers as Sybil Shack, Mrs. I., and my colleague friend will be lost as the inequities towards women in education and society continue.

### ***E. A Conclusion of the Research***

The years 1961-1975 were among the most interesting and most challenging in my educational career for a number of reasons. Professionalism of teachers was being challenged by an almost unending flow of pedagogical theories and on-going educational changes encouraged at local division levels, where the issues of salary and dress code were discussed in the same breath as the integration of special needs students. At the provincial and national levels, concerns such as open classroom teaching, individualized progress and other pedagogies including ideas originating in other countries, were confused with provincial pension plans, certification, and tenure issues. It is my view that consolidation, that is the amalgamation of smaller district schools into larger divisional ones, led to changed pedagogical trends and educational practices. With consolidation there seemed to be a greater move away from memorization and transmission of information from one generation to another towards more diversified and innovative techniques which encouraged creativity and thinking.<sup>486</sup> In this consolidated system, the school was viewed as an institution in

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<sup>485</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>486</sup>Gregor and Wilson, Development of Education in Manitoba, 137-158.

which socialization skills and human equality should be viewed at least on par with academics to result in effective learning of all students each to his/her own level of ability. Pedagogical trends and educational techniques were revised throughout this era in an attempt to promote equity in all learning opportunities. However, many of these pedagogical changes would not have been possible without school consolidation since many rural districts, such as the ones in which I both lived and worked, simply could not afford to try out new pedagogical theories or diversified curricular classes.

With the vision of school as a humanistic institution grew an increasing awareness of the inequities in education despite the arguments to the contrary. Both students and teachers, especially women, were caught up in these inequities which added fuel to the fire of growing civil rights movements especially in the United States, but also to feminist organizations which began to reach towards equity in job opportunities in all professions including teaching.

Sadly too, this era was one in which I witnessed colleagues leaving teaching because of the demands on them as professionals. The provincial vision of education (equity for all, learning for all in consolidated schools) and promoted in its pedagogical theories was at loggerheads with divisions whose philosophical view and pedagogical theories differed. Often, teachers were caught in the middle of political and/or philosophical views between the administrators of the educational policy and the members of the community in which educational sites were found. A number could not cope with the constant change required to adapt to yet another philosophy, or theory, or technique.

Colleagues of mine who worked during some or all of the time period in question offered a diversity of opinions and remembrances in considering aspects of education influenced by consolidation. As the research indicates, some of the opinions have been positive. Others have been negative. Many of the incidences reflecting positivism and progress in one area are counterbalanced in another incidence of negativism and lack of progress. During this time, while a number of teachers left teaching, others as a strong group of professionals continued to pursue their careers and to work for equity in education for all students. The commitment of those who remained did not change, even as today it has not changed. They are professional teachers who are committed to helping students learn.

While it has been argued that consolidation improved surroundings and salaries it was and is the professional attitude of educators striving for equity in education that has, indeed, helped children learn.<sup>487</sup> In 1975, I like many teachers before me, left teaching in Manitoba to pursue other interests in other places. Upon my return in 1982, I experienced severe cultural and professional shock since the trends of which I had been a part or witness in the 1970s had led to even greater changes with an even greater emphasis on trends started in or unheard of by 1975. This fact indicates to me that, while there may be several stated visions of education, the one that is paramount today is the same one I shared with my colleagues in the 1960s and 1970s: that schools exist to help children learn, socially, academically, emotionally and physically. How they

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<sup>487</sup>\*Note: I remember consistently finding this to be true with the many individuals with whom I spoke. To determine if consolidation, in fact, did improve the salaries and the working conditions in areas where it was implemented would require another research project of greater breadth and width than this one.

learn in large measure depends not only on the professional attitude of teachers, but also on the rapid adoption of pedagogical theories, regardless of the country of origin, that best enhance and assist that learning within a supportive community and school environment.

I witnessed too, some improvements in the treatment of female students and educators but my personal view is that there has not been the same emphasis in educational or societal trends to address the question of equity as there has been to the question of pedagogical trends, teachers' association benefits, and questions of the mechanics of teaching. Sadly, this has changed but little and slowly since 1975.

As Sybil Shack says "we have indeed come a long way"<sup>488</sup> however, "the way ahead is still rough."<sup>489</sup> It is therefore concluded that it might be useful for us, as historians, to reflect on past trends in education in order to smooth the way ahead for both educators and students within the educational system of Manitoba.

## **VI. Thesis Conclusion**

### ***A. In Conclusion***

This thesis has attempted to answer: "how did individuals living in two rural and one urban environment view and implement the notion of consolidation in Manitoba Schools from the perspective of the author, between 1961 and 1975?"

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<sup>488</sup>Shack, Teaching as Growth, 507.

<sup>489</sup>Ibid., 508.

To answer this question, it has been necessary to think about a number of supplementary questions. These questions generated the notion of conflict and compromise needed to understand the situation. Some of these include the following. How did members of the community and local school board officials influence what teachers did in their classrooms? In what way did local views supersede, resist or concur with the view of Manitoba Education and the Manitoba Teachers' Society in regarding teachers as professionals as indicated in the way they behaved towards practicing educators? What was the Manitoba Teachers' Society view of consolidation? Did consolidation really improve the lot of female teachers and students and remove stereotypical notions of previous eras? In what way were individual teacher's views in agreement with or in opposition to that of the Department of Education and/or Manitoba Teachers' Society? How were power and knowledge issues overt and/or covert influential in each of the three locations?

Based on my present recollection of past experiences, within a historical context, as a female, a student and a teacher I am now able to make several observations and to formulate several conclusions. In making the observations and conclusions, it has not been my intention to embarrass individuals, governing agencies or readers. It has not been my intention to question the value or worth of consolidation in Manitoba nor the values of its proponents in order to discredit them. It has not been my intention to question or imply disrespect towards the attitudes and/or underlying cultural, social, or philosophical views of individuals. Instead, it has been my intent to explore how the



holding of these views produced the effects and reaction to consolidation that they did. Additionally, my intention has been to define an understanding of my own person, my own being, my own history in time and place. As a consequence, just as the research has been subjective in method, so too are many of my conclusions.

As an individual I first conclude that the autobiographical procedure used to explore meanings as construed by members of the 'school population,' 'community population,' and 'governing agencies' has adequately and appropriately provided me with the opportunity to examine the dominant educational views held in each of the three geographical areas concerned.

Further, in reflecting upon my experiences as a student, a teacher and a female I conclude that the subjective dimension that the autobiographical process implies enabled me to successfully use a process involving the use of comparison and contrasts, the relating of anecdotes, and connection of concepts in a highly personal tone so that, I believe, the reader is able to participate in my experiences in place and time with me.

Third, this examining has enabled me to conclude that what some writers might call 'feminist issues' are in fact really women's issues and that many of these issues still have a relevancy today, several decades after the McFarlane Report. I conclude further that although in Smalltown and Hometown, attitudes towards female students and educators had changed but little after consolidation, the door to change had been opened. Women became aware that things did not have to continue as they had been.

As well, although stereotyping was not totally eradicated in Northtown even with consolidation, the sentiments of inequality were less obviously expressed. It is a further conclusion that those which did remain were to some degree regarded as the residual elements of attitudes and behaviours carried Northward from more traditional communities. I consider it a valuable conclusion that this same exploration has enabled me to develop an understanding of teaching as a profession by reflecting upon it through the eyes of a student, a novice teacher and as a more established and experienced teacher.

As a researcher, although the observations and conclusions reached as an individual also have relevance, it is necessary that the conclusions formulated evolve from a historical base. These are developed through the use of the clearly defined tools of culture, hegemony, values and the school as a set of political relations wherein power and knowledge are by implication included.

One of the most important conclusions surrounds the question of hegemony as a process. The proponents of consolidation advocated that the state control all aspects of educational practice. This control included determining what curriculum materials should be used, what values those educated should have, and how those values would be acquired and transmitted from one generation to another (both overtly and covertly), in the process to re-establish a newly defined 'status quo'. These power brokers had the solid support and legislative power of the state behind them. Many individuals I knew and with whom I lived or associated as a student or teacher in Hometown and

Smalltown, opposed consolidation. They argued that the family and in some cases the church, community and local governing agencies had a better understanding of what the morals and values should comprise. Usually, these individuals were over-ruled.

Gradually they came to accept the dominant view because arguably they legally had little or no way to oppose it, except to try to retain some limited control of local issues within the newly established parameters. That the residents in each of these three areas challenged the power of the central government and its definition of knowledge is evident in the research. However, it is how that challenge evolved, and the ramifications of those challenges as the research has indicated that has created situations of conflict and compromise. It is further worthy to observe here, that whether compromise or conflict occurred the result was the same. Manitoba's Public Schools became consolidated.

Of significance is a second conclusion, which flows from the first. The 1960s and 1970s were turbulent times for education in Manitoba. As discussed in the 'Critical Review of Contemporary Interpretations' for example, the Manitoba Teachers' Society developed into an organization with better roots at the rural level with all the ramifications such development implies. As well, small communities, whose residents were used to controlling the thought process and educational developments of their children at home and in smaller district schools, were caught up in a ground swell of curriculum, values and knowledge reform cloaked in consolidation. In such communities as Hometown and Smalltown, parents were concerned that 'state schools'

would undermine or undue the values systems parents, or their religious or cultural affiliations.

A third conclusion follows from the first two. The times were politically insecure as provincial government educational reformers tried to make decisions that would leave their authority unquestioned. Yet, it is notable that at the same time the provincial government did not want to undermine the power of local boards completely, since for it to survive consolidation required the support of local boards both fiscally and ideologically. In what may be arguably interpreted as establishing links with locally powerful people, the provincial government tried to exercise political care so that it would not be seen as trying to completely remove local societal expectations, cultural patterns and values issues away from home and church influence. For example, the traditional reproductionist model that had been rooted in communities such as Hometown and Smalltown, and arising in part out of established cultural or secular environments, had not yet become firmly or permanently rooted in Northtown. In Northtown, there was the desire for 'something new' in education even as the town itself was new. There was room and opportunity for experimentation. There was no clearly definable status quo to maintain as there had been in Smalltown and Hometown. Consequently, despite its residual links to the 'banking' concept of schooling, there was more of a Deweyan concern to transmit the complexities of growing up to youth, but in so doing to empower them as individual members of society.

Fourth, it is noteworthy to conclude that school reform, initiated by consolidation, propelled the Manitoba Teachers' Society in some divisions to become more socially, politically and professionally active and especially to recognize that as members of the public their job is both necessary and useful. Molnar eloquently voices this sort of sentiment when he says "educators have responsibilities that go beyond the technical aspects of their work in schools."<sup>490</sup> It is also noteworthy as a codicil that both the members of the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the Manitoba Teachers' Society worked proactively with the government for educational reform, arguably more closely than at any other period of time in Manitoba's educational history.

Fifth, the research graphically and conclusively illustrates that various parties involved in the educational process often have differing ideas of how a school system should operate and what the purpose of schooling should be. This conclusion is an important one since it is out of these notions, which may be harmony with or in opposition to each other, that a large number of issues that led to conflict and/or compromise evolved in the jurisdictions researched, and came to serve as points of reflection in the autobiographical presentation. It is a further codicil that very often the holder of the notion may not realize there is a disparity of opinion, until a particular issue or event triggers it. When applying this notion to this research, for example, those advocating consolidation and the use of bus routes to transport students to larger centers offering more courses found their views in seemingly unresolvable opposition with those

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<sup>490</sup>Alex Molnar, Social Issues and Education: Challenge and Responsibility (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1987), vii.

proposing shorter distances to travel at local district schools where the teachers were someone the parent knew. After all the arguments had been held and the 'dust settled' however, in most of the situations wherein conflict has been evident, compromise was usually the vehicle used to move towards new directions. It is important to note, however, that some community members in each of the three jurisdictions felt intimidated by the imposition of consolidation. Since I was in the site of the school, in the middle between parents and students and the 'state,' how individuals, both in authority positions and in the community as a whole, dealt with the issues of consolidation became vividly clear.

Reaction to the political move became evident in the related, shared behaviour, vocabulary and experiences I and others had. From this flows a sixth conclusion. As stated, the school became the site of many culture, value, and hegemonic concerns involving defining and understanding power and knowledge issues in the 1960s and 1970s. However, by initiating reform through the use of legislative power the power brokers of the government of Manitoba and their proponents initiated a power struggle between themselves and boards of trustees, between students and teachers, between teachers and parents, between parents and boards, between professional unions and boards, between government and parents, and between individuals of one cultural community and another. Additionally, these power brokers initiated the examination of long-held values and morality guidelines. They initiated the re-examination by women, by those oppressed, of visible minorities or of those handicapped, of their

individual value and worth as human beings. They encouraged, perhaps indirectly, others to look at education in a new way and to question or perhaps redefine their understanding of such things as knowledge and power.

A seventh conclusion surfaces out of the former one, when one notes that it was also necessary in each of the three jurisdictions to recognize that even as shared concepts existed, there was also a wide diversity of interpreting and using them. The school was in each case the site in which many of the philosophies and personal agendas of their 'holders' were played out. However, individual or small group issues relevant to those holding them, were often swept away as political agendas of more powerful groups evolved. Individual values became absorbed or redesigned to fit into a broader regional or government perceived definition of knowledge, morality and the purpose of schooling. Individual freedoms and personal values were often placed in positions of conflict with or agreement with those of the 'new established order' whether local, provincial or parochial. As a consequence, both conflict and compromise resulted.

However, it is particularly conclusive that centremost in this entire power struggle were two unwitting, and perhaps at times unwilling, players. These were the teachers and the students they taught. Each was caught in a web of expectations and power brokerage that at times left them no more than helpless but obedient pawns, whose obedience was not only expected but also conditioned. As an extension of this conclusion, it is an interesting observation to note that while the school became the facility in which this conflict and compromise was most evident, the established restraints and value

considerations held by individuals, both opposing and supporting the changes, led them to extend beyond the boundaries of the school itself, where personalities became mixed in with power and knowledge issues.

As yet another conclusion it is noteworthy that since culture is not static but evolves and changes over time, change itself implies compromises need to be made to have that change be beneficial to all. Conflict in post consolidation Manitoba resulted when individuals believed the change was harmful, too costly, or unnecessary or in conflict with the individually held definitions of knowledge and power issues since that would mean those traditionally holding those notions had to give up some personal or positional authority.

In summary, although the consolidation of Manitoba's public schools led directly to the loosening of local district power, at the same time it did not give a complete stranglehold on educational control to the provincial government. It is my perception that compromise and the working together with provincial government, teachers, and other community members who shared the government vision of education caused many individuals in Smalltown and Hometown anxiety. At times this anxiety led to situations involving conflict and very often open hostility between individuals and/or groups. A summative conclusion seems to suggest that this resulted from a different definition of knowledge and the purpose of school and differing conceptual frameworks of cultural, hegemonic and values issues being held in different areas, and by different people in those areas. In contrast, the members of Northtown community went to their new



community knowing that in every way life there would be altered and perhaps greatly different. It is my belief that this helped them to understand that changes in education were therefore to be expected and as normal as any other aspect of their lives. Overall, therefore, the consolidation question was viewed by its advocates, as a way to redefine and broaden the moral and educational experience of students by providing new opportunities for growth and development. Opponents of consolidation considered it as a trampling on the rights of individual parents to select materials, schools, curriculum and even teachers for their children. To its opponents, consolidation threatened the existing cultural order- it was a manifestation of an evil of which they wanted no part.

Alex Molnar states "it is common now to describe the social and educational reforms of the 1960s and early 1970s as failures."<sup>491</sup> However, when looking at Manitoba and the consolidation of schools, one needs to add a codicil. Rather than considering the period as a time of failure one can argue as a final conclusion that the opposing dualities of both support and opposition set into motion an inevitable platform for the development of conflict and compromise as Manitobans dealt with the political question of school consolidation, the changes such consolidation implied, and how it hegemonically affected questions of local and provincial power, knowledge issues, cultural practices and values.

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<sup>491</sup>Ibid., 1.

## **B. A Challenge**

My analysis of the history presented through this autobiography and the sharing of experiences led me not only to formulate observations and conclusions, but also to pose questions for and issue challenges to future researchers. This challenge arises because despite the wealth of literature consulted, the examination of information shared in documents by others, and the sharing of and analyzing of incidents from my personal and educational life, there are many educators who have not yet told their story. Additionally, in view of the current government's proposed 'changes' to education, perhaps what will be seen in subsequent years is a repeat, with a different twist, of consolidation. Several arguments suggest that there may be room for such a study. It is possible that the conflict and compromise such proposed reform may generate, will make that evoked by consolidation look insignificant by comparison. Or perhaps the changes will raise other questions. Perhaps what will occur will be another chapter of a continuing consolidation, as instead of local schools being consolidated, entire divisions/districts will be. For example, I see parallels again surfacing which may serve as a catalyst for educational conflict and compromise as serious as any experienced in the consolidation era. This fear is a shared fear. One paragraph from a recent confidential Manitoba Teachers' Society publication says (re: the Manitoba Association of School Trustees' efforts to provoke educators into a strike or lockout position) that MAST "wants to prevent teachers from bargaining for professional rights including the

duties of teachers, teaching techniques and methods, teacher evaluation, class size, and preparation time.”<sup>492</sup>

The challenge arguably exists anyway, since the kind of serious step by step investigative and meticulous examination of materials and memories I conducted exists for other educators who have also lived, experienced, and made observations. How many are still silent who can draw upon journals, diaries and experiences to relate a valid history? Perhaps the breaking of my silence will challenge others to break theirs. I believe that human interaction is a necessary component of both historical reporting and educational life. How can contemporaries in educational research use interaction over time and at various levels to relate success stories, or to provide a catalyst to provoke a question for educational research?

Power and knowledge issues are a part of educational reality. In what ways are the issues raised in this work comparable to or different from those experienced by other educators? Having begun an examination of power and knowledge issues indicates to me that other additional questions are as yet unposed or unanswered. How did childhood attitudes affect educational expectations? How were they carried into realm of secondary and post-secondary environments? Is the same element of conflict and compromise still evident in educational facilities today? Are the issues the same? How strongly are cultural traditions reinforced through the school? Is there a relevancy to the interpretation I affix to values, culture, hegemony and the school as a set of political

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<sup>492</sup>The Manitoba Teachers' Society, "If the Manitoba Association of School Trustees gets its way..." Confidential Document. Received 1 December, 1995, 1.

relations in today's educational establishments? In what ways do educators still experience stereotypical labellings? In what ways do they affix those labels to the students that they teach? How does the provincial government's latest move to reform, yet again, education in Manitoba re-ignite issues of the past? What new issues may be anticipated with such action? How will knowledge be redefined? How will the professional integrity of educators be challenged both with a view to maintaining a commitment to helping students acquire knowledge and with a view to maintaining their own position as professionals? How will members of geographical communities react to this reform? Will such reform mean increased or decreased local control? Will there be a rural/urban split in acceptance or rejection? What will such educational reform mean to the social and cultural traditions of families and communities? Will the change proposed be one in fact, or will it be a technological manifestation with really few if any physical boundary differences?

Or, will the consolidation of Manitoba's public school system of the post McFarlane Report era simply be the first in a series of chapters dealing with conflict and compromise in Manitoba schools?

In conclusion, to read solely the 'success story' of consolidation of Manitoba public schools put out by the political authorities would have ignored some of its weaknesses, shortcomings and possibly even failures. At the same time, to read solely what reproductionist theorists said was the general educational 'pattern' of the 1960s would not have enabled me to acknowledge the successful beginning Northtown made towards

school reform and the kind of critical pedagogy Giroux and Freire advocate. However, to view as definitive my experiences as the sole voice or authority on consolidation would also be limiting and inappropriate. The consultative analysis of documents used in the research assists in removing some of the limitations. Additionally, the ideas used from oral history and narration, that I have incorporated to strengthen the autobiographical presentation, do in reality add positive dimensions to my work. However, it is by examining all issues through a combined methodology, wherein autobiography is key and fundamental to the understanding of history, as I interpret it for myself, from the reflections held as both a student and a teacher, that advances for the cause of historical research have been made. However, I firmly believe that innovation and creativity are two concepts that illustrate a thinking mind and that they are necessary if one is to break paradigms. Consequently, if the style in this work follows an unconventional procedure, that is highly probably because it comes from a highly unconventional and extremely individualistic person and writer. However, having said that, it is my sincere hope that readers of this volume enjoy reading this conversation as much as I have enjoyed writing it. And, I have!

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## **VIII. Appendices**

Appendix 1:

From: Webster's New World Dictionary: Third College Edition of American English

V. Neufeldt, editor

(Simon and Schuster: New York, NY: 1988)

Definitions as Used in this Paper

(double parentheses designate page location)

authority: "1) the power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action or make final decisions; 2) jurisdiction, authorization, warrant" (92)

control: "1) to regulate, to verify by comparison with a standard; 2) to exercise control over; 3) command, direct" (310)

knowledge: "act, fact or state of knowing, awareness, understanding; 2) acquaintance with facts, range of information, awareness of knowledge; 3) learning, body of facts" (748)

pedagogical: "the profession or function of a teacher; teaching" (995)

power: "1) ability to do or act; 2) the ability to control others; 3) authority sway, influence" (1058)

profession: "1) a vocation or occupation requiring advanced education and training involving intellectual skills as medicine, law, theology, engineering, teaching; 2) the body of persons in any such calling or occupation" (1074)

professional: "1) of or engaged in or worthy of high standards of a profession" (1074)

rural: "1) of or characteristic of the country; 2) having to do with farming, agricultural" (1176)

urban: "1) of or consisting or comprising a city or town; 2) character of a city as distinguished from the country" (1467)

vision: "the ability to perceive something not actually visible as through mental acuteness or keen foresight" (1492)