



UNIVERSITY OF  
REGINA

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# *POLICY AND PRACTICE* **IN EDUCATION**

A JOURNAL ADDRESSING  
ISSUES, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE  
IN THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS

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VOLUME 14

NUMBERS 1, 2

2008



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## POLICY AND PRACTICE IN EDUCATION

*Policy and Practice in Education* is a digital online journal available at <http://dspace.cc.uregina.ca:8080/dspace/handle/10294/6>. The editorial board welcomes contributions on most aspects of the education of those who teach. Whether this teaching occurs in elementary, secondary, or postsecondary institutions, which is our primary focus, or in other institutions, such as business and industry, government, or the military, the board is interested in exploring how people become teachers, how their practice matures, what issues and challenges they face, and how the public policy context shapes their practice. The board especially wishes to encourage two kinds of manuscripts: (a) those in which are illuminated the complexities of teaching through established and emerging theories and programs of research, and (b) those in which matters preoccupying contemporary debates about teaching and the public policy context of teaching are critically examined. Manuscripts should be written in an accessible and rigorous style, which communicates to specialist and nonspecialists. *Policy and Practice in Education* is published by the Faculty of Education, at the University of Regina, Regina, SK, Canada.

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ISSN 1708-2749

*Policy and Practice in Education: A Journal Addressing Issues, Research and Practice in the Education of Teachers*

Previous title, *Journal of Professional Studies*, Vol. 1(1), December 1993 to Vol. 9(2), June 2002

Back issues are available in microform from:

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## ABSTRACTS

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***Student Teacher Stress in the Extended Practicum:  
A Canadian Context***

This article explores student teachers' stress levels and potential coping strategies during the extended practicum. Salvador Badali collected data from questionnaires (n = 140) and from semistructured interviews (n = 15). The findings indicate many of the on-going challenges associated with the practicum component of teacher education. Two major themes characterizing student teacher stress are discussed: (a) sources of stress (being a perfectionist and having high expectations; balancing personal and professional commitments; managing workload issues; and establishing and maintaining relationships with cooperating teachers) and (b) coping strategies (personal, professional, social, and institutional). Overall, results indicate differences in coping strategies among low- and high-stress students.

PAGE 33

***Teacher Development After Certification: Lessons From Ontario's  
Mandatory Professional Learning Program, 1999-2004***

Larry Glassford's article analyzes a clash between publicly employed teachers' views of professional autonomy and those of neoconservatives who preach the virtues of public accountability. Combining elements of historical narrative with educational policy analysis, it assesses the fate of an Ontario policy entitled the Professional Learning Program, under which teachers were required to pass 14 professional-development courses over 5 years or face decertification. While the controversial program was eventually scrapped, the author concludes that an accommodation of the two competing visions would ultimately prove advantageous.

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***School Councils: A Passing Fad or a Solid Future?***

School councils can be viewed by educational stakeholders as a mere fad or as an important feature to the future of school governance. In this article, Jane Preston explores the descriptors of school councils and the research pertaining to the effectiveness of parent involvement through school councils. Efficacy of school councils is supported when diverse forms of parent involvement are recognized by the school council and when school council members have a strong working relationship, agree on common values and goals, and utilize quality training opportunities.

PAGE 85

***Repressive Myths and Childhood Fables: An Analysis of (In?)appropriate Practice***

Melanie Janzen uses a feminist poststructural theoretical framework, informed by Davies and Ellsworth, to conduct an analysis of the book, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), an exemplar of developmental psychology in early childhood education. The analysis includes ways in which developmentally appropriate practice constructs knowledge, children, and teachers and explores the implications of these constructions. However, Ms. Janzen argues that these limit the possibilities of younger human beings, justify marginalization, and maintain and perpetuate hegemony. She also contends that the developmental constructions of knowledge, teaching, and children have become the repressive myths of early childhood education, arguing for a pedagogy where children's multiple subjectivities are recognized, where differences are acclaimed as strengths, and where knowledge is recognized as undergirded by power.

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## EDITORIAL

*Patrick Lewis and James McNinch*

In this issue of *Policy and Practice in Education* all four articles, although very different in topic have much in common: They explore the politics and stress that permeate the lived world of teaching. For anyone who has spent time teaching in a K-12 classroom the notion of stress is neither unusual nor new. One need only reflect a moment to recall the beginnings of that stress which invariably draws one back to student teaching experiences. In *Student Teacher Stress in the Extended Practicum: A Canadian Context*, author Salvador Badali reminds us of the stresses associated with the teaching profession, however, he takes us on a closer exploration of the kinds of stress experienced by student teachers and the associated consequences. He suggests that student teachers are vulnerable because of their inexperience and the power relationship between cooperating teacher, student teacher and faculty adviser. Because student teachers have to “straddle two distinct institutional cultures” they are more likely to experience more debilitating effects from stress. Like teaching itself, stress and its causes are complex and not easily ameliorated by one single change. Nevertheless, the author sees some ways for teaching practicum experiences to work toward reducing stress levels and provides suggestions, including program changes, for student teachers to cope better with stressful situations during practicum teaching.

In *Teacher Development After Certification: Lessons From Ontario's Mandatory Professional Learning Program, 1999-2004* readers will be reminded of another kind of stress that is everywhere and always present for teachers, students and parents - the politics of public education. Larry Glassford takes us on a historical reflection of events in Ontario when the provincial government took legislative initiatives to renew the educational system in the latter part of the 1990s and into the opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The author, using historical narrative and educational policy analysis, delineates the struggle for power between so called opposing ideas of “professional autonomy” and “public accountability” and thereby pitting teachers against the government. Throughout the narrative reflection, the author suggests that if those involved could step back or transcend the

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binary struggle they may find there is some possible value to be taken from both perspectives; however, in doing so he of course, provokes further discussion, if not argument along those very lines.

Continuing with the politics of education, Jane Preston looks at the recent history and use of School Councils as legislated by governments to ensure the involvement of parents in the governance of schools. As the title, *School Councils: A Passing Fad or the Future?* suggests, she raises the question of the impetus for implementing the councils, what the long-term goals might be and if it is reasonable and/or possible to have authentic parent participation in the governance of schools. Through a review of research and literature, Jane Preston presents the advantages, disadvantages, and possibilities for the efficacy of School Councils in the Canadian educational context. By delineating some extreme examples of notions of accountability taken to absurd lengths and reminding readers of the less than helpful results of politically motivated educational legislation, she embarks on a careful exploration and discussion of what is, might, and could be possible for School Councils.

Finally, Melanie Janzen in the *Repressive Myths and Childhood Fables: An Analysis of (In?)appropriate Practice* takes a critical look at the dominant discourse of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) in Early Childhood Education; a discourse which has been informed and formed by developmental psychology journeying from description to prescription of a set of universal truths about childhood development and learning that is above question. Only recently have these “truths” of developmental psychology in ECE begun to be questioned and critiqued by theorists and practitioners. However, DAP continues to influence practice in early childhood settings and in early childhood teacher education settings. Melanie Janzen continues a critique of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), an already lively and dynamic discussion in the field, by drawing upon the ideas of power, language and subjectivities as delineated in feminist poststructural thinking to question the assumptions and practices inherent in developmental theory. She argues that, although considered a child-centred approach, DAP and its idea of child-centredness are limiting to children’s growth and development, and may even be “repressive.” Her discussion adds to an important conversation, which needs to grow in light of the increasing interest and attention that governments and policy makers are giving to Early Childhood Education and Care.

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For the authors in this issue of *Policy and Practice in Education*, engagement in thoughtful, critical discussion adds to rather than diminishes the ongoing conversation about what education and teaching are and could be. Perhaps there needs to be a greater effort to bring the politics and power of education into the foreground so that all so called “stakeholders”—teachers, parents, children/youth, student teachers, and governments—can take up the conversation in such a way as to create a fair and democratic role for themselves in what has been deemed a right of all children.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 28 of which Canada is a signatory.

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## Student Teacher Stress in the Extended Practicum: A Canadian Context

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### Introduction

Stress and teaching are frequently linked in the educational literature (Borg & Riding, 1993; Eskridge & Coker, 1985; Fontana & Abouserie, 1993). Various studies support the notion that high-anxiety levels are evident for student teachers (Erickson & Russ, 1967; Singh, 1972; Thompson, 1963) and may be tied to various negative consequences (Doyal & Forsyth, 1973; Hart, 1987). Doyal and Forsyth, for example, highlighted links between teacher anxiety and student teacher anxiety, while Hart observed connections between student-teacher anxiety levels and classroom disruptions. Studies of stress in educational settings date back to the 1930s, although many writers refer to Selye (1956) as being a pioneer of the concept. Selye viewed stress as a neutral physiological phenomenon; it could be either beneficial (eustress) or harmful (distress). In the literature on stress in education, as in everyday use, the term tends now to be associated with negative consequences, although it is used in different ways and with different degrees of precision.

Fontana and Abouserie's (1993) definition of stress refers to the "demand made upon the adaptive capacities of the mind and the body, a demand which, if continued beyond the ability of these capacities to respond, leads to the physical and psychological exhaustion and possibly ultimate collapse referred to by Seyle" (p. 261). Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) defined teacher stress as a response syndrome of negative effects resulting from the teacher's job. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) note that stress is mediated by the teacher's perception of threat to his or her well-being. This notion of stress is particularly relevant to this study because student teachers are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of stress (Sinclair & Nichol, 1981), given their relative inexperience and

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lower status. Towbes and Cohen (1996) conceptualized chronic stress as the accumulation of ongoing strains across several life domains, concluding that students are particularly prone to stress as they make the developmental transition from university student to beginning teacher. A common thread found in these definitions is the notion that stress is typically viewed as the consequence of a dynamic relationship between a person and the environment. The effects of stress are generally seen in individual behavior, mostly expressed in psychological or physiological changes. For this study, I define *stress* as a perceptual phenomenon arising from a comparison between the demand on the person and an individual's ability to cope. The findings of this study reflect the notion that an individual's stress is subjective and therefore dependent on that person's interpretation and appraisal of a situation. The primary purpose of this study is to identify and explain pre-service teachers' stress levels and potential coping strategies during the practicum.

### **Overview of Relevant Literature**

The teaching practicum is generally viewed as the most valuable component of a teacher education program (Glickman & Bey, 1990; McIntyre, Byrd & Foxx, 1996) and yet perhaps the most stressful time in a student teacher's life (Capel, 1997; D'Rozario & Wong, 1996; Elkerton, 1984; MacDonald, 1993). The literature on the sources of student teacher stress can be divided into at least three streams: (a) stress resulting from practicum experiences; (b) stress linked to coursework in higher education; and (c) the relationship between individual characteristics and stress, each of which are briefly discussed next.

### **Sources of Stress**

The body of research on student stress in the practicum, the focus of this study, identifies and describes sources of practicum stress and examines differences related to variables such as gender (D'Rozario & Wong, 1996; Morton, Vesco, Williams, & Awender, 1997; Murray-Harvey et al., 1999), and age (Bowers, Eichner, & Sacks, 1983; Morton et al.; Murray-Harvey et al.), dispositions, anxiety/depression (Morton et al.); grade level taught, type, and length of the school placement; and practice teaching effects (Capel, 1997). Recurrent themes in this stream of the literature reflect student teacher concerns about being evaluated by cooperating teachers and faculty advisors, issues related to planning for

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instruction, and concerns about maintaining control of pupils (Hart, 1987; Morton et al., 1997). Grant (1992) argued that student teachers may be affected more by stress because they have less status than cooperating teachers. Student teachers are primarily guests in another person's classroom as they attempt to establish their reputations as competent and reliable student teachers. In addition, student teachers who have little discretion or control of field roles and expectations for performance are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, apathy, low self-esteem and low self-confidence (Ganster & Fusilier, 1989).

As well as practicum stresses, student teachers may also experience stress from the academic coursework of their teacher education programs (Abouserie, 1994; Miller & Fraser, 1998). Sumison (1998), for example, described the experiences of a small sample of successful student teachers who discontinued in their university even though their practicum experiences were positive. For the students in that study, stress resulted from trying to cope with the workload and from difficulty reconciling their attitudes of inadequacy and isolation.

A third aspect of the literature explores an individual's vulnerability to stress. For example, Admiraal, Korthagen, and Wubbels (2000), Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou, and Kiosseoglou (1999), Brouwers & Tomic (2000), and Chorney (1998) highlighted cognitive factors affecting individual vulnerability to stress among teachers. Freidman (2000) investigated the "shattered dreams of idealistic" newly qualified teachers, finding that participants exhibited declining self-efficacy when they felt they could not live up to their ideal performance expectations. Griffith, Steptoe, and Cropley (1999) reported that high levels of stress were linked to low social support and that individuals coped by disengaging and opting out of activities that they believed caused stress. These findings suggest that some of the stressors associated with teaching are not automatically stressful, but instead serve as stressors only in relation to coping styles.

### **Coping Strategies**

Brecht (1996) reminds us that some stress may boost a person's performance, but unmanaged stress can be debilitating and detrimental to achieving optimal success (Girdano, Everly, & Dusek, 1997). Therefore, the manner in which individuals employ coping strategies is important. Several researchers (e.g., Capel, 1997; Elkerton, 1984; Sumison & Thomas, 1995) have suggested a

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combination of direct-action techniques and palliative-coping strategies as a useful way to cope with stress. Direct-action techniques refer to things that an individual can do that eliminate the source of stress, thus managing it effectively. In general, direct action is the best approach to dealing with stress because the cause of the stress is resolved. On the other hand, palliative techniques do not deal with the source of stress itself, but rather are aimed at lessening the feeling of stress that occurs. Palliative techniques can be mental or physical. Mental strategies occur when a person tries to change how they appraise the situation. MacDonald (1993), for example, found that student teachers coped with stress by talking with their cooperating teachers, being proactive in establishing clear goals, participating in recreational and/or athletic activities, and employing relaxation techniques such as socializing with friends and family. Other studies (e.g., Margolis et al., 1974; Spector, 1986) reported greater satisfaction, higher self-esteem, lower distress, improved performance and lower turnover when individuals had opportunities to participate in decision making. Student teachers, for example, tend to cope better with stress when they refine interpersonal relationship skills. Morton et al. (1997) noted that institutional-level changes also needed to be made in order to give student teachers input into how they were evaluated and by establishing more collaborative supervisory models.

### **Methodology**

#### **Theoretical Perspective Informing the Study**

Reality is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Taking a social constructivist perspective means focusing not only on formal institutions themselves, but also on the processes by which individuals experience and make sense of their lives. This is precisely what is attempted in this study, particularly as student teachers straddle two distinct institutional cultures: K-12 educational settings and the much larger multicultural university. Recognizing that prospective teachers construct knowledge about teaching and learning is fundamental to understanding the way in which they fulfill their duties in field contexts. Individuals do not construct knowledge in isolation. Indeed, the social setting and the interactions within it influence the manner in which individuals construct knowledge about the world.

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In presenting student teachers' perspectives and experiences, I build upon the sociocultural theories of learning outlined in *Situated Learning* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and *Communities of Practice* (Wenger, 1998). From these sources comes the notion that learning occurs in communities of practice and as individuals gain access to a community they become increasingly involved. According to Lave and Wenger, "the form that legitimacy of participation takes is a defining characteristic of ways of belonging, and is therefore not only a crucial condition for learning, but a constitutive element of its content" (p. 35). They suggest that entry to a community results from a process they call "legitimate peripheral participation" (p. 35). This means that an individual gains access to a community through growing involvement over a period of time. Newcomers move from peripheral participation toward full participation. Concurrently, individuals are involved in constructing new identities for themselves. Lave and Wenger state that the key to legitimate peripheral participation is access by newcomers to the community. The period of legitimate peripheral participation in this case is 16 weeks, the length of the extended practicum. "To become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity; old timers and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation" (Lave & Wenger, p. 101). The congruency between Lave and Wenger's model and the student teacher experiences in field settings seems suitable. The practicum may be accurately characterized by sociocultural notions of "old timer" and "newcomer."

#### **Data Source and Analysis**

All fourth-year student teachers (n = 265) attending the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina were invited to participate in this study. These individuals were training to become elementary and secondary teachers. A small percentage (approximately 10%) had previously completed a baccalaureate degree and were in the process of taking 2 additional years for teacher education; the remainder were enrolled in 4-year, concurrent teacher education programs.

The names and school placement addresses of student teachers were provided by the Professional Development and Field Experience Office in the Faculty of Education. The questionnaire (a modified version of D'Rozario & Wong's Survey of Practicum Stresses, 1996) accompanied by a letter of introduction and a

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stamped, return-addressed envelope was sent to each person. One hundred and forty were returned completed - 71 elementary (8 male, 63 female) and 69 secondary (20 male, 49 female). The questionnaire consisted of 30 items representing experiences related to the practicum that students may find stressful, for example, managing the class and enforcing discipline, coping with the overall workload, being evaluated by their supervisor, and fear of failing the practicum. A 5-point Likert scale was employed, where 0 = *Not applicable*, 1 = *Never stressed me*, 2 = *Stressed me some of the time*, 3 = *Stressed me most of the time*, and 4 = *Stressed me all of the time*. Students were also asked to provide comments for each of the items, as well as answer an open-ended question that asked them how they coped with stress.

In addition to questionnaires, the researcher conducted 15 in-depth, semistructured oral interviews of selected student teachers across program and subject areas. Interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes, were tape recorded and transcribed. The interviews were conversational in nature and were built around specific open-ended questions intended to encourage student teachers' reflections on their field experiences. Questions such as the following served as starting points; other questions arose in response to particular comments and, at times, I asked for clarification or expansion.

1. Briefly describe the highlights of your recent field experience.
  2. In your own words, how would you define stress?
  3. What was the most stressful aspect of your field experience?  
Examples.
  4. What was the least stressful aspect of your field experience?  
Examples.
  5. How did you cope with stress?
  6. What advice would you give a student student about to begin the practicum?
  7. Please describe a "typical weekend."
  8. To what extent did your teacher education program prepare you to cope with potentially stressful situations during practicum?
  9. Are there any positive aspects of stress?
  10. Overall, on a scale of 1-10, rate your stress during the practicum.
  11. Knowing what you now know, is there anything you would do differently to cope with stress?
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In analyzing the data, I began by reading the questionnaires and interview transcripts several times to identify issues and concepts related to student teachers' experiences during the practicum. For each theme, I developed phrases or codes that seemed to capture the essence of what they were telling me (e.g., "time press issues," "approaches to planning for instruction," "working with cooperating teachers," and "adjusting to school cultures and expectations for performance"). I placed a list of these codes beside columns for each participant and, going through the questionnaires and transcripts again, I noted the pages on which reference was made of each topic. During this process, it became obvious that some themes should be deleted, combined, modified, and new ones added. With the codes and frequencies, I formed a tentative structure of key themes and subthemes. I then began writing the report, going back to the transcripts to elaborate the themes and gather representative quotations. As the writing process continued, I had to further adjust some themes and modify quotations to more accurately represent the content of the transcripts. At the end of the process, I returned once again to the questionnaires and transcripts, reading them in their entirety to satisfy myself that I had in fact presented the information in a fair and accurate manner. The transcripts had previously been returned to the participants as a member check to ensure that their words and my interpretations represented their thinking. Some changes in wording resulted in some transcriptions, but there was uniform acceptance of my interpretations culled from the interviews.

In terms of the interview component of data collection, the methodology employed in this study was qualitative as defined by Punch (1998). I had a relatively small sample of participants, the interviews were open ended, I made extensive use of examples and quotations in reporting, and my concepts and hypothesis were modified as the analysis proceeded. This study was interpretive in nature. For example, the coding of responses was partly a matter of judgment, and the meaning attached to each code or theme depended on my interpretation of student teachers' comments. In making these judgments and interpretations, I was undoubtedly influenced to some extent by my experiences in teacher education over the years. And finally, although one may have reservations about a reliance of self-report data that are unsupported by observational accounts or medical measures, this "person-perception" approach is the norm in much of the literature.

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## **Findings**

The issues raised by these student teachers have been rarely reported in the research literature. The findings are important because they highlight many of the ongoing challenges associated with the practicum component of teacher education. In this paper, I report on data obtained from the written response portion of questionnaires and from student teacher comments captured from follow-up interviews. The following issues caused the greatest source of stress: having high expectations of one's teaching performance, seeking a balance between practicum/personal commitments, and coping with workload and managing time. Conversely, the following issues were reported as the least stressful: working with community-based individuals/groups, working with support staff, communicating and working with teachers in the school, fear of failing the practicum, and relating to faculty advisors.

### **Being a Perfectionist and Having High Expectations**

Based upon survey responses and follow-up interviews, being a perfectionist and having high expectations for oneself was a major factor in stress levels among student teachers. Observations, as the following from a female secondary student teacher, were common across subject area and grade levels.

I'm really hard on myself because I always try to do my best. I knew when I was performing below expectations and it stressed me out. Much of my stress related to reflecting on the lessons I taught which were generally very good but I tended to focus on the negative.

The most confident and high-achieving student teachers tended to express the most doubt about their abilities to succeed in the practicum. According to one elementary student teacher,

I knew internship was going to be a lot of work. I'm a strong academic student and I felt well prepared and expected to do well but I still worried a lot. There are so many things I had no control over, especially the personality and expectations of the cooperating teacher.

Partly because of the uncertainty and stress associated with being placed in unfamiliar contexts, many student teachers said

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that they “re-adjusted their attitudes,” and for some individuals this meant “lowering expectations for their performance.”

I’m a perfectionist, so for the first little while I just didn’t sleep very much. I worked really hard and I put in many hours before I realized that it’s okay to cut corners. I figured out how much I needed to plan in order to engage students and satisfy my cooperating teacher and at the same time not go crazy by spending too many hours planning for a 30 minute lesson. (Middle Years Student Teacher)

For some student teachers, learning to “play the game” was an effective coping strategy, but one that left them feeling uneasy because they acknowledged it felt like they were “cheating themselves.”

#### **Balancing Personal and Professional Commitments**

Almost all participants acknowledged tensions in trying to balance personal and professional responsibilities during the practicum. The following comment from an elementary student teacher was typical.

I couldn’t believe how many hours I spent preparing to teach. It didn’t take me long to realize that this was going to completely consume my life. I guess this is what being a teacher is like...but finding a balance between your outside life and your school life was almost impossible.

A secondary student teacher lamented having to “cut ties” with her community.

I’m an active person....During internship, it was hard to find the time to participate at the school level and still maintain my non-school commitments. I felt guilty about having to put my local church choir duties on hold because there just wasn’t enough time.

Most student teachers said it was difficult fulfilling family obligations during the practicum.

I spent less time with family than I was used to because it seemed like I was always planning lessons. Getting groceries, going to a movie with my wife, taking my dogs for a walk, things

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that I normally do consistently...they went out the window. Yes, it was stressful. (Secondary Student Teacher)

During follow-up interviews with student teachers, I asked them to describe a typical weekend. The following quote from a secondary student teacher was generally consistent with questionnaire responses.

Weekends were very busy. Usually there was volleyball on Friday, or some teachers would get together for a drink at a local bar. My co-op would drag me along with them...she didn't give me a choice. If I was lucky, I'd get home by 6 p.m. Most Friday nights I devoted to grading students' work. On Saturdays I did lesson planning in the morning and afternoon, probably running for groceries somewhere in between. I usually spent Saturday night talking on the phone, going to bed early. If I was teaching a novel in one of my upcoming classes, I would read that novel, because it didn't seem as much like work as doing some of the other preparations.

For many student teachers, extracurricular activities were simultaneously a cause of stress and a stress release.

Coaching turned out to be a good experience. I think it boosted my teaching quite a bit... just dealing with the students out of the classroom. We were all more relaxed with one another. (Secondary Student Teacher)

However, some student teachers said they were forced to accept duties they had little or no skill or experience with.

I ended up coaching the Junior Girls Volleyball team. The teacher who was supposed to do it was on maternity leave. I had never played on a sports team, so it was a completely new learning experience. I have limited athletic skills...so that was stressful just showing up to practice the first couple times. I had no idea what I was supposed to do. (Secondary Student Teacher)

Most student teachers expressed the view they had no choice but to cope with whatever demands their cooperating teachers made of them. According to these student teachers, the "stakes of the game" were extremely high.

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In hindsight, I wish I there had been more of a balance but I had to do what was necessary to get everything done and get a good grade and hopefully a job. I'm not expecting it to get better in my first year of teaching either. I hope that once I get some long-term plans down, it should ease up a little. I'm hoping that by my third year of teaching there is some balance in my life. (Elementary Student Teacher)

### **Managing Workload Issues**

Regardless of subject area or grade-level assignment, workload-related issues were an ongoing complaint by the student teachers who participated in this study. Dealing with workload stress was perceived as a "make or break" experience for many student teachers. The following comment from a middle years student teacher was typical.

There was a lot of pressure during internship because there just wasn't enough time to get everything done to the standard I would have liked. At times, I worried that I wasn't working hard enough or I worried that I wasn't meeting the expectations of the cooperating teacher.

Lesson-planning-related activities consumed a greater amount of student teachers' time during the initial stages of the practicum because they were assessing pupil readiness and, for some, they were also learning new subject area content. During the 3-week block, student teachers were expected to assume the full duties of their cooperating teachers, the rationale being that it's a time for them to demonstrate they can handle the pressures associated with being a "real teacher." Student teachers commonly referred to the 3-week block as a "sprint to the finish line" or as "a time to prove yourself."

I spent a lot of time on planning because my cooperating teacher expected very detailed lesson plans for each lesson. When I got to my three-week block, I spent about 10 hours planning a day and five hours teaching. That was very stressful. (Secondary Student Teacher)

Another secondary student teacher said,

I felt like I was starting from scratch. When people ask me what internship was like, I tell them it's like you have a project due

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every day and you've got to present it for five hours some days. Adding to the stress was knowing that my planning had to satisfy my cooperating teacher as well...it can be a little overwhelming at times. (Secondary Student Teacher)

Secondary English student teachers, in particular, reported spending significant amounts of time planning lessons.

Teaching during the 3-week block was by far the most stressful. I was preparing for eight separate classes, because I was teaching English grades 7-12. There were several split classes, something I was not used to. The work never stops, I don't know how teachers manage to have a life.

Managing workload issues was further complicated for many of the approximately 40% of student teachers placed in non-Regina area schools. For some it was a "homecoming"; for others it meant living in unfamiliar communities.

It seemed like I was always doing school work. I usually stayed at the school until 10:30 on Friday night and I would get there around 9:00 on Saturday. I didn't know anybody. It was a small, tight-knit rural community. I was a bit of an outsider at first. The janitors and I would joke that we were always at the school. I'd stay most of Saturday and then...for the first two months or so, I would spend most of Sunday there too. And then I realized that it was too much, I had to take Sunday off. (Secondary Student Teacher)

### **Establishing and Maintaining Student Teacher/Cooperating Teacher Relationships**

The majority of student teachers identified the cooperating teacher relationship as a key factor in whether or not their practicum was successful. Student teachers made both positive and negative comments about their relationship with cooperating teachers. It was common, for example, for student teachers to depict cooperating teachers as mentors who supported them in their transition from university student to teacher. According to an elementary student teacher,

By the end of September, I got into the groove of the school and I felt like I was a real part of the teaching staff, my co-operating teacher was a big supporter and mentor. Right from the start,

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she didn't treat me like an intern, to her I was a teacher. I think I was able to manage my stress because of the support of the cooperating teacher.

"Fitting into the school" and being treated as "equals and peers" was frequently mentioned by student teachers as an important factor in whether or not their practicum was successful. Student teacher comments revealed the importance they attached to cooperating teachers who were generous and authentic in their support.

My co-op was really great. She supported and encouraged me in whatever I wanted to do. Many times she let me know that she didn't think something would work, but she encouraged me all the same. I really appreciated that quality and I hope that if I am ever a cooperating teacher, I let my intern experiment. It was a successful internship because she gave lots of feedback and suggestions. (Elementary Student Teacher)

The majority of student teachers who participated in this study emphasized the critical role cooperating teachers fulfil when they encourage risk taking.

My cooperating teacher always had time for me, even though it was obvious he was very busy. I always felt like I was listened to and supported. One of the things I valued the most was just having the time to sit and talk informally about teaching, the students in the school...educational issues and what it's like to be a teacher. (Secondary Student Teacher)

Other student teachers, however, highlighted negative aspects of working with cooperating teachers, thereby contributing to increased stress levels. Some student teachers said they were at a huge disadvantage when, for example, they were unable to meet their cooperating teacher in advance of the practicum.

Even though I tried, I didn't get a chance to meet my cooperating teacher until the beginning of the school year. I was pretty stressed out during August because I wanted to begin planning but I was on hold. He told me not to worry but I think he should have been more forthright in helping me plan for September. (Secondary Student Teacher)

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Most student teachers expressed concern about being placed with cooperating teachers they didn't get along with.

My cooperating teacher was the greatest cause of stress during my internship, I just didn't see eye-to-eye with him about how to teach. Don't misunderstand me, he was a nice enough person but we disagreed philosophically about teaching strategies. I thought the whole purpose of internship was to be able to experiment and try out what we had learned at the university. For me, we disagreed about how structured the lessons should be as well as assessment strategies. I had high expectations of myself and I was really disappointed when I felt like I had no other choice but to give my cooperating teacher what he wanted, rather than try something different. (Secondary Student Teacher)

For the most part, student teachers recognized that "it was not personal."

Right off the bat there were a lot of problems with my cooperating teacher...we were just too different in personality and approaches to teaching. He was by no means a bad co-op, but it's just we were so different. When I look back, I realize I put up a lot of barriers but I think he put me in some really awkward situations...I didn't learn very much. (Elementary Student Teacher)

Several secondary student teachers described the challenges associated with adapting to two very different cooperating teachers.

When I picked up my minor class I wasn't as confident compared to my major. Adapting to another cooperating teacher was something I wasn't prepared for. I just assumed both would be similar in their expectations but I was wrong. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what each of them wanted...I think it distracted me from focusing on the pupils themselves.

Student teachers recognized the delicacy of these relationships. According to a secondary student teacher:

I didn't have a strong relationship with one of my cooperating teachers... I found it interesting that my second cooperating teacher was much more open and supportive...I had to be careful

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not to play one off against the other in my mind, I reminded myself that it wasn't that bad, I could survive it.

Although student teachers acknowledged that schools were "hectic places" and that their cooperating teachers were often involved in various extracurricular activities that might reduce the amount of time they could spend together, student teachers were nevertheless disappointed when that was the case.

My cooperating teacher was heavily into coaching...I hardly saw her but when I did, I knew she was feeling a lot of stress herself. I thought it was the intern who was supposed to be the stressed one. When I would go to talk to her she was polite but she just didn't have the time to explain things properly to me. It seemed I was always catching her on the fly. (Elementary Student Teacher)

Next, I report on student teachers' coping strategies during the practicum.

### **Coping Strategies**

From student teachers' written responses to the question, "How did you cope with stress?" as well as from information gathered from follow-up interviews, several specific coping strategies were identified. The experiences of student teachers in this study were consistent with what Murray-Harvey et al. (1999) found, namely, that student teachers employed personal-, professional-, social-, and institutional-coping strategies.

***Personal coping strategies.*** Personal coping strategies included cognitive strategies (e.g., positive thinking, being pragmatic when confronted with difficult situations); recreational strategies (e.g., playing sports, general exercise, listening to music and watching films and television); behavioral strategies (e.g., rewarding oneself with food, and engaging in routine activities like walking the dog); emotional strategies (e.g., the use of self-depreciation and having a sense of humour); and rational/time-organizational strategies (e.g., defining priorities for practicum work and free time).

When participants were asked how they most often dealt with stress in the practicum, the majority said they employed positive thinking strategies because they feared that creeping negativism would be a drain on their performance. For example, one elementary student teacher said,

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I approached the practicum as a learning experience and I promised myself that I wouldn't get down when things didn't go as planned. I think I brought a lot to the children I was teaching....I kept telling myself to relax and it would all work out.

A secondary student teacher had this to say.

Because I was a little uncomfortable teaching my minor subject, I told myself that I needed to be patient and not worry about every little thing. I did my best and relied on those around me for help.

Almost all participants cited recreational coping strategies as an effective way to manage stress during the practicum. The most common activities involved physical activity and recreational sports. For example, one middle years student teacher said that when things got most stressful,

I went for a run or headed to the gym for a workout. Sometimes it was hard to find the time but I always felt better when I made time for physical activity.

Other student teachers chose passive activities such as reading and watching television or movies.

I took long hot baths with a favourite novel or went for long walks with my dogs. Being away from everyone and everything recharged my energy level and I always returned feeling refreshed and ready to go. (Elementary Student Teacher)

Most student teachers said there was little to be gained by worrying about things they had little or no control over. As a result, they attempted to keep things in perspective.

I prepared as best I could. If something didn't work out, I tried to be philosophical about what happened. Sometimes I just had to laugh...I can tell you that it was really important being placed with a like-minded cooperating teacher who didn't get on me every time a lesson fell flat. (Middle Years Student Teacher)

The majority of student teachers sought a balance between their personal and professional responsibilities, but only a minority

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indicated they made it a priority to “take time off” during the practicum.

I always tried to take either Saturday or Sunday completely off...no school-related activity. This was especially hard to do during peak teaching times, but I think it helped me keep my sanity and to be honest, I think my overall performance benefited as well. (Secondary Student Teacher)

***Professional coping strategies.*** Professional coping strategies involved having a knowledge of the curriculum, being prepared and organized, and possessing an adaptive disposition. According to one elementary student teacher, being knowledgeable and confident about the subject area content was a key factor in reducing stress, thereby highlighting the connection between theory (knowledge primarily associated with university-based coursework) with practice (K-12 extended practicum experiences).

At the start, it was more difficult than I was anticipating. When I think back to my methods and instructions courses at the university, there was less pressure in getting things right. At the time, I didn't appreciate how fast-paced everything is in a real classroom, I couldn't procrastinate and survive...I learned this in the first week of September.

Most student teachers realized they were responsible for their own professional growth and development. As a result, many said that it was up to them to develop context-specific strategies, rather than rely on generic approaches they had learned in the university setting.

I was really organized, otherwise I know I would have been panicked all the time. I was lucky that my cooperating teacher and I shared similar views about the importance of planning and the amount of detail necessary. I think I did a good job of figuring out the best ways to motivate pupils and enforce consistent discipline. Classroom management was not something I took for granted. (Secondary Student Teacher)

Possessing a positive attitude was important, but student teachers recognized it was insufficient by itself when confronted with complex issues. In interviews, student teachers acknowledged that being a reflective, self-critical practitioner was essential to

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their success, but highlighted how much more complicated it was in practice from what they had experienced in coursework settings.

Although I didn't realize it then, we had so much more time to think about things when on campus. As frantic as it seemed, it's nothing like the fast and frantic pace of school life during practicum. I've developed new confidence in my ability to think well on my feet. (Elementary Student Teacher)

***Social coping strategies.*** Social coping strategies included relying on family and friends in times of crisis or simply for conversation and support.

My cooperating teacher was really busy with coaching and other extracurricular activities and I had children and a spouse to look after. Although we got along well together, much of the feedback I received was verbal, rarely written which I would have liked. If I came home feeling stressed, my partner was always there to listen and for that I am really grateful. (Secondary Student Teacher)

Other student teachers described relying on parents, some of whom were also teachers.

My mom was great because she really understood what I was going through. One time I was upset about something and she knew exactly what to say to calm me down and remind me that everything was alright. It's not that I didn't talk to my cooperating teacher, but sometimes I just didn't want to bother him about how I was feeling. (Elementary Student Teacher)

***Institutional coping strategies.*** Institutional coping strategies involved both K-12 schools and the university. At the school level, student teachers received support from cooperating teachers, other teachers, and student teacher peers. Scheduling noninstructional time for planning was an example of a system-related school support. At the university level, faculty advisors provided contact and the Field Experience Office, a system-related support.

There is no question that student teachers relied heavily on cooperating teachers for support. Typical student teacher comments focused on "the value of debriefing lessons" and "being able to observe and pick the brain of more experienced teachers." These findings highlight the importance of student teachers having a solid

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professional working relationship with cooperating teachers. It is worth noting that in the teacher education program in which this study occurred, significant emphasis was given to student teachers and cooperating teachers in this regard.

The internship seminar was a great way to begin the year. With the support of seminar leaders, we were able to establish trust and clarify what was expected of me. Just having the time to talk and get to know one another outside the busy school setting was a huge bonus. (Secondary Student Teacher)

Faculty advisors were generally viewed as less important than cooperating teachers but when there were problems, student teachers really appreciated their help.

I really valued my faculty advisor's perspective because she tended to remind me about some of the bigger issues. I had a tendency to get too wrapped up in little details and she was fabulous at helping me focus in a non-judgmental manner. She was a nice complement to my cooperating teacher. We all got along well together. (Elementary Student Teacher)

### **Discussion**

Although this was an exploratory study of student teacher stress in the practicum, readers will nevertheless recognize many of the issues raised by these participants. Their experiences highlight an important phase of their professional education. The analysis of the questionnaire and the follow-up interview data indicate that these student teachers face a variety of stressors. K-12 schools are complex hierarchical institutions in which both cooperating teachers and student teachers perform multiple roles. However, few members of the educational community have less power or status than student teachers. This is significant given the obvious power differentials between student teachers and cooperating teachers, and the tendency of individuals in both groups to downplay issues of power and instead define the practicum experience as a "collegial relationship." A useful way to more fully understand student teachers' stress levels is to acknowledge that the extended practicum is a constructed learning environment and an integral component of the learning-to-teach process. As is the case in many professions, the novice learns under the tutelage of experienced practitioners who are, in this case, the cooperating teachers.

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Most student teachers were eager to discuss with me the role of power in their relationship with cooperating teachers. To them, it was obvious that cooperating teachers had all the power. This is consistent with the claim that “those with power are frequently least aware of, or least willing to acknowledge, its existence” (Delpit, 1988, p. 283). Some student teachers reduced short-term stress levels by “playing the game” during the practicum, hoping for a good final report and a future job offer. While student teachers recognized that cooperating teachers have power over them, most nevertheless preferred to emphasize the caring and supportive qualities they witnessed in cooperating teachers. The majority of student teachers described their relationship with cooperating teachers as partnerships, reflecting in part their desire to be seen as “pseudo-colleagues.”

Nevertheless, participants’ comments highlight the sometimes difficult and changeable nature of this complex relationship, and the sometimes messy interplay between issues of power and notions of collegiality. The literature on student teacher stress highlights the importance of the support from peers, family, friends, cooperating teachers, faculty advisors and from teacher education programs, generally. The manner in which cooperating teachers exercised their role was a major factor in explaining student teacher stress levels in the practicum. This is not surprising given that the cooperating teacher is the major point of reference and support in the school context.

Obviously, not every student teacher exhibited the same type and amount of stress during the practicum. In terms of coping strategies, there were some differences between high- and low-stress student teachers. The highest performing and most conscientious student teachers appeared to be the least stressed during the practicum. Also, secondary student teachers, unlike their elementary counterparts, sometimes experienced additional stress in trying to meet the expectations of two distinct cooperating teachers. Participant responses were consistent with Murray-Harvey et al.’s (1999) study in which she reported that high-stress students did not employ cognitive strategies to the same degree as did low-stress student teachers. Low-stress students tended to demonstrate more initiative and talk to cooperating teachers to clarify practicum issues. Also, high-stress students relied more on social support networks outside of school contexts. And finally, reflective practices were reported more often by low-stress students. Overall, low-stress student teachers reported a greater number of

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coping strategies than high-stress student teachers. Before concluding this paper, one final issue needs to be highlighted.

Based on the interviews I carried out, it became clear that some student teachers are unable to fully commit to the practicum. These individuals described difficulty in “giving their all,” which they said sometimes “frustrated their cooperating teachers” because they had to maintain part-time jobs to meet financial and personal obligations. In these instances, program developers and teacher educators need to pay closer attention to this reality and perhaps consider more flexible and alternative teacher education programs (e.g., more part-time enrolment and online courses).

### **Implications and Further Questions**

What has been learned from this study? What can be done to assist student teachers in managing their stress during the practicum? First, a cognitive coaching framework that emphasizes reflective thinking, nonjudgmental feedback, and mutual learning has been reported by Brouillette, Clinard and Ariav (1999). Their research describes a mentor-novice model that trains teachers to take a coaching role, showing them how to guide student teachers to do their own thinking. The coaching conversation ideally provides several strategic benefits to student teachers, including building trust and rapport, encouraging professional collaboration, providing specific feedback on teaching, and most importantly, developing skills in reflective practice. Second, a possible answer to coping effectively with the practicum may be in finding ways of developing self-efficacy among student teachers. This might take several forms such as providing workshops and professional development opportunities that promote a healthy balanced approach to life, time/stress management strategies, and survival skills. It is my contention that teacher educators have an obligation to help student teachers cope with professional stressors because otherwise, teacher burnout is likely to increase and more and more beginning teachers will leave the profession. Third, teacher education programs should pay careful attention to how they recruit and support mentor cooperating teachers before they take on student teachers in the practicum. And finally, programs should reexamine the manner in which student teachers build teaching loads during the 16-week practicum. The practicum might be an improved learning experience for all participants if student teachers taught fewer classes and, instead, were given more opportunity to

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participate in school/community projects and, in doing so, to reconceptualize the student teaching practicum as something more than “teaching as performance.”

A number of questions are raised as a result of this study.

- Is stress negatively impacting student teacher performance levels during the practicum?
- Why is it that higher stressed students do not use cooperating teachers as much as less stressed students?
- To what extent do age and gender differences among student teachers impact stress levels?
- What similarities and differences exist between elementary and secondary student teacher stress levels?
- To what extent can successful strategies be replicated across student teacher groups, especially for those most effected by the negative elements of stress?
- How can teacher education programs be more sensitive and supportive of student teacher stress levels?

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## Teacher Development After Certification: Lessons From Ontario's Mandatory Professional Learning Program, 1999-2004

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### Introduction

To what extent should teachers be entrusted with control of their own professional development? The question perplexes educational policy-makers in jurisdictions around the world. Effective teaching, it is widely assumed, is one of the keys to enhanced student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Furthermore, high-quality professional development opportunities for practicing teachers tend to promote more effective teaching (Newmann, King & Youngs, 2000). This statement, too, is not inherently controversial. Spokespersons for the teaching profession are as likely to subscribe to its message as are the representatives of public interest groups dedicated to raising students' achievement levels while promoting cost efficiency. It is in the implementation of professional development for teachers that the debate begins. Who decides upon what is needed? Who ensures it takes place? How is quality measured? Who pays? Now, the issue becomes problematic, because it becomes political.

Across North America, there are essentially two contending schools of thought as to where the initiative for teacher development, including postcertification professional learning, should lie (Grimmett, 2007; Roth, 1996). One of these might be termed the *professional autonomy model*. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that teachers, individually and collectively, are responsible, self-motivated, and devoted to the interests of their students. Consequently, it is they who are best able to judge, for themselves, which aspects of their teaching would benefit from retraining, upgrading or instruction in fresh approaches (Buday &

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Kelly, 1996). Proponents of this model advocate placing the onus for monitoring professional development in the hands of the individual teacher. Drawing upon earlier work by Rowan (1990) on the organizational design of schools, Smith and Rowley (2005) noted the vital importance of teacher commitment, individually and collectively, in making this approach to professional development a viable one. It implies investing a great deal of control over in-service professional learning in the hands of the teachers.

The major competing school of thought might be termed the *public accountability model*. Often associated with a neoconservative preference for a limited and “lean” state (Sears, 2003), it questions the validity of any system in which teachers are solely responsible for ensuring their own compliance with community expectations of ongoing professional development. Where the professional autonomy model emphasizes the potential of human idealism, the public accountability approach is grounded in a perception of humans as essentially self-interested. The latter philosophy frequently leads to a carrot-and-stick approach to professional development: either incentives for compliance or sanctions for noncompliance, or both. In this view, teachers cannot be trusted to take the courses or workshops they require to stay current, on their own initiative. Smith and Rowley (2005) dubbed this set of assumptions a control strategy, linking it to parallel movements dedicated to system-wide educational accountability and externally imposed performance standards.

There seems little in common between the two approaches for professional development. Compromise between apparent absolutes is fraught with difficulty. Yet both schools of thought have their limitations. On the one hand, it is hard to escape the notion that a top-down, authoritarian model for dealing with highly educated professionals in a liberal-democratic society is inherently dysfunctional and bound to fail. Numerous studies have shown that attempts to impose change upon teachers simply do not work (Sikes, 1992). On the other hand, one need not be a devotee of Thomas Hobbes to acknowledge there will inevitably be those members of the profession, or indeed of any human community, who fail to live up to the ideals of their fellows. If left on their own, will they be the few bad apples that eventually spoil the barrel? Some form of professional accountability in so vital an aspect of educational effectiveness as teachers’ ongoing growth and development seems essential. This dilemma faces many educational jurisdictions around the world. In one of these, the province of

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Ontario, Canada, a newly reelected neoconservative government decided in 1999 to take control of professional development and impose a set of policies deeply rooted in the notion of public accountability. In so doing, they knowingly and confidently confronted a well-organized and collectively articulate body of teachers committed to the preservation and enhancement of their professional autonomy.

A few words about the methodology and organization of this paper are in order. It is a blend of historical narrative and policy analysis. The strength of a chronological approach is that it allows the reader to understand more clearly the interrelated development of events over time. While it is often too simplistic to simply declare that one particular event caused an ensuing one, nonetheless cause-and-effect relationships of varying intensity do exist and are worth noting. As one standard reference work on methods of educational research has pointed out, historical investigation is the one research method that can meaningfully study evidence from the past (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). The purpose of such inquiry, however, constitutes more than the mere attempt to reconstruct events in their proper sequence. Beyond narrative description is the deeper goal: to clarify, explain, and analyze the significance of what happened. We do this, not only for our own intellectual satisfaction, but also in the hope that our research may have what Levin (2004) has termed *impact* on policy-makers. Historical research, properly analyzed, can thus help politicians, bureaucrats, and practitioners to learn from the lessons of the past.

For this latter aspect, we turn to the field of educational policy analysis for guidance. While there are several models that can be used - neoinstitutional, neopluralist, behavioural, and critical theory among them - this paper utilizes a modified political-system approach, for its ability to encompass contextual aspects of the sociopolitical environment alongside the key political actors, namely interest groups, institutions, and elite individuals (Cooper, Fusarelli & Randall, 2004). Following the lead of Cibulka (1994), the specific findings in this focused historical study will be related to broader perspectives in the evolution of teacher development and professionalism, so as to add to the "cumulative knowledge base about politics across different policy areas." As a result, the earlier work by Castle and Tilley (2003), on the beginnings of Ontario's teacher-testing initiative, will be extended through the current paper's investigation of the eventual centrepiece of that

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controversial policy: mandatory professional development for experienced teachers.

The opening section briefly explores the historical and sociocultural context of educational politics in Ontario at the turn of the millennium. This is followed by an examination of the formative events that led to the creation of an unprecedented and draconian-sounding recertification policy that would force veteran teachers to follow a structured professional development program or face the loss of their livelihood. The predictable consequence of this bold government policy - a very public clash with the teacher unions - forms the core of the ensuing section of the paper. With the stakes set so high, a win-win resolution of the conflict proved impossible. In the next part of this account, then, the voters' verdict proves decisive. A new government terminated the professional learning program and searched in vain for a viable replacement. On the basis of the preceding narrative, I proceed to draw appropriate lessons from an epic political battle, not only between a partisan government and self-interested teacher unions, but also between two entrenched views of teacher development. The critical issue which the Ontario case study poses for us is this: Is ongoing professional learning best left to the teachers themselves, operating on both an individual and collective level? or does it require direction from above, in the form of a mandatory government program supported by incentives or sanctions? In other words, which model works better - professional autonomy or public accountability - to ensure that every child has a competent classroom teacher (Darling-Hammond, 1996)?

### **Educational Policy in the Ontario Context**

In a knowledge-based economy, the appropriate education of present and future workers is one of the keys to growth and prosperity. In both Canada and the United States, however, the constitution allocates macromanagement of the economy to the federal government, while responsibility for education is granted to the provincial and state levels. In the case of Ontario, its capital city of Toronto is not only the focus of provincial policy-making, but it is also the location of the largest stock market in Canada and the head offices of many major financial and industrial corporations. Ontario's inhabitants represent some 40% of the Canadian population of 33 million and, when francophone Quebec is accounted for, Ontarians constitute nearly one-half the English-

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speaking population of Canada. Rapid growth in the resource-based economies of Alberta and British Columbia is beginning to alter this balance, but for the foreseeable future political trends in Ontario will have an impact that goes well beyond the simple reality of it being 1 province in 10.

The political culture of Ontario is best described in the apparent oxymoron of a name given to the political party which governed Ontario for 42 consecutive years, from 1943 to 1985: Progressive Conservative (PC). A coalition of corporate, small-business, and agricultural interests, it managed for more than 4 decades to hold the support of the “moderate middle” of the political spectrum, where most Ontario voters tend to congregate. When in 1985 it veered to the right it was replaced, first by a mildly reformist Liberal government led by David Peterson that sought to mimic the classic middle-of-the-road strategy, and then by the New Democratic Party (NDP) led by Bob Rae, whose philosophy can best be described as pragmatic social-democratic. Each of these governments held office for 5 years. In 1995, the PC party returned to power under the leadership of Mike Harris. Far from abandoning the mid-1980s experiment in right-wing ideology, the Harrisites hardened their neoconservative economic and social views into a glibly coherent platform which they sold to the Ontario electorate as the Common Sense Revolution (Gidney, 1999). Furthermore, unlike many previously victorious Ontario leaders who had campaigned with vigour, but governed with caution, Mike Harris plunged boldly ahead to implement his tax-cutting, program-slashing, and budget-balancing lean-government policies. The goal was to reduce the role of the state in people’s lives while emphasizing market-based solutions, and the key method chosen was to cut down the size of government (Sears, 2003) while maintaining, or even raising, the quality of service to the public. It was a tall order, bound to raise the hackles of affected interests, and the confrontational style of the PC government produced a deep polarization of views not seen in the province for many decades.

One of the occupational groups most adamantly opposed to the lean-state agenda of the Ontario PCs was the province’s teachers. Unique in North America, Ontario teachers are subdivided into four separate federations: (a) public elementary teachers in the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO); (b) public high school teachers in the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF); (c) teachers employed by publicly funded Catholic school boards in the Ontario English Catholic Teachers

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Federation (OECTA); and (d) francophone teachers in the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO). Together, they cooperate on common causes through the Ontario Teachers Federation (OTF), but the locus of power has always been located in the four individual teacher unions. In 1997, these teacher federations launched an unprecedented 2-week, province-wide walkout. Every publicly funded elementary and secondary school in the province was closed, while teachers publicly protested Bill 160, a proposed law that would terminate the local school boards' right to raise taxes, making them totally dependent on provincial grants for their revenue. Other provisions in the bill legislated controls on class size and preparation time that had previously been left to the local collective bargaining process (Anderson & Jaafar, 2007). Though ultimately the PC government prevailed - the teachers went back to work and Bill 160 became law - the bitter confrontation set the stage for future battles between organized teacher unions and the Harris regime. Interestingly, subsequent polling numbers showed that public opinion began to swing away from the government, as the province-wide strike wore on (Gidney, 1999). One could infer that Ontarians as a whole did not approve of open confrontation, preferring more civil means of settling political differences. Be that as it may, one obvious result of the great school disruption of 1997 was a legacy of deep distrust between organized teachers and the PC government.

### **The Genesis of the Professional Learning Program (PLP)**

The mandatory professional development policy known as the Professional Learning Program, or more colloquially as 'the P-L-P', originated in a preelection promise by Premier Mike Harris in April 1999 to institute a system of periodic teacher exams. In a party manifesto entitled "Blueprint: Mike Harris' Plan to Keep Ontario on the Right Track," the PC party pledged to "create higher education standards by testing our teachers as well as our students." Later in the same document, the party talked of a "Charter of Education Rights and Responsibilities." Here, the promise to periodically test teachers was spelled out with greater clarity:

We have excellent teachers in Ontario but the world is changing rapidly and we've got to make sure all teachers are keeping up. They must have the up-to-date skills, training and knowledge to put our students at the top. It's common sense to make sure that

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our teachers are the best-qualified and skilled professionals, so, working with the College of Teachers, we'll require all Ontario teachers to participate in a testing program to stay up to date. We will require all teachers to take and pass re-certification examinations every three to five years. (Harris, 1999, p. 38)

Clearly, the Harris government was operating within the parameters of the 'public accountability' model of teacher development. While teaching excellence was valued, the fundamental assumption was that teachers, left to their own devices, could not be trusted to direct their own professional development. Thus, the new policy would "require" that teachers periodically pass a recertification test. Harris made the connection crystal clear during the election campaign. "If we are serious about increasing accountability in our education system, then we've got to measure progress," he was quoted as saying. "Just as we already test the progress of our students and our schools, so too should we test our teachers" (Canada News Wire, 1999, p. 2).

During the course of that same campaign speech, Harris pinpointed his party's chosen instrument for turning the teacher-testing promise into a program. "One of our first priorities following the election," he stated, "will be to ask the College of Teachers to prepare a work plan to move ahead with implementation of teacher testing" (Canada News Wire, 1999, p. 1). This was news to the College. Only 3 years old, the fledgling body had been proposed by the preceding NDP government, but was actually created through legislation sponsored by the PCs in 1996. What might have been seen as a gesture in the direction of 'professional autonomy' for teachers turned out to be nothing of the kind. The bureaucratic costs of registration, record-keeping, and the investigation of teacher misconduct, formerly a responsibility of the Ministry of Education, were farmed out to the new Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), to be funded by a mandatory fee imposed on all its members. This was the principle of user pay, part of the Harrisites' lean-government drive. Clearly, the PC government saw the College of Teachers as a body subservient to itself, though that was not OCT's own view. Writing in the next edition of *Professionally Speaking*, its official journal, the College chair, Donna Marie Kennedy, confessed that the Premier's April announcement had come as a complete surprise to her and her colleagues on the College Council. "Neither the College, nor Council, had been consulted on this proposal," she stated. In the same article, the College Chair revealed that OCT

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was “currently consulting with teachers and groups across Ontario on a draft professional learning framework for the teaching profession.” Furthermore, this framework was intended to “provide teachers and the public with a clear understanding of the ongoing professional learning that is expected of teachers” (Kennedy, 1999, p. 6).

The College Chair’s reference to what was “expected” of teachers did not endear OCT to the teacher federations. They had not welcomed the creation of the Ontario College of Teachers, viewing it at best as a ruse to have teachers pay, through fees, for services once provided free by the Ministry of Education and, at worst, as a brazen attempt to push them completely aside. Now, this upstart body was presuming to lecture them about their professional development responsibilities. Nevertheless, the unions welcomed OCT’s candour in disassociating itself from the PCs’ new teacher-testing idea. Predictably, the federation leaders were dead-set against a recertification policy. Marshall Jarvis, OECTA head, likened it to “perpetual probation” (Chamberlain, 1999, April 20, p. 1) and predicted it would dissuade people from becoming teachers. Liz Barkley, president of OTF, termed it “insulting” to assume that “we all need to be recertified” (Chamberlain, p. 1). A nasty fight between the provincial government and organized teachers over the proposed recertification policy was a certainty, with the College of Teachers ranged somewhere between the two combatants.

The Speech from the Throne, which formally opened the new session of the Ontario legislature in the fall of 1999, reiterated the Conservatives’ intention to introduce regular testing of teachers’ knowledge and skills. Still, the election promise existed in words only. Then in November, the new Minister of Education, Janet Ecker, formally requested the “advice of the College on how to implement a program for teacher testing which is cost effective and within the following parameters:

- regular assessment of teachers’ knowledge and skills
  - methodologies which include both written and other assessment techniques
  - a link to re-certification
  - remediation for those who fail assessments
  - de-certification as a consequence if remediation is unsuccessful.
- (Ecker, 2000, April, p. 2)

Earlier, the Conservative government had publicly committed itself to beginning the implementation of this new policy by June 2000, so

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Ecker requested the College provide its advice by December 31, 1999, barely 7 weeks from receipt of the letter. In a move which bought the College some good will with the teachers, the latter declined to meet the Minister's deadline, but did commit to thorough research, widespread consultation, and an expeditious response by April 2000. While the Minister's letter makes clear that she was still thinking of a largely traditional testing format, she had wavered a little in referring to "other" assessment techniques. As for OCT, it tipped its hand in the September 1999 issue of *Professionally Speaking*. "Even a recent study by the leading test provider in the U.S.," it pointed out, "can't provide clear answers about how testing works best, or if it is the best way to improve accountability of the profession" (OCT, 1999, September, p. 19). Having cast doubt on traditional testing, the article went on to suggest an alternative. "Here in Canada," it noted, "Alberta has chosen to follow the required professional learning path to increased accountability, and certified teachers in the province are now required to develop and fulfil an annual plan for their own professional growth" (p. 19). Perhaps the College could turn the teacher-testing issue to advantage by reorienting it to the professional learning initiative it had already launched.

When OCT issued its hurriedly drafted final report on April 13, 2000, among the 15 recommendations was a teacher-testing proposal, but not for experienced teachers. Recommendation 3 stated that new entrants to the profession should be "required to complete successfully a written assessment of knowledge related to Ontario curriculum and education legislation and policy appropriate for beginning teachers" (OCT, 2000, March, p. 123). Here was a test that looked like a test, to satisfy the first part of the Conservatives' election pledge. As for experienced teachers, they would be required under Recommendation 11 to "prepare a professional growth plan which would form a part of the performance appraisal process" (p. 126) already provided for under Regulation 298 of the Education Act. More importantly, under Recommendation 12 all certified Ontario teachers would be required to "maintain a professional portfolio, the components of which would be defined by the College and would highlight ongoing professional learning and achievements in their area of professional responsibility" (p. 126). The contents of this portfolio would have to be reported to the College every 5 years for inclusion on the Certificate of Qualification. The annual professional growth plan, the professional portfolio, and the mandatory 5-year report to the College were

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intended to substitute for the teacher examinations originally called for by Premier Harris on the hustings. Would the PC government accept the new plan as an acceptable form of periodic assessment and teacher recertification?

Ecker's initial response was not promising, calling the College's recommendations only a start toward fulfilling the government's commitment to testing all teachers in the province on a regular basis. Specifically, she admitted disappointment that the Report had been silent on her request for advice on how to test knowledge. "They did not provide that advice," she bluntly said (Rushowy, 2000, p. 1). On May 11, when she formally announced the government's "comprehensive Ontario Teacher Testing Program," she included the College's recommended entry-to-the-profession test for novices, but significantly hardened the component for experienced teachers. This aspect she explained as follows:

Beginning next fall all teachers will have to be re-certified every five years to show they are up-to-date in their knowledge and skills. To be re-certified, teachers will have to successfully complete a number of required courses, including written tests and other assessments. (Ecker, 2000, May, para. 7)

Instead of one big exam, there would be a series of small tests connected to "required courses." Was this professional development? The Minister of Education thought so. "Teacher training and upgrading is not as consistent, effective and vigorous as it needs to be," she explained (para. 2). But, "this teacher testing program responds to the concerns we have been hearing" (para. 19). The symbolism here was important. The Minister underscored two things with her toughened stand on testing: first, that she was in charge, not the College of Teachers, and second, that she and the rest of the cabinet received policy feedback from interested groups and individuals other than the usual elite members of the educational policy community.

The mandatory recertification cycle for experienced teachers was, according to Ecker's May 2000 policy announcement, to begin in the fall of 2001. However, very little was heard of this initiative for several months. The Ministry of Education established a new subdepartment, called the Ontario Teacher Testing Project (OTTP), to administer all facets of the new program. Once the bureaucracy was in place, consultations with faculties of education, school board associations, parent groups and assorted other interested parties

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were held. According to Paul Anthony, Director of Policy and Standards within OTTP, much work was spent creating a series of competency statements loosely based upon, but not equivalent to, the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession issued by the Ontario College of Teachers in 1999. Addressing successive meetings in the spring of 2001 - first a joint meeting of the Ontario Teachers Federation and the Ontario Association of Deans of Education, and then the annual meeting of the Ministry of Education and Ontario Faculties of Education - Anthony explained that the recertification initiative, or certification maintenance, was designed to assure the public that teachers' competence was ongoing, with an updated demonstration every 5 years. He identified five key areas of competence around which the program was being designed: technology, classroom management, communication, leadership, and teaching for all students (author's meeting notes, May 5 and June 4, 2001).

Although the College of Teachers was periodically consulted by Ministry officials at various levels during this hiatus, it was essentially kept out of the loop. Expecting a reasonable phase-in period, OCT did not express concern at the arms-length relationship. In the June 2001 issue of *Professionally Speaking*, College spokesperson, Denys Giguere, described the "teacher recertification" process this way:

Another central plank of the government's teacher testing program, which was not recommended by the College, is the recertification of Ontario classroom teachers every five years. The government has not yet fleshed out the re-certification process, but it appears that it will include a number of components, like professional development activities with tests and other assessments, as well as remediation opportunities. (para. 20)

When, on June 7, the government announced its new policy - which took legislative form in Bill 80, officially known as the Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001 (Government of Ontario, 2001) - the tone was uncompromising. Bill 80 required every certified Ontario teacher to successfully complete a professional learning program of 14 courses every five years, with each course lasting a minimum of 5 hours, including a written assessment. Seven courses had to be in specific core areas: curriculum, student assessment, special education, teaching strategies, classroom management and leadership, use of technology, and communicating with parents and

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students. The other seven could be taken in those or other areas of interest. The program was to be administered by the College of Teachers, which would have to approve courses and course providers, as well as keep official records of each teacher's completed courses. Teachers who failed to complete 14 courses over the five-year cycle would lose their certification to teach in Ontario. The first batch of 40,000 teachers was to be notified that their 5-year cycle would begin in the fall of 2001. Bill 80 was passed into law on June 28, only a few short weeks before it was to begin taking effect (Elliott, 2001, June 29).

Reaction from the teacher federations was swift and negative. Phyllis Benedict, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation, issued a statement in early June, when Bill 80 first appeared, describing the legislation as "one more attack on teachers," and regretting its impact on the province's impending teacher shortage. "Elementary teachers already regularly and voluntarily engage in professional upgrading," she maintained. "Mandatory professional development and teacher testing denies teachers' professionalism, is redundant and insulting" (*Canada News Wire*, 2001, June 7, para. 2). The other two major federations - OECTA and OSSTF - issued similar denunciations. When the bill passed, Benedict vowed that her members would refuse to take the courses. "This is not about avoiding professional development," she insisted. "This is about anger at the government for yet another attack on professionalism" (Elliott, 2001, para. 6). The polarization between the PC government and the teacher federations on the issue was now starkly revealed. One ironic but significant point to note here is that the organized teachers' defiance of the government's imposed policy was rooted in their understanding of professionalism, even though they viewed their own professional College with suspicion.

### **Implementation and Resistance**

The Conservative cabinet's chosen instrument to implement its mandatory recertification policy was, in fact, the quasi-independent Ontario College of Teachers, funded by fees from its membership. Initially, the College offered a spirited opposition to the policy's implementation framework. The College Chair, Larry Capstick, was disturbed by the lack of consultation with the OCT Council, but even more upset by the imposed timelines.

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It is unrealistic to expect that this program that ties teacher licensing to completion of professional development can be successfully launched by September. The government is demanding that in a little over two months, with no clear funding commitments from the Ministry of Education related to implementation or maintenance, the college puts in place a recertification program for 40,000 classroom teachers - one third of teachers in publicly funded schools. (OCT, 2001, June 7, para. 3)

When the Minister, Janet Ecker, had asked for the College's advice on teacher testing in November 1999, OCT leadership had politely but firmly declined to meet her December deadline and, when the College's report came out in April 2000, it had noticeably altered the focus of the government's mandatory testing policy. Ecker and her cabinet colleagues were determined to maintain the upper hand this time.

The new mandatory recertification policy was established, not by issuing a series of administrative regulations from the Ministry of Education, but through legislative amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act. "Council sought legal advice," Capstick stated in July 2001, "and had to accept the fact that the College is a legislated professional body and will have to carry out its new mandate under the Act" (Ontario College of Teachers, 2001, September, para. 5). As a further means of imposing its will, the Conservative government specifically delegated the administrative oversight of the new program, not to the College Council, but to a new entity, the Professional Learning Committee (PLC). This body would be composed of a maximum of 11 members, including 6 to be chosen by Council, broken down as follows - 2 elected Council members, 2 appointed Council members, and 2 members of the College membership at large. In addition, the Minister could appoint up to 5 members to the committee. In the end she appointed 3, but combined with the 2 Cabinet-appointed members from the College Council, they ensured that a majority on the 9-member PLC were not active teachers (Ontario College of Teachers, 2002, March, p. 42). The balance of power on the committee charged with overseeing the new program was thereby shifted in favour of members representing, in theory, the public interest but, in practice, the partisan government that had appointed them.

By August 2001, the College of Teachers decided to knuckle under. It submitted a business plan to the Ministry of Education outlining the projected expense of the new initiative:

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Costs for the program will include, for example, communicating with College members, developing a computer system to keep track of the professional learning of up to 180,000 educators, approving providers and courses across the province and setting up an appeal process for providers as well as courses if they are not approved. The College will also have to implement a new data collection system. (OCT, 2001, September, para. 14)

Unless the government came forward with start-up money, OCT would be faced with imposing a hefty fee increase on its disgruntled membership. At the same time, it was scrambling to pull together a professional learning program with almost no lead time for planning. All that existed to this point was the *Professional Learning Framework* (2000). In this document, the College identified its responsibility for accrediting certain kinds of in-service programs for certified teachers, but noted there also existed a broad range of learning opportunities offered by school boards, faculties of education, the Ministry of Education, teacher federations, and subject associations. While supporting the idea that ongoing learning was “at the heart of teacher professionalism,” the framework document went on to assert that Ontario teachers were already engaged in “a wide variety of professional learning in order to improve their practice and enhance student learning” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2004a, p. 24).

What a difference a year made. Now, the Ontario College of Teachers set out to create a concrete Professional Learning Program (PLP) that would satisfy both a provincial government imbued with the idea of cost-cutting and public accountability on the one hand and, on the other, a membership base of some 180,000 teachers and administrators unaccustomed to the top-down direction of their professional learning. On August 13, 2001, the College issued a general information letter about the Professional Learning Program to all its members, over the joint signature of Capstick and Joe Atkinson, the College Registrar. In it, they reviewed the recent history of the government’s mandatory recertification policy, noting OCT’s role in moderating the original teacher testing idea of 1999. “Bill 80 requires the College to begin to implement the program this September,” they explained, then promised to make the implementation “gradual and incremental” (Capstick & Atkinson, personal communication, August 13, 2001). At the end of their seven-page letter, Capstick and Atkinson stated hopefully that “this

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new professional learning program should not curtail or interfere with individually motivated professional activity” (p. 6).

On October 15, 2001 a second letter was sent to the 40,000 practising teachers who had been randomly selected from the College register, as well as to 6,500 newly licensed teachers. These represented the first cohort to enter the PLP stream. The remaining 70% of the College membership would begin their 5-year cycle in the fall of 2002. Recipients of the letter were reminded that, under the terms of Bill 80, they must complete 14 approved courses by December 31, 2006, and every 5 years thereafter. Capstick and Atkinson were at pains to point out that this new legal requirement would not prove as onerous as they feared. Many in-service courses they were accustomed to taking would qualify for credit in the new program. Approved PLP courses could be as short as 5 hours and many would be available online. Within the 5-year framework, courses could be taken at the individual’s own pace. However, the government’s overall parameter on course selection remained: one-half of the 14 courses must come from the seven areas prescribed in the legislation. Furthermore, all the courses would have to support the College’s Standards of Practice, be organized around outcomes that included “improving student achievement,” and contain a “formal assessment mechanism” (Capstick & Atkinson, personal communication, October 15, 2001). Instead of one big exam, then, the new PLP would fulfill the mandate of the Ministry’s teacher-testing policy by requiring 14 “formal assessment mechanisms” over five years.

By autumn 2001, then, the response of the Ontario College of Teachers to Bill 80 and the government’s mandatory recertification was that they would accept their assigned role as administrators of the Professional Learning Program, thereby hoping to continue the work they had started with their 2000 consultation and report, in channelling the PC government’s teacher-testing policy in the direction of an ongoing teacher development program. In stark contrast, the three major teacher federations’ response was angry and determined resistance by all legal means. By this time they did not expect any quarter in their very public battles with the provincial government, but they did feel a strong sense of betrayal from the College of Teachers. The three federations had all endorsed that part of its 2000 report which recommended scrapping the Harris pledge of periodic retesting of practising teachers, in favour of a combined individual growth plan and professional portfolio (Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, 2001,

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June). Furthermore, their views should have been well known to the College, because the federations' staunch opposition to the top-down teacher-testing initiative was a matter of public record. The following statement from the professional journal of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario was representative of the strong position taken by the province's organized teachers.

The only prescribed professional development for teachers should be that related to the curricula, student assessment and effective pedagogy. It should be provided by school boards within the existing school year calendar, during the instructional day, on a consistent basis and be adequately funded by the provincial government. (Matthews, 2001, p. 9)

The government's mandatory program, as funnelled through the proposed Professional Learning Program of the College of Teachers, was unacceptable to federation leadership. It remained to be seen which elite group would have a firmer hold upon the loyalties of the province's teachers - the union leadership of ETFO, OECTA and OSSTF or the Council and Professional Learning Committee of the College of Teachers.

The federations' immediate response was to state that, though they would continue to offer learning opportunities for their membership, they would not participate under the umbrella of the PLP as course providers. Furthermore, they strongly urged their members to boycott the new program. Typical was this motion, adopted by OECTA's provincial executive: "that members who receive letters from the College of Teachers informing them that they are in the first cohort for re-certification return these letters to the College of Teachers" (OECTA, 2001, October, para. 5). At the end of an article in its own journal, this union's leadership made a direct plea for teacher solidarity. "OECTA is depending on teachers' commitment and cooperation to fight mandatory certification," the article stated. "The system of 'perpetual probation' will collapse if all teachers refuse to comply" (para. 12). By January press reports were indicating the success of the tactic. Thousands of notification letters sent to the first cohort of teachers were returned unopened to the College, along with more thousands of letters of protest from teachers not yet designated for involvement in the program (OECTA, 2002, January; Smyth, 2001). The scope of the teachers' response even prompted one member of the College Council to ask the Minister, Janet Ecker, what the government would do if large

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numbers of teachers refused to comply with the professional learning legislation. Ecker, making her annual address to the College Council, did not directly respond to this query. She did announce that the provincial government would provide an \$8 million grant to the College to cover start-up costs associated with the PLP (OCT, 2002b, March). Published in its own journal, the announcement could hardly avoid seeming like payoff money to OCT for assuming responsibility to ensure a successful launch of the government's divisive professional learning program.

By the time the College of Teachers sent out an official notice to the second, and larger, cohort of its membership, informing them that their Professional Learning Program cycle would start on September 1, 2002 and end on December 31, 2007, the political context had changed. Mike Harris had retired as Premier and Conservative party leader, replaced by a former colleague, Ernie Eves. There was also a new Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer. In spring 2002, she followed the advice of the College, to make the first-ever qualifying test for new teachers a field test in its first year. This seemed to indicate a softer approach than her predecessor, although Witmer was still committed to the overall public-accountability approach to education. Addressing the College Council in December 2002, she professed herself willing to improve the PLP, but "within the legislative framework" established by Bill 80 (Ontario College of Teachers, 2003, March, p. 55). As for the College, now that it was working with a different, more conciliatory Minister, it began to recast the PLP in the mold of its own Professional Learning Framework. In the second-cohort letter of July 4, 2002, Capstick and Atkinson struck a much more positive tone, free of the defensiveness of the previous year. "The Professional Learning Program is not teacher testing," they asserted. "It is a program of ongoing professional learning designed by you, the individual educator, from a list of opportunities that relate to your professional needs" (Capstick & Atkinson, personal communication, July 4, 2002). In a memo of supplementary information accompanying their letter, the College made clear the consequences of noncompliance. If, at the end of the 5-year cycle, and given due notice, any member failed to meet the program requirements, the College's response would be the one set out in legislation. "The College will suspend the member's teaching certificate," the memo stated, "and the member will not be able to hold a teaching position in Ontario's publicly funded schools" (p. 4). Behind the carrot of flexibility lay the stick of decertification.

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The leadership of the teacher federations was not convinced, by either Witmer's softer tone or the College of Teacher's more positive rationale. To them, the Professional Learning Program was an unacceptable government intrusion into a sacrosanct area of teacher autonomy. Throughout 2002 and into 2003 they lobbied against it, strongly urging their members to continue the boycott. For example, ETFO recommended its members should enrol in professional development courses as usual, but avoid any PLP courses approved for recertification. ETFO members were urged to return their copies of *Professionally Speaking* to the College of Teachers and refuse to complete the evaluation component of any PLP programs they were required to attend by their school boards. Further, they were urged to explain ETFO's position to their friends and neighbours, to elected politicians in their area, and to the Minister of Education (ETFO, 2002, Summer). OSSTF's advice to its members was similar: Continue to take courses and participate in board-sponsored PD days, but refuse to complete any assessments for the College's PLP, and do not become a PLP course provider. Its own internal records indicated that 85% of OSSTF members had requested that their Board not forward completion records of PLP-approved courses to the College of Teachers. "Our plan is working," the membership was informed. "Subject associations are not seeking provider status. Working with school boards, OSSTF has ensured that board professional development days are not being used as PLP courses" (Adamson, 2002, para. 4). OECTA went even further, contacting recertification providers identified on the College of Teachers website, advising them of its objection to the recertification program, and requesting their withdrawal, with considerable success (OECTA, 2002, February 27).

Increasingly, the three English-language teacher federations began to look beyond their immediate battle with the College of Teachers, as measured by the PLP boycott, to a more permanent solution. A provincial election was expected in 2003. The first cohort of teachers would not reach the end of their PLP cycle till December 2006. If the Conservative government could be defeated at the polls, and replaced by a government opposed to the Professional Learning Program, then the teacher federations would be vindicated. Much attention was given to lobbying both Opposition parties: the Liberals and the New Democratic Party (NDP). Opinion polls seemed to indicate a real possibility that the PC government could be defeated. Kathy McVean, President of OECTA, shared the

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Federation's rationale and election tactics with her membership in a special issue of the federation newsletter, *Agenda*.

Unless we defeat the Harris/Eves government . . . we will not end re-certification. But we may not be wise to make re-certification an election issue for the broader public when that time comes. We must instead focus our energy on their defeat on any issue that will work. (OECTA, 2002, November, p. 2)

Interfederation differences were to be put aside, in order to make common cause with the other two English-language teacher unions, ETFO and OSSTF. Above all, the confrontation called for union solidarity in the face of intimidation. "If 35,000 OECTA members stand together," declared McVean, "we will be able to end re-certification and regain our professional autonomy" (p. 2). Battle lines were now drawn, with the organized teachers committed to a boycott of the PLP program administered by the College of Teachers, with full mobilization of members to help defeat the Conservative government at the next election.

### **Repudiation and Termination**

"The PLP is fully functional, growing and gathering momentum," wrote Lois Browne in an article entitled "Gathering Momentum - an evolving PLP" that appeared in the September 2003 issue of *Professionally Speaking*, the official journal of the College of Teachers. After reviewing the history of the government initiative, and noting that "in its original design, the program was not what the College had suggested," Browne asserted that it was now "running at full throttle" (Browne, 2003, September, p. 28). The Professional Learning Committee, originally the means by which the College's opposition to the program was overcome, had now apparently morphed into a major contributor to its success. "The commitment of individual committee members has been key in keeping the PLP growing and on track" (p. 28), Browne maintained. As evidence of how the College had tamed the mandatory professional development beast, Browne cited several factors. It had expanded the meaning of a PLP course to include "a variety of learning opportunities" (p. 29). For the 11,000 francophone College members, "a significant proportion of French-language professional learning opportunities" were available (p. 29). For those on tight schedules or in remote areas, "nearly a third of approved PLP

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courses are now offered online or through other forms of distance education” (p. 29). For anyone concerned about cost, “more than half of approved PLP courses are offered by school boards . . . free of charge or for a nominal fee” (p. 29). An independent learning option had been created, thus providing members with “significant autonomy in the development of programs that respond to their individual needs” (p. 29). Clearly, in OCT’s view, this was a success story. “Two years after the Professional Learning Program was announced,” Browne concluded, “it looks very different” (p. 30). With 450 approved providers, nearly 4,200 approved courses, and more than 64,000 earned credits, it did seem promising, till one realized there were more than 180,000 members of the College. After 24 months of operation, they had earned about 1/3 of one credit each, on average, not much when the overall requirement was 14 credits over 5 years. It had been a hectic 2 years for the College, to be sure, but so far there was little progress to report among its own membership, Ontario’s certified teachers.

Clearly, the Federations’ PLP boycott was working but, if the law remained in place, the lives of Ontario teachers would become very complicated in 3 years when the College began suspending their teaching certificates. It was now time to expand the political action to the electoral front. Premier Eves called the provincial election for October 2, 2003. Although his Conservative party trailed the Liberals in the opinion polls, this did not guarantee a PC defeat. In 1999, the Harrisites had come from second place in the preelection polls to snatch victory at the ballot box, much to the chagrin of the teacher organizations. With the antigovernment vote split between two Opposition parties, it was entirely possible that a mere 40% level of support in the popular vote could translate into a majority of seats, because of three-way battles in many ridings. Bob Rae’s NDP had even won a majority of seats in 1990 with less than two-fifths of the total vote. At the highest levels, the teacher unions made two vital decisions. One was to advocate strategic voting for their members. Because the overriding goal was to defeat the Conservatives, creators of the PLP, then the best way to assure success was to plump for that candidate - Liberal or NDP, since both parties opposed the PLP - with the best chance of winning the riding. The second decision was to ensure total mobilization of the membership. It was not enough to vote strategically on October 2. Far more important would be the widespread involvement of teachers in working for winnable candidates opposed to the PC government, throughout the campaign (OSSTF - ETFO, 2003,

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September). This activist participation would encompass several facets of the Ontario political system, particularly public opinion, the news media, and political parties.

Facing a very media-savvy adversary in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, the teacher federations, in the Spring of 2002, had begun to prepare for a decisive battle on the hustings. According to Vivian McCaffrey, ETFO's chief lobbyist, the Elementary Teachers Federation "organized a series of regional pre-election training workshops in April and May 2002 to assist locals with the planning process" (McCaffrey, 2003, Fall, p. 10). The district and branch executives then initiated a series of activities such as

Getting members involved in Liberal and NDP riding associations, attending nomination meetings, making donations to the parties, surveying members to identify people willing to work for specific candidates, and sponsoring various kinds of advertising to remind the public about government cuts. (McCaffrey, p. 10)

Dubbing it the "Fair Funding Campaign," ETFO and its locals paid for a newspaper insert in targeted daily newspapers, magazine advertisements, a radio ad, billboards, and transit advertisements. During the actual election campaign, the Federation kept a low profile while working feverishly behind the scenes.

ETFO's approach to the election was not to set teachers up as a whipping boy for the Tories . . . but to concentrate on informing members about the issues, encouraging them to get involved in their local campaigns, and reminding them to vote. (McCaffrey, 2003, p. 11)

Union funds were used to release teachers to work in specific campaigns. Out of 103 ridings, ETFO supported 76 candidates. "Forty-six of these were successful," according to McCaffrey, "including 23 who unseated a Tory incumbent" (p. 11). The combination of teacher voting, campaigning and advertising had an impact. "Without the work of teachers, education workers, and their local and provincial organizations," McCaffrey concluded, "a change of government was not a foregone conclusion" (p. 10).

The Ontario election campaign of 2003 was not fought directly on the PLP issue. Several other aspects of the PC education platform became controversial, such as their pledge to ban teacher strikes

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and lockouts and to subsidize tuition costs for students enrolled in private schools. Other issues of note were health care, the electric power supply, tax cuts and the budgetary deficit. Leadership factors played a role, too, with no one party leader dominating the stage as Harris had in 1999. When the votes were counted, though, the Conservatives were decisively defeated, replaced by a Liberal majority of MPPs led by Dalton McGuinty. Most teachers rejoiced, but they did not relax their vigilance, yet. The Professional Learning Program was entrenched in legislation and could not be eliminated by the stroke of a Minister's pen. The teacher unions instructed their members to keep the pressure on the new government and continue the PLP boycott. Even after the November 20 Throne Speech had promised to replace the "expensive and unproductive 'teacher testing' program" and to "treat educators with respect," (Government of Ontario, 2003, November 20, para. 12 & 14) they were wary. "During a meeting with the Minister yesterday, December 18," the Catholic teacher union informed its members, "OECTA president Donna Marie Kennedy urged him to clarify statements made in the throne speech" (OECTA, 2003, December 19, para. 3). Finally, they were satisfied when the new Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, sent an open letter dated December 19, 2003, to Marilyn Laframboise, Council Chair of the Ontario College of Teachers, with the following key sentence: "The government has listened to teachers' concerns about the Professional Learning Program and plans to introduce legislation in the Spring to repeal the Program" (Kennedy, G., 2003, December 19, p. 1). At last, the PLP was dead. Summing up the position of Ontario's organized teachers, the OSSTF newsletter stated, "The new government heard your concerns and we await the legislation that will put an end to this expensive, wasteful program" (OSSTF, 2004, January 13, p. 1). All of the organized teachers' efforts - the PLP boycott, the private lobbying, the public advertising, and the election activism - had succeeded in terminating the program. But, would it prove to be a pyrrhic victory?

### **Replacing the PLP**

What would replace the Professional Learning Program? As early as January 2003, representatives of the four teacher federations had been meeting with members of the Ontario Association of Deans of Education to develop an alternative model.

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By November, there was sufficient consensus to send the plan on to the new Liberal government. In essence, it would repeal everything connected to the PLP.

A 5-year teacher performance appraisal cycle would replace mandatory courses, approved providers and ties to recertification. Teachers would assess their individual learning needs and complete annual learning plans using the professional learning framework as a guide. Employers, on the other hand, would conduct the performance appraisal process....They would be required to provide a range of professional development experiences and in-service programming during the school day, keep records of teachers' Annual Learning Plans and share records with the Ontario College of Teachers upon request should a complaint be lodged. In a scaled down role for the Ontario College of Teachers, it would continue to investigate complaints against members and publicize opportunities for ongoing learning. (OSSTF, 2003, December 9, p. 1)

In essence, the College of Teachers would return to its more modest pre-PLP role.

Upon receipt of Gerard Kennedy's letter of December 19, serving notice that the Professional Learning Program would be cancelled, Marilyn Laframboise, OCT's Chair of Council, made two key points in her return letter. On the practical side, she stated that the College had introduced an external hiring freeze and provided notice to temporary staff. Secondly, she stressed the College's fundamental role in the professional development of Ontario teachers.

The initial and ongoing professional education of our members is a central part of the College's original mandate . . . flowing from the Royal Commission report *For the Love of Learning*. That is why the College Council endorsed a professional learning framework in October 2000. (Laframboise, 2003, Dec. 19, p. 1)

Shortly thereafter the College acknowledged, in its website newsletter, that there had been problems with the PLP. "The Professional Learning Program has been a source of concern for our members," said Doug Wilson, the College Registrar (OCT, 2003, December, para. 4). The website statement also stressed that, in its April 2000 report, OCT had "clearly advised against linking any program of professional learning to teacher certification" (para. 7).

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On February 20, 2004, the College presented new advice to the Minister of Education concerning professional development. Summing it up, the College Chair, Marilyn Laframboise, stated, "We want to do our part to ensure that PD is teacher driven and supports school improvement and student achievement" (OCT, 2004, February, para. 3). Common sense comments, but how the mighty had fallen. Nonetheless, out of the wreckage of the ill-fated, top-down PLP, the college was signalling both its willingness to cooperate with other interested stakeholders in any new professional learning initiative, and its acceptance of the message sent by its own members through the boycott, that Ontario teachers must consent to any replacement program if it were to have a decent chance for success.

In his speech to the Ontario legislature on May 13, 2004, in support of the bill to terminate the Professional Learning Program, Gerard Kennedy was much clearer on what he was against than what he was for.

Since it was imposed in 2001, the PLP program has been an enormous failure in practise. By September 2003, less than one in five teachers had registered for even one course of the official program, let alone the 5 or 6 they should have by then to reach the compulsory number. The PLP program has cost the Ontario College of Teachers approximately \$10 million, paid for by additional annual fees levied on individual teachers. While dollar cost is just one measure, Mr. Speaker, the amount of discouragement that the PLP policy has generated among Ontario teachers is much greater....According to the College of Teachers, we have been losing one in three new teachers within the first five years of practise....Mr. Speaker, we're going to fix that. We are taking a new, respectful approach to teachers' professional development. (Kennedy, 2004, May 13, para. 14-22)

Kennedy promised a discussion paper would be released shortly, invited input from the various stakeholders, and promised a new spirit of collaboration on the issue with teachers, principals, school boards, and faculties of education. He listed five ideas in particular that were being considered: a mentoring program for new teachers, increased professional development days, enhanced summer programs, a new look at the connection between performance appraisal and teacher development, and more funds for professional development. While an interesting clutch of ideas, they lacked

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coherence or any underlying principle. The Minister's commitment to a respectful dialogue seemed to hint at acceptance of the professional autonomy approach, but still he held back from an unconditional endorsement of it. Nonetheless, when the bill to repeal the Professional Learning Program finally received royal assent in December 2004, Kennedy sent out another open letter to Ontario's teachers, signifying that the book was now closed on mandatory professional development. "There is no 'replacement' for PLP," he stated, "because we see it as a flawed foundation from which to build" (Kennedy, 2004, December 16, p. 1). Instead of requiring a set number of PD courses, and then making teachers bear the cost, the Liberal government announced a new program of direct funding for teacher development at the board and school level. The carrot had replaced the stick, at least for a time.

### **Conclusion**

One of the factors that makes the Ontario experiment with mandatory recertification, based upon an imposed regimen of professional development courses, so ideal as a case study, is that it has recognizable beginning and termination points. Initially packaged as an ongoing program of teacher testing, it was announced with much fanfare as part of the ruling PC party's reelection platform midway through 1999. Less than 5 years later, the Professional Learning Program was formally terminated in a public exchange of letters between the newly elected Liberal Minister of Education and the chairperson of the College of Teachers governing council. At the time of its initial announcement, the Harris government believed that the periodic retraining and evaluation of veteran teachers would prove popular with the voters, as apparently it did. Once safely reelected, however, it became clear that the PC leadership had little idea of how to implement such a policy. Janet Ecker, the novice Minister of Education, finally sought advice on the matter from the 3-year-old Ontario College of Teachers. To her surprise, OCT launched a major public consultation and, in its subsequent report, sought to dissuade the provincial government from formally testing experienced teachers. In its place, the College recommended a combination of annual learning plans and ongoing professional portfolios. This was not stern enough for the Minister, who subsequently announced a policy that consisted of fourteen mandatory professional learning courses over a 5-year cycle. Those individuals who failed to

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complete the program successfully would lose their right to teach in Ontario.

This plan, dubbed the PLP, provoked angry and visceral opposition from the teacher federations, that denounced it publicly as yet another plot by the PC government to undermine the province's teachers. They were even more infuriated when the Ontario College of Teachers accepted the government's instructions to take the lead in administering the program. For its part, OCT evolved from active opposition to the way PLP was dropped into its lap, to grudging obedience to the provincial government's dictates, to growing enthusiasm for the program once Premier Harris and Education Minister Ecker were replaced by somewhat kinder and gentler leaders: Ernie Eves and Elizabeth Witmer, respectively. There was no such mellowing of views within the teacher federations, however. The polarization between organized teachers and the neoconservative PC government came to a head in the general election of 2003, when the teacher federations mobilized all their resources to help ensure the defeat of their erstwhile nemesis. It took a year for the legislative repeal to be passed, but for all intents and purposes, Ontario's Professional Learning Program died on election night in 2003.

What can be learned from Ontario's experience with mandatory professional development? First, the idea of ensuring that classroom teachers will stay current in their grasp of course content and teaching skills has what Miles and Lee (2002) have termed *political validity*. Opinion polls in 1999 showed broad public support for the idea and, as part of the Harris Conservatives' campaign platform, it proved saleable in the political market-place. Having said that, when it became clear that the Conservative government's specific instrument of implementation, the Professional Learning Program, was unacceptable to the vast majority of the province's teachers, as evidenced by their widespread boycott, then it became an electoral liability, playing a part in the unseating of the Eves government in 2003. Ontario's political culture is one that values consensus and civility, one that really is a creative blend of the progressive with the conservative. The highly contentious PLP failed the test of consensus and civility. Secondly, we could certainly conclude that the leadership of the teacher unions had a closer hold on their members' loyalties than did the Ontario College of Teachers. This was made crystal clear when the rank-and-file membership heeded the instructions of their federations to boycott the Professional Learning Program despite the potential risk to their own careers.

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What credibility OCT had gained with its independent stance at the time of the 2000 report on teacher testing was quickly lost when it consented to administer the government's thinly disguised teacher testing substitute, the PLP.

On a more universal level, it may well be misguided to polarize the competing models of teacher development, as if professional autonomy and public accountability were mutually incompatible. A judicious blend of the two approaches might reassure the tax-paying public, while motivating the professional teachers. If so, the quality of classroom teaching and learning would be augmented, to the ultimate benefit of the students. This seems to be in line with other research findings. Fifteen years ago, Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) noted the vital necessity of linking teacher development to each practicing teacher's sense of uniqueness and moral purpose, while simultaneously fostering collaborative work cultures and interdependent collegiality. In a recent study of school reform in San Diego, a research team headed by Linda Darling-Hammond suggested the need for "a redefinition of professionalism from the notion of individual autonomy, even in the absence of professional knowledge or standards of practice, to a notion of collective responsibility for knowledge-based practice" (Darling-Hammond, Hightower, Husbands, Lafors, Young, & Christopher, 2005, p. 187). In other words, rather than choosing professional autonomy **or** public accountability, perhaps the ultimate solution has been staring us in the face all along. The new challenge must be to learn how to accommodate professional autonomy **and** public accountability.

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## School Councils: A Passing Fad or a Solid Future?

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Internationally, during the last 20 years, a mass of time and effort has been directed at establishing and developing effective school councils. In the 1990s throughout Britain, Australia, and the United States, successive governments introduced numerous policies and programs advocating parent and community involvement within mainstream education. Across Asia in the mid 1990s, wide-scale school reform promoted parent involvement. The Ministry of Education in Korea ordered all primary and secondary schools to pilot the establishment of school councils to promote school autonomy (Ho, 2006), and education authorities in Hong Kong devolved decisions making practices to involve parent and community representatives (Education Department, 2000). Since 1995, Canada's 10 provincial and three territorial governments have reinvigorated efforts to engage citizens in the education of its youth by legislating and promoting school councils as an important component of school governance. The most recently legislated act, passed in Saskatchewan in 2006, likewise enshrined School Community Councils as a fundamental component within the province's public education system (Saskatchewan Executive Council, 2006). Chronologically, Table 1 highlights when each province/territory within Canada renewed its school council focus through legislative action. Thus, not only have school councils become irrefutably popular, internationally, but also within Canada the current attention that provincial/territorial governments have devoted to school councils exemplifies the faddish nature of these predominantly parent-governing bodies.

What is the impetus behind the hype and prioritization currently given to parent involvement and school councils? What does the research say about the influence and effectiveness of school councils? The guiding principles behind parent involvement in school councils are laudable but, in reality, can school councils be an authentic constituent of school governance and, if so, how? In this

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article, I endeavor to answer these questions. Namely, the fundamental reasons for the existence of school councils are described, what the research reveals about the effectiveness of schools councils is reviewed, and suggestions are presented on how to support the efficacy of school councils.

Table 1

*School Councils Across Canada, 1995-2006*


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<b>Province/Territory</b>	<b>Legislated</b>	<b>Local Title Given to School Council</b>
Alberta	1995	School Council
Manitoba	1995	Advisory Council
Nova Scotia	1995	School Advisory Council
Ontario	1995	School Council
Prince Edward Island	1995	School Council
Northwest Territories	1996	District Education Authority
Newfoundland & Labrador	1997	School Council
Quebec	1998	Governing Board
Nunavut	1999	District Education Authority
Yukon	1999	School Council
New Brunswick	2001	Parent School Support Committee
British Columbia	2002	School Planning Council
Saskatchewan	2006	School Community Council

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**The Push for Parent Involvement: Origins of School Councils**

The information discussed in the following sections attempts to explain why government leaders, researchers, and educational authorities are placing more emphasis on enticing parents to be part of the school governance landscape. Specifically, advantages of parent involvement are discussed and political explanations are presented as to why close school-community relationships are vital components within the public education system.

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### **Advantages of Parent Involvement**

The many advantages of strong connections between schools and communities are described by well-known writers such as Dewey (1899) and Vygotsky (1934/1962). These scholars advocate that parent and community involvement within schools provides a richer, more relevant curriculum and higher student success rates because of the extra support and attention. Fullan and Quinn (1996) so appropriately stated, "Nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and families/community working in partnership" (p. 3). If parents, extended family members, community members, teachers, and administrators mutually endorse and promote the educational journey of a child, invariably the child becomes more successful in whatever he or she attempts.

Research has confirmed the notion that parent and community involvement within schools has positive effects on students and their school experience. Specific student advantages include increased academic achievement, better attendance, improved behavior, and a stronger motivation to succeed (Darch, Miao, & Shippen, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hiatt-Michael, 2001). As well, strong parent-school relationships have been linked to teacher efficacy (Wyman, 2001). In general, productive parent involvement in schools is characteristic of effective, high-achieving schools (Levine & Lezotte, 1995; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1997).

Moreover, the ramifications of parent involvement are multidimensional. That is, advantages of parent involvement are not limited to effects seen only within the students themselves. For example, by being more involved with parents, teachers may have a renewed approach to homework and experience more productive relationships with the community (Epstein, 1995; 2001). As well, parental involvement has the potential to improve home literacy, especially if the school's computers, Internet, and newspapers consequentially become available to parents (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005). Parents may hone decision-making skills and productively interact with other parents when they are personally involved with educational issues (Epstein, 1995). More effective parenting techniques may be the result of parental workshops sponsored within schools (Corter & Pelletier, 2004; Epstein, 1995; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2001). Better parenting skills equate to healthier children which, in turn, affect the welfare of a community. The divergent potential of parent involvement

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influences students, parents, educators, and the community in a multitude of ways.

### **Locally Accountable Governance**

Literature regarding school governance restructuring is impregnated with terminology such as *accountability*, *site-based management*, *school-based planning*, *local voice*, and *decentralization*. Users of such language believe that to ensure improvement in schools, the parents, who are naturally closest to the students, must be given influence and authority in schools. As Leithwood (2004) suggested, "Schools, families, and communities 'co-produce' student learning" (p. 1). The local voice of the community plays a vital role in the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development of youth (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1997; Tymchak, 2001). Thus, as indicated in the introduction, new legal status has been given to a variety of parent advisory committees, school councils, and parent governing boards within Canadian schools (Young & Levin, 2002) and around the world. Such a decentralized aspect of school governance endows the school community with more responsibility for the type and quality of education it delivers to its youth. In addition, as student populations decrease specifically within rural areas (George, 2004; Tremblay, 2001), the geographic areas of Canadian school divisions are growing (Young & Levin). To prevent large bureaucratic organizations from predominantly leading homogeneous agendas, autonomous local groups need to have the freedom to address local needs (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). Parent involvement within schools cannot be labeled as a straight-forward, technical process; rather, school initiatives involving parents must be approached, organized, and addressed with reference to a community's social and contextual needs.

Closely aligned with local responsibility and voice is the issue of accountability. Behn (2004) stated, "Everyone wants accountability in education" (p. 19). During the 1980s and 1990s, pursuance of school governance accountability was exemplified throughout many international settings. For example, within England and Wales, Governing Bodies were required to prepare a management plan reflecting how they intended to meet national curriculum requirements (Thomas, 1993). In New Zealand, increasing the power bestowed upon a Board of Trustees was also an opportunity to relocate accountability from bureaucracy to local communities

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(Phillips, Raham, & Renihan, 2003). The idea of accountability became even more popular at the turn of the century, when President George W. Bush endorsed the *No Child Left Behind Act*, which held all federally funded schools accountable for raising student achievement scores (Hursh, 2004; Wood, 2004). When signing this piece of legislation, Bush confidently stated, "Accountability is the cornerstone of reform" (Rudalevige, 2003, p. 24).

Having parents become an active component of the school's governance system is a means of making schools more accountable to the society which funds them (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1997). In some places in the United States, the idea of parent accountability has been stretched to such an extent that parent report cards are tabloid topics, and in England parents have been jailed for their child's truancy (Corter & Pelletier, 2005). Corter and Pelletier (2004) also presented another consideration when addressing the topic of accountability: "Cutbacks in government expenditures and services through the '90s fuelled ideas of using parental, community, and business resources to take up the slack" (p. 8). In 1994, Alberta's government cut educational funding by 12.5% (Clamp, 1997); in 1995, school councils were implemented in Alberta (Alberta Government, 1998). With governments limiting or decreasing public education budgets, increasing the role of parents within education can be seen as an attempt to maintain and/or improve the quality and efficiency of schools.

Similar to the many forms of school councils within Canada, Saskatchewan's School Community Councils typify an attempt to increase accountability within schools. For example, the School Community Council, in cooperation with the principal and school staff, is required to develop a Learning Improvement Plan (Endsin & Melvin, n.d.). The Learning Improvement Plan incorporates the following actions: (a) the creation of a School-Community Profile and vision, (b) the development of objectives to increase student learning and well being, (c) the creation of an action plan to achieve objectives, (d) the identification of program supports, and (e) the submission of this information (a to d) to the Board of Education for approval (p. 22). In addition, the School Community Council must annually report details of the Council's plans, initiatives, and expenditures to parents and community members (Saskatchewan Learning, 2005). These responsibilities are traceable, strategic

actions intended to rationalize and account for student achievement and increased community involvement.

### **Democratic and Societal Issues**

Dewey (1916) believed that within a democratic society public education should provide opportunities for students to socially interact and directly participate in local decision-making processes. In most Western countries, similar democratic ideologies have been extended to the governing roles that local parents and community members uphold within schools (Beane & Apple, 1995). Corter and Pelletier (2005) claimed, "Parent involvement in governance...may be seen as inherent rights of individuals that do not need to be justified by increases in student achievement" (p. 301). Brown (1990) went so far as to introduce the label *parentocracy* (p. 65) to refer to educational policy that addresses the needs and wishes of the parents in schools. One of the central purposes of most school councils is to share the responsibility of students' learning and well being with parents and community members and, in this age of democratization, sharing means giving everyone (e.g., educators, parents, students, and community members) a voice in the education process.

Abraham Lincoln's words have often been used in depicting democracy as a process *of* the people, *by* the people, and *for* the people. Juxtaposed with Lincoln's description of democracy, school councils are elected representatives *of* the school community, elected *by* the school community, and elected *for* the school community. Within each Canadian province/territory, democratic ideas are embodied in the formal election process used to secure school council membership. For example, upon a Saskatchewan backdrop, five to nine parent and community members, a First Nations representative (as applicable), and one or two high school students (as applicable) form the elected body of the School Community Council (Melvin, 2006).

In addition to democratic issues, additional motivation undergirds the existence of school councils. Tymchak (2001) addressed some of the societal pressures apparent within Saskatchewan education. These issues, which span the educational landscapes across Canada, include (a) the growth in the number of school-aged Aboriginal peoples, (b) the globalization- and information-explosion era, (c) the continual needs of child poverty and student violence, (d) the increased frequency of pupil mobility, (e) the challenges faced due to increasing numbers of single-parent

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families, (f) the increase in immigrant populations, and (g) rural depopulation (pp. 8-16). To effectively deal with these real and pertinent changes, meaningful partnerships must coexist between schools, families, and the surrounding community.

Statistics indicate the Canadian landscape is undergoing population changes. Canada's current fertility rate is at an all-time low of 1.5 children per woman (Statistics Canada, 2006), and similar low birth-rate patterns are globally endemic within developed countries (George, 2007). Smaller family sizes, coupled with postponed parenthood, provide opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's education. Another societal observation deals with the recent increase of Canada's immigrant population. Specifically, within the last few years, Canada has accepted over 200,000 immigrants per year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005). This increase of an ethnically diverse populace affects the focus of education within schools as, for example, English as a Second Language (ESL) has become more of an issue (Duffy, 2005). As applied to school councils, Melvin (2006) believed that school councils need to represent the minority voices and cultures that are becoming more prominent across Canada.

### **Research Pertaining to the Effectiveness of School Councils**

The political promotion of school councils is supported by research, which cites advantages of parental involvement. Parental involvement in this sense includes homework monitoring and assistance, reading with children, tutoring children using school materials and instructions, attending parent-teacher interviews, volunteering at school, and attending school-sponsored functions. When research refers to parent involvement under such an umbrella term, the findings overwhelmingly demonstrate that parent involvement is positively linked to student well being and academic achievement. However, the following indicate that research that supports positive outcomes related to parent involvement, specifically in the form of school councils, is variegated.

### **Positive Outcomes of School Councils**

Epstein (1995) expounded that the first step to promote parent and community involvement within schools is the establishment of an *action team*. Action team members consist of teachers, parents, the administrator, and may include members from the community

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and middle school/high school. Action team membership may also include anyone central to the school's mandate. Directed by Epstein's guidelines, an organization called the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) instructs action teams how to attract community partnership programs. The NNPS and action teams mutually (a) write annual plans intended to connect community with school improvement goals, (b) assess the quality and progress of their intended programs, and (c) review and improve plans and activities on an annual basis. Studies indicate that when schools implemented this process, the quality and quantity of their family and community connections with the school greatly improved (Epstein, 2005, Sanders & Lewis, 2005; Sheldon & Van Voorhis, 2004). In turn, action teams increased community involvement within the school and improved student achievement, attendance, attitude, and behavior (Catsambis, 2002; Epstein, 1995, 2001; Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999; Sheldon, 2003). Longitudinal results of Epstein's research indicate that a minimum of 3 years is needed for an action team to become established and produce constructive results for the school (Epstein, 2005; Sheldon). A noticeable prerequisite of these successful school councils was consistent training.

There are additional benefits attached to school councils. For example, research highlights that school councils can improve relationships between educators and parents, increase the number of parent advocates for the school, and increase parenting skills and parental confidence (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). Hrycauk (1997) claimed that members of school councils are ambassadors for the school and contribute public support to local schools. Members of a school council are often fundamental in the acquisition of community resources and local information relating to curriculum topics (Dukacz & McCarthy, 1995). Pelletier (2002) believed an active school council is supportive for teachers, and Wyman (2001) stated that school councils improve the working conditions of educators. In addition, minor financial benefits may be the result of low-cost parent labor and/or parent volunteerism associated with school councils.

### **Questionable Aspects of School Councils**

To rebut the above information, research also concludes that parent involvement in school governance has little to no impact on student learning and achievement. For example, Davies (1977), in a report regarding the status of school councils in the 1970s, revealed

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that most school councils have little responsibility or power to affect educational decision making and rarely use the power if they have it. David's (1994) research involving 13 schools in nine American school districts indicated that most of the decisions made within school councils were nonacademic issues, and the numbers of parents running for council positions, voting in elections, and sitting on subcommittees were limited in size and voice. In Chicago, 14 elementary school councils were part of an in-depth study to determine whether school reform efforts actually made a difference for students (Wenzel et al., 2001). The findings indicated that school councils were marginally involved in improving academic and social successes within the school.

In an Ontario study, teachers, school council representatives, and parents were surveyed across several school boards (Corter, Harris, & Pelletier, 1998). The survey focused on how community members viewed the importance, effectiveness, and viability of school councils. The results of the study indicated that most community members did not know the names of their school council representatives, and nonschool council members were not interested in serving on the school council in the future. Nakagawa (2000) believed that although parent involvement through school governance is often recognized by community members as superior to other types of parent involvement, parent participation via school governance is not necessarily the best way to support the academic success of students. Parker and Leithwood (2000) suggested school councils, at best, marginally influence school-improvement contributions.

A study done by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1997) revealed that parent involvement via school councils is not necessarily linked with increased student success. For example, in France, Spain, and Germany, representative parents sit on a variety of policy-making boards, ranging from state to local levels. Conversely, Japanese parents have no voice on any policy-making boards, but academically Japan emerges as one of the highest performing countries in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001).

The less-than-positive research associated with school council effectiveness may be due to the multitude of challenges faced by these associations. School councils may confront power struggles and political conflict (Flinspach & Ryan, 1994). Members may express a lack of interest in educational issues beyond the needs of

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their own child (David, 1994), and membership may place excessive demands on parents' time (Hallinger, Murphy, & Hausman, 1992; Hrycauk, 1997). Also, there may be a lack of understanding pertaining to roles and responsibilities of school councils (Parker & Leithwood, 2000). As well, representation of culture and ethnic diversity is often inadequate or absent within school councils (Corter & Pelletier, 2005; National PTA, 2000). A further challenge facing school councils, especially in Canada, deals with lack of power. Most school councils in Canada are specifically advisory in nature (Young & Levin, 2002). For school council members to feel they are making a marked difference within schools, they need to expand their authority into additional domains (Rideout, 1995). Based on context, this expansion of responsibility may include increased decision-making powers regarding such things as school budgets, the hiring/releasing of staff, and the approval of programs and curricula. To add concern to these queries surrounding school councils efficacy, critics address the financial cost of implementing school councils when, at best, school councils appear to marginally improve student learning. As quoted by Corter and Pelletier (2005), "An Ontario provincial ministry official suggested that the \$25 million invested in establishing these councils may have not been worth it" (p. 311). School council expenditures may include the time and money spent by senior administration and educators in instituting school council programs, the increased workload of principals, and the training provided for school council members.

With the emergence of such unfavorable data regarding the relevance of school councils, why support school councils in the first place? In light of this question, educational stakeholders must recognize that associating school councils with quantifiable evidence regarding such things as increased student/school achievement may be presumptuous. Factors that directly or indirectly affect student/school achievement may be anything, for example, from the implementation of new curricula and teaching pedagogy to an inflated school budget. Attempting to prove school councils, in and of themselves, increase student wellbeing and learning is problematic.

### **Toward School Council Efficacy**

For a school council to maximize its potential, there needs to be an evolution from top-down educational policy to using policy as a catalyst for school-improvement initiatives. One way to begin to

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take advantage of the potential of school councils is through a process of reflection. A central obstacle to school council productiveness deals with *schoolcentric* (Lawson, 2003, p. 80) assumptions regarding parent involvement. The term *schoolcentric* infers that parents are to act in ways validated by the school system, otherwise their participation is marginally recognized, if at all. As mentioned previously, the involved parent is traditionally perceived as the one who attends parent-teacher interviews, supports school-sponsored events, and monitors the completion of homework and assignments. Parent involvement, in this sense, is defined by school personnel and is acknowledged when its effects are recognized within school domains. In addition to defining parent involvement within specific boundaries, the dimensions of parental involvement are often measured (Nakagawa, 2000). In this sense, a principal can quantify parent involvement by counting how many parents attended the last school meeting, calculating if attendance goals were met at the spring music festival, and answering whether the coffee-and-muffin incentive increased the number of parents attending the last parent workshop. Although the previous examples are aspects of parent involvement, educators and school councils need to diversify the accepted meaning of parent involvement.

In line with the above point, a truer form of parental involvement is initiated by personal introspection. Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) described how, by releasing assumptions, an inner-city school began their staff's parent engagement quest:

It involved a process of holding everything they [the staff] do up to scrutiny and of asking themselves why they do it; of affirming practices which reflect their beliefs and which reflect positive assumptions about parents; of discarding practices which, when examined, are found to be in contradiction to their beliefs or negative assumptions about parents; of being open to new possibilities; and of being cognizant that because times, people, and context change, this process of challenge and affirmation will be a continuous one. (p. 28)

In essence, the staff focused on identifying personal assumptions and beliefs about parents and questioned why parents may or may not want to become more involved with the school. Parker and Leithwood (2000) believed a staff that prioritized reflection and professional development regarding parent involvement is the type

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of school environment conducive to the success of school councils. After educators and school council members assess both personal and collective assumptions regarding parent involvement, a new concept of parent involvement can originate, one that does not marginalize the multitude of ways that parents are involved with their child's education. Therefore, an involved parent may, indeed, be an *invisible* parent who spends quality time with his/her child, talks with his/her child, provides nutritional meals, as well as moral support for his/her child.

The introspective act of challenging attitudes and assumptions about parent involvement is the start to improving the efficacy of school councils. A further component involving the effectiveness of school councils is less philosophical in nature and deals with principals. Within all school councils within Canada, the principal is an appointed member of the association. Research suggests principals have an especially crucial role to play in determining the effect that school councils will have within a school. (Benson, 1999; Dukacz & McCarthy, 1995; Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; McClure & DePiano, 1983; Parker & Leithwood, 2000). Principals can view school councils as an asset or liability and, depending on which outlook she/he holds, council members will either feel they are worthy members of the school's governance or insignificant bodies robotically attending monthly meetings. Benson's research revealed that school council members often felt ambushed by school administration. Ironically, at their meetings school council members were reluctant to discuss issues they believed were important and felt powerless to establish the agenda. For school councils to be effective, principals need to welcome school council members, value the vast amount of knowledge that members hold, promote their confidence, and collaboratively work with them.

In addition to principals, some teachers may feel intimidated by school councils. This anxiety could be because school councils may represent a loss of authority for some educators. Epstein (1995) stated that effective parent-school relationships cannot develop when parental interests are pitted against those of teachers and principals. A fear of sharing or losing power is not limited, however, to school council issues; similar apprehension operates at every level of the school system. As Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) pointed out, "Reform has failed because teachers are not good at sharing power with students, principals are not good at sharing power with teachers, and school systems are not good at sharing power with their schools" (pp. 98-99). To be successful, school

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councils cannot be viewed as a rival body armored against educators; rather, school councils need to be recognized as a supportive, resourceful avenue available to assist and complement the needs of school personnel.

Much of the literature documenting the effectiveness of school organizations places great value on the trust and respect that must permeate throughout the group (Epstein, 1995, 2001; Melvin, 2006; Pushor & Ruitenberg 2005). Kerr (2003) stated that council members need to recognize that patience, trust, and forgiveness are important components of effective school councils. Part of creating and sustaining a nonthreatening relationship within a school council involves promoting an environment whereby it is acceptable to make mistakes. In addition, a fecund relationship is characterized when both parties share common goals (Melvin, 2006; Stevenson, 2001). Therefore, at the onset of a new council, when a new member joins, or when a principal assumes a new position, it is extremely important that common goals are discussed and (re)identified. Attached to this statement is the caveat that all members need to recognize that promoting shared goals does not denote deafening conformity to some mainstream plan or action. Member allegiance to shared goals incorporates the assumption that it is always important to be open to fresh, divergent ideas. In these ways, the goals and values of school councils need to be the topics of ongoing discussions.

The endpoint of many discussions entails making a decision. The strength of the council is greatly increased when members work towards a common cause in areas where they have reached consensual agreement (Dukacz & McCarthy, 1995; Stevenson, 2001). "Consensus does not necessarily mean that all parties agree, but that all can live with a decision for the sake of the group's ability to move forward" (Melvin, 2006, p. 46). Melvin believed that being directed by common values and goals and utilizing consensual decision-making procedures support a positive start to any school council and contribute to their long-term success.

A final feature supporting the success of school councils is quality training. Krishnamoorthi (2000) explained that training for school councils needs to be more than "reading a bunch of slides" (p. 304). A quality training program needs to have a flexible time schedule, expose multiple educative themes, and be hospitable towards the specialized needs of the school and its students. Boylan (2005) supported the importance of providing training for school council members and stipulated that training must include services

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that assist council members in identifying the needs of the school community and enhance communication between the school and the community.

### Conclusion

Are school councils simply a fad or are they an important feature to the future of school governance? The schizophrenic answer is that they can be recognized as both. Within the past 15 years, the legislation of school councils across every Canadian province/territory characterizes a new educative trend - a trend that endorses parents and community members as being more accountable within public education. Consequently, schools and their communities are being melded into a more cohesive, symbiotic unit of alliance. The future success of school councils is to be determined within context. When nurtured properly, school councils are a valuable channel that can narrow the distance between parents, teachers, and the whole community and, thereby, positively influence the education a student receives. For those who believe in the collaborative power of educators, parents, and community, school councils figure brilliantly in the future of school governance.

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## Repressive Myths and Childhood Fables: An Analysis of (In?)appropriate Practice

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### Introduction

Education, especially in early childhood, has long and extensive roots in educational psychology and theories of development. The influence of developmental psychology has so pervaded our thinking, our view of education, and how we assess children, that our ability to theorize and value children's subjective experiences has been hindered. The theories and practices of developmental psychology have become regimes of truth (Foucault, 1976/1990) or, to use Ellsworth's (1992) term, the *repressive myths* of early childhood education. How can challenging these regimes of truth expose our assumptions about young children and the ways that we engage in teaching and learning? What repressive myths continue to be perpetuated? Whose interests do they serve? Using a feminist poststructural lens, influenced by Davies and Ellsworth, I analyze and critique the book, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), a framework for early childhood educators, underpinned by the concepts of developmental psychology.

Hogan (2005) posits that the critique of developmental psychology remains marginal and most often occurs outside the North American context. However, the emergence of the Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education Group (established in the early 1990s) and the subsequent American Educational Research Association (AERA) Special Interest Group - Critical Perspectives in Early Childhood Education - have provided North American forums with robust debate. Although developmental psychology has received more criticism over the years (e.g., Bloch, 1992; Cannella, 2002; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Greene & Hogan, 2005; Hauser & Jipson, 1998; Kessler & Swadner, 1992; Walkerdine, 1993), developmentally appropriate practice remains largely influential in many early-childhood-education-policy,

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teacher-education, and school-based milieus. The purpose of this critique is to add to the on-going, dynamic discussions of early childhood education to perpetuate conversation, stimulate dialogue, and encourage theorizing in a field limited by the stranglehold of developmental psychology. In an effort to promote debate, the theories of feminist poststructuralism are presented as an alternative means to think about power, language and subjectivities that question the underlying assumptions of developmental theory.

In this analysis I focus on the ways in which developmentally appropriate practice constructs knowledge and children and teachers, and the implications of these constructions. I argue that these constructions limit the possibilities of younger human beings, justify marginalization, maintain and perpetuate hegemony, and have become the repressive myths of early childhood education.

#### **Establishing a Feminist Poststructural Framework**

In establishing a feminist poststructural framework from which to analyze the developmentally appropriate practice document, I draw on Davies' (1993) feminist poststructural theory. Her theory provides a scaffold "for understanding the relation between persons and their social world and for conceptualising social change" (xi). According to Davies, these relations between the subjects and their social worlds are upheld through the discourse. Discourses are constructs - assumptions that have been created - which come to be viewed as "natural," thus maintaining those assumptions about identity and dualisms. I agree with Davies that by "disrupting old discourse, paths open up for speaking into existence other ways of being" (p. 12). Through deconstructing discourse, the layers of these terms can be peeled back (admittedly, only partially) to reveal the ways that discourse upholds the structures that maintain oppression. Davies asserts that "central to any feminist deconstruction is an excitement about discovering the very mainsprings of power that have held women and other marginalised groups in place" (p. 8). For example, developmentally appropriate practice relies on using terms such as *knowledge*, leaving the underlying assumptions unproblematized. Through deconstruction, the challenge is to question which knowledge becomes privileged and which knowledge is marginalized. It is critical, therefore, that discourse constructed as natural (e.g., *child* or *childhood*), and concepts assumed to be "true" (e.g., developmental theory), be deconstructed. This deconstruction can

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lead to a discourse of resistance that allows new possibilities to emerge.

Feminist poststructural theory, as conceptualized by Davies (1993), acknowledges individuals as discursive subjects, often constrained by dualisms. Subjects can assume multiple positions - positions that at times contradict one another and are in constant motion of being reconstituted through the discursive relationships with others. Davies explains that subjects are “not fixed but constantly in process, being constituted and reconstituted through their discursive practices they have access to in their daily lives” (p. 11). Poststructuralism allows for social constructions to be exposed, for binaries to be disrupted, and for the exploration of the multiple, subjective and divided ways in which subjects are ever-changing through interactions with others. Subjects, therefore, do not have fixed and rational identities; rather, they are constituted through discourse and discursive relationships with others. As Ellsworth (1992) contends, through realizing that “the myth of the ideal rational person” (p. 96) has been oppressive, we can explore the complexities of human beings and the fluidity of their subjectivities. These understandings of discourse and subjectivities will inform the analysis and undergird the deconstructions of knowledge, teacher, and child.

### **What Is “Developmentally Appropriate Practice”?**

*Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) was published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC is the largest organization in the world working on behalf of young children and is “dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8” (NAEYC, 2006). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs* has sold over one million copies and, according to Goldstein (1998), “the most widely influential perspective on the education of young children is embodied in the phrase ‘developmentally appropriate practice’” (p. 61). It is because of this book’s tremendous influence and the authority given to developmentally appropriate practice that I have chosen this book as the exemplar from which to conduct an analysis.

Educational psychology’s developmental theories, with Jean Piaget as a tremendous influence, are the foundations on which developmentally appropriate practice is based. Piaget’s theory

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claims that children's learning can be organized into stages of development and that "children's cognition develops in an invariant sequence" (Bowman & Stott, 1994, p. 123). The influence of developmental theory is pervasive throughout *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) and is evident in the use of the term *development*. For example, the word *development* saturates the section of the book on the principles of child development and learning (pp. 9-15). Development is described as an "orderly sequence" (p. 10), proceeding "at varying rates" (p. 10), and in "predictable directions" (p. 11). Bredekamp and Copple state that developmentally appropriate practice is "based on knowledge about how children develop and learn" (p. 9) and concepts of development are used in relation to the physical, social, emotional and cognitive domains of the child.

### **Analysis**

Most of the analysis focuses on Part One of the book, specifically the sections "Principles of Child Development and Learning that Inform Developmentally Appropriate Practice" and "Guidelines for Decisions about Developmentally Appropriate Practice." I analyze the ways in which developmentally appropriate practice and its discourse around *knowledge*, *teacher* and *children* feed the "repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination" (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 91), to foster power inequities and maintain hegemony.

### **The Myth of Knowledge**

The presuppositions on which these theories of development are based are often perceived as unquestionably valid because of their roots in positivistic science. This approach to knowledge represents an undeniable truth and becomes "fact" in the minds of the educators. Bredekamp and Copple (1997) employ this sense of absolute truth by indicating, for example, that the list of child-development principles are "empirically based principles" (p. 9). The authors apply the term *knowledge* in a carte-blanche sense, implying there is only one knowledge - that known to the authors - and it is indisputable. The positivist notion of one known truth has long been problematic and knowledge needs to be understood as "contradictory, partial, and irreducible" (Ellsworth, 1992, p. 112). By privileging positivistic science, Bredekamp and Copple dismiss

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personal insights to knowing, thus favouring the expert over teachers or parents.

The term *development* invokes a sense that children are not yet developed, that they need developing (improving), and that there is a developed, predetermined place at which one can arrive (presumably, adulthood). For one to become developed, one must travel along the continuum of knowledge and build on previous knowledges to reach an end place where the prescribed knowledges have been acquired and integrated into the self. For example, Bredekamp and Copple (1997) indicate that,

Development proceeds in predictable directions toward greater complexity, organization, and internalization . . . [and developmentally appropriate programs] provide opportunities for children to broaden and deepen their behavioural knowledge by providing a variety of firsthand experiences and by helping children acquire symbolic knowledge through representing their experiences in a variety of media. (p. 11)

This is just one example where learning is presented as developmental and how the child is positioned as “undeveloped,” implying incompleteness, inferiority, or defectiveness.

Although Bredekamp and Copple (1997) acknowledge that children’s development includes the physical, social and emotional domains, the principles favour the cognitive and rational aspects of thought. This is not surprising because in Western cultures the rational-emotional binary privileges the rational over the emotional. Emotion has been delegated to the feminine, private sphere and, therefore, has “not been considered ‘noteworthy’ within the male-defined parameters of historical scholarship” (Boler, 1999, p. 19). Developmentally appropriate practice, in its efforts to advance children to greater cognitive developmental stages (inadvertently?), places less focus on children’s emotional attributes and needs. Further, this approach to knowledge dismisses concepts of knowing that may not be cognitively based (e.g., religious, intuitive or insightful knowing) (Jipson, 1998). Ellsworth (1992) argues that privileging rational thought creates the “irrational other” and this becomes “a vehicle for regulating conflict and the power to speak” (p. 94). By assuming there is one way to think, dialogue, and develop, children can become “othered” and, therefore, excluded, labeled, and constructed as lesser.

According to the developmentally appropriate practice book (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), students are expected to attain certain concepts at certain stages. These guidelines have been criticized for being Eurocentric and culturally biased (Jipson, 1998). Jipson's study reveals that the cultural values of individualism and objectivity in learning often clash with non-Eurocentric values, which often favour cooperation and collectivism, as well as intuitive and humanistic learning. Students possessing Eurocentric experiences (e.g., a concentration on language knowledge) arrive at school already equipped with particular kinds of knowledge and can readily succeed within these Eurocentric expectations. These students are not necessarily smarter, but they do have greater cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973). Of course, students who arrive from non-Eurocentric cultures likely possess different capital and may have difficulty meeting Eurocentric expectations. This illustration is an example of how developmentally appropriate practice privileges Eurocentric knowing and marginalizes those who lack access to this knowing, and perpetuates the hegemony of the dominant culture.

Moreover, this marginalization also serves to uphold binaries of children who are successful and those who are not, privileging language-focused, Eurocentric cultural values. If divergent thought is not valued, it can be argued that developmentally appropriate practice perpetuates "an ideology of control" (Noddings, 1992). As a society, what do we risk by disallowing the creative thought of younger human beings? Children who favour emotion over rational thought, whose culture is not of Eurocentric origins, who develop differently than the predefined ages and stages model, and whose strengths and gifts are other than those deemed appropriate by Bredekamp and Copple (1997) are at risk of marginalization and subsequent school failure. Others, to avoid marginalization, may eventually succumb to the imposed expectations, enacting compliance and conformity.

### **The Myth of the Omniscient, Essentialized Teacher**

In the developmentally appropriate practice principles, there is no doubt that the teacher is constructed as the expert. The teacher is depicted as superior, more knowledgeable, and is the decision-maker; students, as lesser: less knowledgeable and in need of support from the knowers. An interesting example of this is found in the section, "Teaching to Enhance Development and Learning." Here, the word *teacher*, followed by a verb, is used in 41 of the 44

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sentences. The verbs include *prepare, make, establish, observe, listen, plan, create, provide, offer, organize, incorporate, bring, foster, promote, develop, engage* and *pose*, to name a few. Of the remaining three sentences, a *children-verb* structure is used only once. Paradoxically, children are described as “active constructors of their own understanding” (p. 17) and yet, according to the structure of these principles, children play no active role in their own development and learning. Instead, children are portrayed as passive recipients of the teacher’s irrefutable knowledge and expertise. Davies (1993) explains that, “the disruption of knowledges advocated in feminist poststructuralist writing runs counter to this culture of the classroom” (p. 39). It is ironic that in a document claiming to focus on the child, the teacher maintains centre stage.

While teachers are positioned as knowers in the adult-child, knower-not knower binary, they are also positioned as experts in regards to their relationships with parents. The superiority of the teacher is implicit in the guideline entitled ‘Establishing Reciprocal Relationships with Families’<sup>2</sup>. While the teacher is directed to get to know the children and their parents, there is no expectation that the teacher allows the children and parents to get to know her. This implies a superiority of the teacher - an unequal relationship where the teacher is privy to the private life of the child and parents, yet the teacher’s private life remains off-limits. In maintaining a hierarchy of teacher over child, the teacher is positioned over the parents as well. Although one of the guidelines is entitled ‘Establishing Reciprocal Relationships with Families,’ the tone of the directive positions the teacher in a higher hierarchical position. For example, Bredekamp and Copple (1997) state that “the teachers work in collaborative partnerships with families” (p. 22), positioning the teacher as the worker (knower/leader) and the parents as the recipients (not knowers/beneficiaries). Teachers are encouraged to “acknowledge parents’ choices ... and respond with sensitivity” (p.

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<sup>2</sup> Although the authors use the word *families*, they refer only to the parents of the families, excluding siblings, grandparents, other extended family members, or caregivers. In this discussion, I will use the term *parents* and do so with the understanding that I am referring to the caregivers of the child. I recognize the Euro-centricity of using the term *parents* and understand that in doing so I may negate the extended family that may be central to the child-rearing of some cultures. I choose the term *parents* because it more accurately represents the people to which Bredekamp and Copple refer.

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22), yet there is no direction that teachers must actually take into account or adopt parents' recommendations. Another example directs "teachers [to] support families" (p. 22). This condescending direction implies first, that families need support; second, that families want or have asked for support; and third, that teachers are able to provide appropriate support to meet the perceived needs. These examples serve to illustrate the teacher's position as expert over the parents, negating knowledge or insight that parents have about their own children, and positioning parents in as much need of support from the omniscient teacher as their developing children.

The one page dedicated to teachers' relationships with parents is further diminished by the remarkable 22 pages devoted to "Early Childhood Teacher as Decisionmaker." In this section, teachers are instructed to use their understandings of child development, individual children, and the social and cultural contexts in which the children live to make "decisions about the well-being and education of children" (p. 36). To further understand how teachers are positioned in this section (which is reflective of how they are positioned throughout the document), it is interesting to consider the photographs interspersed throughout. In this section, there are 10 photos and a teacher is present in 6. Of those six teachers, all are White and five are female. Parents are present in 3 of the 10 photos and all parents are non-White. In 4 of the 6 photos that include a teacher, the teacher is in the centre of the photo facing the camera, with the parents either looking to the teacher, thus the parents' faces are not visible or, where we can see their faces, the teacher is positioned over the parents, looking down at them as they look up to her. Through this sampling of photographs, we see how teachers are physically positioned as superior, as objective experts and omniscient knowers.

Finally, the way in which Bredekamp and Copple (1997) have portrayed teachers as an essentialized group is problematic. Throughout the book, teachers are depicted as an essential group of White women. In the one photograph of the male teacher (one of two male teachers in the entire 185-page book and both are White), the teacher is across the table from the student, and they are engaged in hammering a nail into wood. Conversely, in the photos of the female teachers, the teachers are in very close proximity to the children, often touching or holding them, and are engaged in reading, beading, feeding, talking, or observing. In these depictions, the male takes up tasks with tools, while women are portrayed in roles of nurturing, perpetuating gender stereotypes. Further, the

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stereotype of early childhood teachers as female, presumably because women are nurturers, perpetuates childhood education as women's work.

### **The Myth of the Child**

Davies (1993) insists that we need to "understand the process through which the person is subjected to, and constituted by" (p. 13), to unpack the discourse through which constructions are created and sustained. When adults are placed in the superior position of the binary, children are constructed as inferior, as less capable and as needing support. Cannella (2002) argues:

Within the "child" construct(s), younger human beings are reified as the "other". This othering labels them as innocent (i.e., simple, ignorant, not yet adult), dependent (i.e., needy, unable to speak for themselves, vulnerable, victims), cute (i.e., objects, playthings, to be watched and discussed), and needing of control (i.e., savage, lacking discipline, needing structure), to name just a few. (p. 3)

This Western construction, therefore, positions children as needing help, control, and surveillance. This construct is upheld within developmentally appropriate practice in that children are positioned as requiring adult guidance, support, direction, protection, security and comfort. Children are portrayed as objects that can be controlled by adults, while adults remain in dominant positions of power, as knowers, keepers, and enforcers. Davies (1989) explains that "children are defined as *other* to adults in much the same way that women are other to men" (p. 4). Bredekamp and Copple (1997) portray adults in positions of control, charged with regulating children through surveillance. This myth of childhood works to maintain oppression over children and to uphold the power of the adults, especially the teacher.

***The child as knowable.*** Throughout the principles and guidelines of developmentally appropriate practice, there is also an assumption that teachers can fully know individual children. For example, the book insists that "teachers should learn about the culture of the majority of the children they serve if that culture differs from their own"; and that "teachers [should] make it a priority to know each child well" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 12). Within this section, Bredekamp and Copple describe the various tasks in which teachers must engage to better know the

children they teach. For example, they write, “teachers observe children...to learn about their interests, and developmental stages” and, “teachers establish positive relationships with families” (p. 17). These, among other guidelines, presuppose that individual children can be completely known. This is problematic because it does not recognize the complexities and multiple subjectivities of children. I agree with Ellsworth (1992) when she insists that because teachers can never fully know the multiple subjectivities of the students, it is impossible for teachers “to assume the position of center or origin of knowledge or authority, [and to have] privileged access to authentic experience or appropriate knowing” (p. 101). A teacher cannot simply know a student whose subjectivities are constituted by multiple factors including gender, race, class, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or ideology (Ellsworth). Again, the assumption works to reinforce the dominance of the teacher over the child, the teacher as knower, and the child as simply knowable.

***The child and individuality.*** One of the goals of developmentally appropriate practice is for children to increase their “development of self-regulation abilities” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 17). In her study, Jipson (1998) recognizes the privileging of individualism (reflecting Eurocentric influences) and that autonomy is the focus of this education that excludes the values of the collective or collaborative perspectives (p. 235). The 12 principles of Child Development and Learning that inform developmentally appropriate practice focus mainly on development of the individual, explaining that through interactions with their environment and social groups, a child’s development can be advanced. These principles ignore the reciprocal possibilities of these interactive relations. For example, in regards to *play*, the guidelines describe the possibilities for individual child development and skill acquisition when engaged in play, as opportunities for the child to develop language skills and practice problem solving. Although the authors indicate that children can “learn to deal with emotions” (p. 14) and “interact with others” (p. 15), *play* is viewed as a means to an ends of individual development and negates opportunities, for example, for collaborative approaches to problem solving or cooperative construction of ideas. This focus on individuality and autonomy counters the values of some cultures and families and, in effect, becomes marginalizing. Collectivism is not only devalued in Western thought, but it may also be viewed as threatening to the status quo. Finally, there is a misconception that society will improve if individuals perform better which, as Bloch (1992) states,

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“serves (whether intentional or not) to distract attention from structural analysis of the problems that help to maintain oppression and inequalities in achievement” (p. 16). Therefore, when public attention is focused on individual achievement, it is detracted from structural change.

Although the book refers to “individual variation,” the assumption remains that all children progress in a linear fashion through the known (prescribed) stages of development, at similar rates, toward similar endpoints. The document refers to the “typical development of children” (p. 10), referring to “predictable changes” (p. 9), and explains that learning proceeds from behavioural knowledge, to symbolic, to representational. This simplistic assumption that children learn from concrete experiences to abstractions is based on understandings of knowledge as linear and cumulative. This linear-progressive description of children’s knowledge does not explain how young children can understand abstract concepts - such as friendship, fear or love - and creates essentialized understandings and limited expectations of children. Ellsworth (1992) writes that identity must be seen as complex and nonessentialized,

As a starting point - not an ending point. Identity in this sense becomes a vehicle for multiplying and making more complex, the subject positions possible, visible, and legitimate at any given historical moment, requiring disruptive changes in the way social technologies of gender, race, ability, and so on define Otherness and use it as a vehicle for subordination. (p. 113)

Bredekamp and Copple (1997) maintain notions of children as essentialized and completely knowable and, in so doing, create children as Others, maintaining their subordination.

***The child as lacking agency.*** Not only is there a focus on individuality, but children as autonomous units are also constructed as lacking agency. *Agency* is an important human attribute because, as Davies (1993) explains, “to achieve full human status, children must...achieve a sense of themselves as beings with *agency*, that is as individuals who make choices about what they do, and who accept responsibility for those choices” (p. 8). Because children have been constructed as inferior to adults, teachers are put in positions of constantly observing, monitoring, and assessing children. The directive to teachers to observe children is pervasive throughout the principles and guidelines of the book. For example,

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teachers are directed to *observe, listen, assess, and study* children. Cannella and Viruru (2004) argue that the constant pressure to observe children legitimizes surveillance. Through surveillance, control over children is maintained and their ability to enact agency is therefore denied. Children are thus positioned as those who lack agency. Teachers act as their agents, making choices for them and denying them, as Davies explains, opportunities to be fully human. The ways in which the child is constructed, the authors' insistence on the development of autonomy, the surveillance mechanisms imposed, and the denial of agency within education settings dangerously disallow ideas that do not fit the predefined norm and greatly limit the possibilities for children.

### **Creating a Space for Transformative Stories**

I have argued that developmentally appropriate practice, as conceived by Bredekamp and Copple (1997), although perhaps well-intentioned, works to maintain hegemony. The ways in which knowledge is predefined and based on rational thought and on Eurocentric values, privilege White, middle-class children and marginalize those who bring differences. This narrow view of knowledge limits possibilities for children by shutting down alternative ways of knowing or thinking. Teachers are essentialized as White and middle class and are positioned as experts, thus dismissing the possible contribution of parents. Children are placed in subordinate positions on the adult-child binary, are essentialized as knowable and in need of control and, in effect, are robbed of their opportunities to enact agency. The conformity that is striven for and perpetuated by developmentally appropriate practice marginalizes many who are then deemed as underdeveloped, developmentally delayed, or, in short, failures.

That schooling maintains an ideology of control is not a new argument, and both Ellsworth (1992) and Davies (1993) provide some interesting possibilities in thinking about pedagogy. Ellsworth offers a "pedagogy of the unknowable" (p. 110), where subjects are recognized as partial (as in unfinished and subjective), where differences are acclaimed as strengths, and knowledge is recognized as undergirded by power. Ellsworth recognizes the power implications of knowledge, the complexities of human subjectivities, and a curriculum that values agency. Ellsworth explains that once the "origin of what can be known and origin of what should be done" is removed, then the challenge remains in how to construct "classroom practices that engage with the discursive and material

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spaces that such a removal opens up” (p. 115). By removing what we think is known and what we think children should know, we create a space in which to explore new possibilities. For example, Davies’ (1993) pedagogy overtly introduces students to understanding discourse and fosters understandings of how subjects are culturally and historically constituted. In Davies approach, children explore binaries such as adult-child and are exposed to concepts of power and powerlessness. Davies explains that by doing so:

Children can be introduced to the possibility, not of learning the culture, or new aspects of it, as passive recipients, but as producers of culture, as writers and readers who make themselves and are made within the discourses available to them. (p. 2)

In Davies’ study, using children’s literature, she initiates conversations with children to discuss gender constructs, problematize individuality, and explore subjectivities. Davies’ work highlights the possibilities of conversations with children and positions them as knowers and constructors of knowledge, culture and identity.

An important element in Davies’ (1989; 1993) work, as well as in Ellsworth’s (1992), is the acknowledgement and the challenges presented in the teacher-student binary. Ellsworth explains how teachers are always implicit in this power dynamic of teacher-student because of the structures within which we work and, therefore, she urges teachers to confront unknowability. This requires that teachers take a position, not as knowers, but as learners alongside students, relinquishing the need for power of knowing and control. Davies’ pedagogy also attempts to expose power imbalances, challenge assumptions, recognize human complexity, and encourage agency among her students.

There are other authors, although not working from poststructural positions, who offer alternatives to developmental models of teaching and learning. For example, Noddings has advocated care (1992) and happiness (2003) as core values that should be reflected in our schools and school systems. Egan (2005) has been working on, what he terms, an imaginative approach to teaching where students’ experiences are valued and knowledge is recognized as “a product of human hopes, fears and passions” (p. xii). Mills, O’Keefe and Jennings (2004), and those who embrace an

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inquiry approach to education, have for years been advocating the creation of a curriculum around the interests of children and fostering teaching that reflects the values of society. However, developmental psychology has so dominated educational discourse that these various understandings of children, teaching, and learning are considered *alternatives* and, therefore, portrayed as lesser or bogus approaches to “real” education.

Because early childhood pedagogy has become virtually synonymous with psychology (Dahlberg et al., 1999), theories of development have become perceived as “truths” instead of the “socially constructed representations of a complex reality” (p. 36). These truths - manifested in developmental checklists, benchmarks, and outcomes to be met by children, assessed and normalized by teachers - reflect what psychology has hypothesized to be generalizable, apolitical and static. These truths have led to pedagogy that overshadows or altogether fails to reflect the morals of the society in which we live. We need to reflect the ways in which developmental psychology has influenced pedagogy, consider its limitations, and seek alternative ways of conceptualizing knowledge, children, and teaching. In doing so, I suggest we seek a curriculum not of transaction or oppression, where the repressive myths of knowledge, teacher, and child are perpetuated, but rather one of transformation, where our subjective fictions are given space to emerge and flourish.

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## School Matters: Why African American Students Need Multiple Forms of Capital

*RoSusan D. Bartee and M. Christopher Brown II*

REVIEWED BY *Barbara McNeil and Norbert Witt*  
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RoSusan D. Bartee, an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Mississippi (Oxford), and M. Christopher Brown II, Professor and Dean of the College of Education at the University of Nevada (Las Vegas) are distinguished scholars who care about and give considerable attention to the schooling of African American students. Writing within the superstructure of a 21<sup>st</sup> century American society that is tenaciously capitalistic, Bartee and Brown examine the overall academic achievement of African American students as manifested in an urban desegregated magnet school<sup>3</sup>. Far from being a critique of the inequity-producing school systems of capitalistic America that the majority of African American students must navigate year after year, *School Matters: Why African American Students Need Multiple Forms of Capital* is a rigorous exploration of four forms of capital (economic, human, cultural, and social) that the authors suggest are necessary for school success within the status quo - the dominant economic, ideological, and political order that exists in the United States (US).

The authors believe that the disbursement/allocation of “capital in home and school settings affects the types of educational outcomes and the quality of lifelong opportunities that individuals are able to enjoy” (p. 1). Accordingly, the researchers discuss capital acquisition and possession and point out that economic, human, cultural, and social capital act as “consumer, producer, and regulator” of the educational process. Thus, the acquisition and possession of the four identified forms of capital are brokers of the

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<sup>3</sup> See Endnote.

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educational process and determine who are the winners and who are the losers in the academic sweepstakes of mainstream society.

The book is divided into five chapters supported by three important appendices. Chapter 1 is by far the strongest and makes a noteworthy contribution to education scholarship due to its perceptive and elucidating synthesis of what is arguably very dense material on the different forms of capital needed by African American students. While we agree with the authors' contention that the educational systems that operate in capitalist America were designed and function to "continue the reproduction of the elite" classes, the absence of a fuller discussion of power and the importance of critical consciousness and pedagogy is regrettable. The authors position readers to take for granted the "if you can't beat them join them" approach to social change and ignore the ideas of theorists regarding the transformation of unjust social orders through the use of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

Bartee and Brown treat readers to a valuable and necessary distillation on each form of capital and they shine magnificently in this area. Thus, we learn, in turn, about the historical perspective of economic, human, cultural, and social capital. This is followed by examination of the uses of each of the capitals and the role of each form of capital as consumer, producer, and regulator in the field of education. The authors explain that there are two perspectives that frame current understandings about education: institutionalized perspectives which "emerge in the purposes that schools serve for educating" and individualized perspectives "which seek to reconcile the issues emerging from the home and school" (pp. 20-21). The authors inform readers that the two perspectives are "primarily associated with the discussion surrounding the cultured and uncultured nature of particular activities and their effects" (p. 21). In their *realpolitik* vision of schooling, "educational achievements are inextricably tied to a system of educational inequalities" and the students who succeed in this highly stratified world are those who "are able to acquire the more desirable" kinds of capital. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the school to make available such forms of capital to students. With regard to the "individualized perspectives," the authors suggest a need for congruence between home and school. Therefore, parents should direct their offspring to take full advantage of the capital-amassing opportunities (participation in "cultured activities") offered by magnet schools so

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that the students will acquire the “desirable kinds” of capital “to effectively matriculate through the academic pipeline” (pp.46- 47).

In Chapter 2 Bartee and Brown make a direct link between the failure of traditional public schools to produce high levels of academic achievement for African American students, while emphasizing the greater potential of desegregated magnet schools to provide optimal conditions for the acquisition of the four forms they outlined in first chapter. With such an enunciated view of school, the researchers assert that “Magnet schools, as a tool for desegregated schooling and higher academic outcomes, possess the legitimate forms of capital” (p. 50). Embedded in the preceding view are the ideological positions on which this text is based and they are decidedly neoconservative. Magnet schools are presented as the antidote, the salvation for the educational malaise that afflicts African Americans. Among the questions we pose as reviewers and critical readers of the text are these: Which African Americans are the authors speaking about? which African Americans are best served by magnet schools? and what will become of those who do not and cannot make it into these types of schools which are based on selective enrolment?

Along with the above, Chapter 2 is useful for contextually situating and familiarizing readers with information about school desegregation and magnet schools in the US. This information is particularly helpful for readers unfamiliar with the history and politics of race and schooling in contemporary America. For examples, the authors talk about the Brown “mandate of school desegregation” (p. 57) and point out that “magnet schools are one of the more widely accepted forms of school choice to achieve school desegregation” (p. 61).

In Chapter 3 Bartee and Brown present quantitative and qualitative data linked to their primary research question: “To what extent does a desegregated magnet school increase or decrease access to cultural and social capital?” (p. 67). The authors looked at individual student participation in school-based activities and in private lessons to determine the correlation between cultural and social capital. The researchers used indicators such as attendance at operas, museums, churches, involvement in sports, and music bands to assess a student’s level of cultural and social capital. We noted that jazz was the only African American art form recognized as a “high culture” activity. The authors construct Westlake School as a favourable site for cultural and social capital acquisition for

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African American students who are generally in a deficit position regarding so called “high status activities.”

Our reading of Chapter 3 reveals a clear suggestion that the networks that engender cultural and social capital are more readily available among those affiliated with “status culture” - primarily that of middle- and upper-class Whites and African Americans. The question of why “non-status culture” students do not participate as frequently as status culture students is not examined by Bartee and Brown. While the authors acknowledge that lower class parents at Westlake point to a lack of emotional and social support for their children, support for the underprivileged African American students is not an issue for them. Instead, the authors suggest that any perceived lack of support results from the failure of individual students to take full advantage of the resources made available by schools—they need to learn how “to do” school.

Not unlike others in the book, the goals of Chapter 4 are to educate and persuade readers that the particular educational processes set in motion at Westlake magnet school are closely linked to the levels of student attainment found there. Readers might be forgiven for wishing to bypass or give up on this complex, sometimes confusing and dense chapter. That, however, would be a mistake because it is in this chapter that the authors offer qualitative and quantitative data to answer a key question of the research: How do status cultures or status groups influence the teaching and learning process in a desegregated magnet school? The short answer, according to Bartee and Brown, is that the values and traditions of so called “status cultures or status groups” influence teaching and learning in significant ways.

A significant, though not surprising, finding of the study is that African American students have the lowest enrolment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses or are not “being recommended for AP courses compared with other groups” irrespective of socioeconomic status or gender (p. 103). As suggested by the authors, these findings are directly related to race. However, as is their pattern throughout the book, Bartee and Brown do not point to the historically rooted and inequitable racial stratification system that is characteristic of the larger society and is entrenched at Westlake as a likely explanation for lower number of African American students in AP courses.

Hence, it is the students, the individuals, and not the institution who are responsible for the situation. Evident here is the authors’ flagrant defense of the magnet school but not the interests of

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African American students whom the authors portray as sabotaging themselves by backing away from honors and AP-level work. Bartee and Brown's silence on the absence of critical dialogue regarding the enrollment of African American students in AP courses is further evidence of their position but, more important, it also points to a context where true democracy and equity are limited.

Bartee and Brown theorize that "stakeholders' participation in high-brow and/or low-brow cultural activities, and curricula" has an impact on educational outcomes (p. 116). The activities range from sports and math and debating clubs, to elite social organizations as "Jack & Jill" and the "Links" for cultivating behavioural patterns and attitudes within African American students, seeking to "refine the students in ways that signify proper value systems and mannerisms" (p. 132). Here it is worth noting that the authors clearly emphasize that African American value systems and mannerisms have to be changed into "proper" forms, which "often represent the mores of upper class African-Americans" (p. 132). This is the clearest indication of the audience the authors try to reach: upper class African Americans (and those who want to be), conservative policy makers, and those in favour of market-driven schools of choice.

In their discussion of the "relational aspects" of school, Brown and Bartee state that parents play a vital role in the education of African American students at Westlake, but make it clear that educational outcomes are greater when "the ideologies of the home environment and the school environment reflect each other" (p. 133).

With regard to gender, the authors suggest that African American females are more compliant to the ethos of the school, while African American boys are more resistant, unwilling to change their behaviors into the "proper forms" dictated by the school and, as result, they "encounter more difficult challenges than any other races and/or females in the schools" (p. 125). While we would wish to see greater scholastic commitment from African American males, we support their desire to retain aspects of their African American identity and the validation of African American cultural resources.

To summarize Chapter 4, Brown and Bartee are very transparent in their partisan support for magnet schools such as Westlake that require the adoption of the discourses, social practices, and ways of being of specific groups—in other words, the cultural and social capital of middle and upper middle class African

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Americans and Whites in order to move through the academic pipeline that leads to success in reputable colleges and later in life.

Chapter 5 summarizes the previous chapters, revealing a self-perpetuating world that only serves the needs of the few who are chosen—nay, invited, to be part of Westlake. It is a world that leaves the majority of African American students out in the cold, fending for themselves in a society that continues to undervalue their rich cultural and social capital. The authors suggest that those who do not make it or struggle are either lacking in discipline or they just don't get it. The school is close to a mirror image of the wider American society. Therefore, Westlake is not a site of transformation or progressive change; it is a stratified "microcosm of the real [American] world" of privilege and inequity based largely on race and socioeconomic factors. The foregoing realities lead readers to challenge the notion that magnet schools such as Westlake can achieve the goals of "racial balance" and "desegregation" in the broad American society. The majority of African American students will continue to be part of the misery-inflicting, inequitable system of education based on race, class, and gender.

In our critical reading and reviewing of the text, it is hard for us, an African Canadian female teacher educator and a White male teacher educator in Aboriginal education, to see this monograph as a work of hope. Working in a faculty that is committed to social justice and antioppressive education, we rather believe in transforming public education in a way that does not close doors by selective enrollment and/or asks children to give up who they are—their social and cultural identities. We believe in schools that promote "human development" on the basis of each individual's identity.

It is clear to us that Bartee and Brown are especially interested in the academic and social well-being of the tiny segment of the African American population who attend and fare well at schools such as Westlake. The book can be seen as contributing to a response to antioppressive/antiracist education theory, which expands the meaning of *education matters* into *equity matters* (Corson, 1998, pp. 112 -114), which not only asks for access to capital for all students, but also for transformative education. We agree with Bartee and Brown when they suggest that students need to learn the appropriate codes and cultures of the dominant spheres but, as Freire and Macedo (2003) point out, they also "have to become literate about their histories, experiences and the culture of

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their immediate environment” (p. 354) in order to emancipate, transcend, and transform them.

In sum, *School Matters: Why African Americans Need Multiple Forms of Capital* is a revealing and important book. Although it would have benefited from a more thorough editorial scrutiny, the book is useful for revealing a contemporary neoconservative, African American perspective on schooling. Bartee and Brown provide readers with an extensive discussion on the education capital nexus that helps education students, researchers, and policy makers understand the implications of human, economic, cultural, and social capital on educational outcomes. Knowledge of the workings of the capitals is vital for those wishing to transform education to make it more socially just and equitable for all.

### Endnote

**Magnet school.** As an icon of the conservative-driven “school choice” reform movement that started in the US during the 1980s, “magnet schools are public schools that offer specialized instructional program in particular disciplines” (Banks & Green, 2008, p. 27) for selected students. For instance, there are magnet schools that focus on the arts, mathematics and science, the social sciences and technology that “parents can choose as an alternative to their children’s regularly assigned schools (Archbald, 2004, p. 283). Though magnet schools are intended to support students with a variety of special skills and interests, it is above-average performance achieved on standardized tests that usually determines who is selected or offered the opportunity to attend such schools. “The term *magnet* reflects the draw with which magnet schools receive students (Banks & Green, 2008, p. 27). Magnet schools attract students from areas surrounding the school and many have been established to address school segregation.

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*School Matters: Why African American Students Need Multiple Forms of Capital*

Peter Lang

2007

173 pp.

ISBN: 978-0-8204-8688-8



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## No Education Without Relation

*Charles Bingham and Alexander M. Sidorkin*

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What happens when people come together is a constant in what draws and holds my attention. So, this book's assertion of relations as education's heart of education seemed a bit obvious. Was there more here than an affirmation of this centrality? My answer is 'yes,' with a few surprises thrown in along the way.

The notion of relation in education has come to refer to a wide range of educational philosophies and curriculum interactions. A joy to be found in *No Education Without Relation*, is that the book is not presented as unitary in nature, but rather as a coalition committed to social change and educational reform. The book contains then a variety of interpretations, different emphases, and a host of fascinating queries – all in search of openings and spaces allowing readers to catch sight of the primacy of relations. As Bingham and Sidorkin suggest early in their introduction:

Even the most narrowly construed “back to the basics” purposes of public schooling may become unachievable if schools lose the ability to foster human relationships that allow them to function.  
(p. 3)

This book opens with an introduction followed by a “Manifesto of Relational Pedagogy: Meeting to Learn, Learning to Meet.” This Manifesto was written at a spring retreat in 2002. Prior to this, a core group of authors formed a number of symposia, airing ideas and engaging in debate and dialogue. This collaborative effort is evident through references among chapters; through challenges, critiques and the lending hands in developing each other's position in the remaining 11 chapters.

After the introduction and Manifesto, the remainder of the book is divided into three parts. The four chapters in the first part (entitled Pedagogy of Relation: Mapping the Territory) outline the theoretical territory and the pedagogy of relation is positioned

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among existing conversations. In four chapters, the second part (or Democracy, Care and Strangers: Challenges to Relations) focuses on democratic engagement, and part three (Knowledge, Curriculum and Relation) explores epistemological and curricular implications. To describe this book in this way may give the reader a sense of the scope but it only faintly catches its connections to Buber, Balchtin, Dewey, Gadamer and Heidegger, its emergent nature, but it misrepresents entirely this book's verve.

Allow me three brief samplings or instances where I found myself stopping and rereading – each time was sent off into 'mitsein' or 'being with.' (Am sharing these to give the reader a taste of statements occurring as provocative chance.)

Although there is a practical limit to the amount of change that a practice can afford, it is clear that as soon as a child starts to take part in a practice, the practice will already have changed. (Biesta, p. 16)

Normality always contains a bigger mystery than abnormality because by very definition normality lacks prominent features and thus is more difficult to understand. We call 'normal' what no longer requires and yields an explanation. (Sidorkin, p. 55)

[The need] to recast the ethic of care as the ethic of care for social justice. (Hutchinson, p. 84)

I came across question both in the text and ones that arose when reading the text that I had not even glimpsed but now seem to be haunted by frequently, even daily. Why indeed do students do their work? If resistance does signal the need to redevelop the student teacher relationship, where and how does the redevelopment find address? I am left wondering what part "chimera relations" (Hutchinson, p. 83) play in classrooms or in day-to-day school life (especially since school is not an identical world for all who participate in it). I was taken aback by one chapter's title, 'Democracy Needs Strangers and We Are Them' (p. 73). These bits and pieces surprised and pushed me to rethink. They may not have the same effect on readers or leave them feeling displaced or somehow realigned.

Even if this failing is the case, the book is worth examination because of its challenge 'to learn to meet.' "Simply put, students and teachers cannot and will not do a good job within discouraging and alienating schools" (Bingham & Sidorkin, p. 6) or communities. In

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addressing such a challenge, educators “need to move from struggling against something to struggling for something” (p. 6). This book does offer something worth struggling for. My question is how to make this something – the relational – a more evident part in my own classes. Of course, echoing Nel Noddings, good teachers have always known how to do just this.

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*No Education Without Relation*

Peter Lang

2004

190 pp

ISBN: 0-8204-6830-4



## We're Not Robots: The Voices of Daycare Providers

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Enid Elliot's book, *We Are Not Robots: The Voices of Daycare Providers*, challenged me to rethink an idea I have embraced as an instructor in an Early Childhood Education (ECE) college program. I felt it was crucial for students to understand that coming into the field because they "loved children" was not enough. I dismissed this 'lovely notion' in my eagerness to impress upon students the value of the work they would be undertaking, that is, the critical developmental learning that children would achieve in their care. I wanted validation for their work and their career choice. When I considered Bredekamp and Copple's (1997) concept of both/and thinking from Elliot's perspective, I realized that not only do early childhood educators need to integrate *both* education *and* caring in their work, the value of caring needs to be confirmed.

Research in the early-learning-and-care field abounds on the topics of child development and how children learn. Advocates for the early-learning-and-care field have been vociferously sharing their mantra "Good education cares, Good care educates." Yet, somehow the caring aspect of the work can often be relegated to a minor position on the stage in an effort to showcase that children are, in fact, learning while in child care or preschool situations in order to validate to society the work that is done. "See?" the cry resounds, "We are doing much more than just babysitting these children-they are learning!" Therefore, there is great effort in demonstrating how children are learning and, subsequently, instructing students and educators in the field how to best expand that learning and support development. Caring gets relegated to the "Best supporting actor" role. Of course we care, we love children, that's understood...*isn't it?*

Over a period of 7 years, Elliot interviewed seven passionate, trained child-care educators who worked with infants and toddlers

in four licensed centres. She offers a convincing sample of interviews and body of research that promotes caring as a fundamental component of this work. Ms Elliot's background - a combination of researcher and educator with hands-on experience in early childhood education in Canada, Turkey and the United States - lends credibility to her writing that might not otherwise exist. Her interpretation of the interviews reflects a true understanding of the nature of the participants' emotions and their work. The interviews and the educator stories give the book an authentic view of the field. This is not a profession that is easily defined in terms of a simple job description. The interactions with the youngest and most vulnerable people in our society and their families, coupled with the complexity of those relationships, is reflected in the very telling statement from one of the educators, "*We are not robots.*" Interactions with infants and toddlers cannot be scripted. There is no definitive schedule or a program design for the people bound together - children, educators and family members - in this complex partnership.

Although stories have been used for centuries as a way to communicate a distinctive kind of knowledge, they have often been disregarded in the field of education. However, when stories are shared, they create a special pedagogical interaction between author and reader. When the author offers her insights in a meaningful way, the reader can empathize with the humanness of the story and possibly relate to its detail. Because of the societal respect for research and scientific knowledge, the unscientific aspect of sharing stories can be seen as unimportant (Sorrell, 2000). Elliot recognizes the value of the stories in describing the issues around infant and toddler care. By incorporating the related research in support of the anecdotal sharing of stories, Elliot affords us the opportunity to learn from both in this book.

There are several repeating threads throughout the book. One is that the larger society needs to recognize the job itself as valuable and complex. It is not easy to look after several infants or toddlers and meet their group and individual needs and the needs of the family and the needs of coworkers. Another thread is the importance of self-knowledge. Elliot discusses the necessity of understanding what the educator herself brings to the mix, the acknowledgement of her needs and emotions, and how this understanding grows and evolves over time. Finally, there is the thread of understanding the differences of others; accepting, while not judging them; and the value of trying to work together. This

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includes families, and coworkers, as well as the opinions of the larger society.

Elliot shares the human side of working with infants and toddlers and goes beyond the usual rhetoric of social-emotional development and partnerships. She uses words such as *compassion*, *thoughtfulness*, *attachment*, and *heart*. These are not words that fall easily into the category of prescriptive instruction on how to provide care and education for infants and toddlers. Even though the word *care* is intrinsically woven through the fabric of all books on this topic, it is often given less space and therefore possibly less credence than all the information on how to care for infants and toddlers which evolves into the care-giving routines of feeding, dressing, and supporting their play and growth. As Ms. Elliot says, "To do a good job, caregivers must decide to be fully present to the relationship of caring" (p. 9).

Ms. Elliot delves deeply into the subject of attachment and the understanding that "the early relationships of a person impacted their subsequent emotional development" (p. 18). She supports the theory that children attach with parents, family members, and their caregivers in varying degrees. She maintains that while the concept of and research around attachment is well-developed, its value or understanding is often overlooked in the field. She presents that not enough emphasis is placed on the value of attachment, and it is crucial to the infants and toddlers in care and to their caregivers.

Unfortunately, while there may be a feeling that people who work in this field *must* be caring with and for children, there is often much evidence to the contrary (Leavitt, 1994). As a result, the issues around attachment become more intricate and difficult to convey. Ms. Elliot examines the reasons for poor care-giving and determines that lack of training and lack of good quality training, poor wages, recruitment-and-retention issues, the push and pull between commitment and dissatisfaction and, generally, the feeling that their work is devalued in either the field of education or society as a whole, all contribute. She takes the perspective that the necessary personal emotional work that must be done to work well with infants and toddlers is a process. I agree strongly that opportunities for self-reflection and personal growth must be intrinsic to the courses and practical work that ECE students undertake. This is the beginning of their journey, the beginning of a life-long process of self-reflection and self-evaluation that must take place for them to stay true to their profession.

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The interviews with the front-line educators indicate an attentive and conscientious dedication to their work with the babies and their families. Their stories are thought-provoking and warm. Yet, they also share their frustrations with the family relationships, the difficulties of working with children who do not always use words to communicate, and the feelings that their work is neither understood nor valued by society.

“These women all know that their work is a good deal more than babysitting, and would agree with Pence and Benner (2000) that ‘there are no simple answers’ (p. 152) in the business of caring for babies. Articulating the interwoven relational, emotional, and intellectual threads of care giving is often difficult, as the practice of caring is often assumed rather than named.” (p.154).

Elliot outlines the ‘places of difficulty’ that educators face in their daily work such as grief, tensions, and things not said. She acknowledges the grief that is experienced as part of caring: saying good-bye and accepting parents’ values, while maintaining separateness. She includes a delicate discussion of the tensions that arise from the work with the babies themselves in trying to understand and meet their individual needs and the difficulty of the collaborative process with coworkers.

Ms. Elliot concludes the book, not with definitive answers, but with a summation of the supports required for the educators to continue on their journey of caring.

I have been hesitant to offer strong recommendations, not because I do not feel strongly, but because I would prefer to offer these stories and voices for discussion and for thought. This has been a process of uncovering the thoughts of the caregivers, as well as my own. The value is found within the process and I urge others to embark upon it. (p. 167)

She developed her guidelines for supports from a combination of research, insights from the interviews, and her own personal experience: working as a team with coworkers, having facilitative and supportive administrators, maintaining a work-site environment that encourages on-going training, hiring staff with good training and who share a common vision and philosophy, implementing low child-adult ratios and small group size, viewing time “as an element we can organize and control” (p. 147), and finally requiring education and training that is specific to infants and toddlers.

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Ms. Elliot has endeavoured to assemble a vast subject into the package of one small book. At times the organization of the material and writing could be tighter and more streamlined. The repetition of some themes becomes distracting. However, for a student or a reader not conversant with the larger issues facing the early learning and child-care field, this repetition could be a benefit. It may enable them to more clearly understand the complex issues of frustration, vulnerability, partnerships with families, poor wages, and a lack of recognition for the work that educators do.

There is an important place for this book on the shelves of students, college and university ECE professors and front-line educators in the early learning and care field. It reminds us to balance the two aspects of care and education: They cannot be separated and, especially in the infant and toddler domain, the caring alone may take the lead role.

In a world where other caring professions have developed guidelines for staff (i.e., nurses) to be able to 'care' for clients with reduced emotional attachment as a measure to help prevent burn-out and support efficiency, Ms. Elliot offers another possibility - accepting the complex emotional interplay between partners, acknowledging the verb 'care' at its deepest levels, and celebrating its value and necessity. Enid Elliot has produced an innovative offering to a field inundated with the theories of learning and development. This book is like the flower that blossoms up through the crack in the cement. It is early learning *and care*. Both are imperative. Thank you, Ms. Elliot, for undertaking this project of demanding caring be an integral part of this job, for the love of children.

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*We Are Not Robots: The Voices of Daycare Providers*  
SUNY Press  
2007  
199 pp + xii  
ISBN-13: 978-0-7914-6942-2



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