

**TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING AS PARENTS' RIGHTS  
MOVEMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

by

**Cecilia Kalaw**

**B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1990**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS**

**in the Faculty  
of  
Education**

**© Cecilia Kalaw 1999**

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

**August 1999**

All rights reserved. This work may not be  
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy  
or other means, without permission of the author.



National Library  
of Canada

Acquisitions and  
Bibliographic Services  
  
395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Acquisitions et  
services bibliographiques  
  
395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-51372-6

Canadä

## **Abstract**

### **Traditional Schooling As Parents' Rights Movement in British Columbia**

Since the mid-1990s, BC's public education system has experienced significant political challenge from highly organized, activist parents advocating the creation of "traditional schools" and challenging controversial curricula on sexual health education and anti-homophobia education. This thesis examines the emergence of parent groups and issue advocacy organizations that collectively form BC's "traditional schooling" movement and the movement's impact on the public system.

Using document research and interview data, this thesis traces the ideological underpinnings of the Traditional Schooling Movement (TSM) to the policy agendas of religious conservatives and neo-liberal "choice" activists. Under the banner of "parents' rights," this movement represents the "fusion" of conservative and neo-liberal policy agendas for public education, of which the priorities are maximizing parental choice of schools and guaranteeing parental control over their children's educational experiences.

In light of Pierre Bourdieu's (1987) reproduction theory, this analysis illustrates how the TSM has redefined parental involvement in education and popularized the creation of self-selecting, academic programs such as "traditional schools" within the existing North American framework of "alternative programs." The traditional schooling movement, it is argued, is simply one of the most recent and most organized expressions of middle-class mobilization against 'comprehensive' values in BC's public education system. What makes the TSM unique from other education movements is its populist appeal and the level of support it has received from state institutions and the political elite.

By continuing to promote greater competition and differentiation among schools, this thesis concludes that the TSM will continue to challenge teachers unions and education policy makers grappling with the difficulties of balancing the democratic impulse to provide meaningful educational choices for BC families with the need to ensure an equitable system of public schools. Moreover, it is capable of setting the terms of public debate on public education's priorities and the direction of reform unless the education establishment can provide alternative visions for involving parents in more meaningful ways within the education system.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisory committee – Drs. Suzanne de Castell and Ariene Tigar McLaren – for their critical insight, guidance, and encouragement in developing this thesis. I highly value the friendship you both have extended to me.

I am indebted to various people and organizations for their assistance during the research process, namely the traditional school activists, parents from district parent advisory councils, trustees and district staff who answered my questions and shared their experience of the traditional schooling movement; to the CCPA, for giving me an opportunity to work on the Traditional Schools Study; to J. Mozzochi and R.L. Taylor, for taking an interest in me and opening doors that helped me develop an understanding of international right wing movements. Thanks also go to Will Offley for sharing his vast knowledge of the Canadian Christian Right, Teresa Pryce and Isabel Cordua-von Specht for their friendship and assistance in editing earlier versions, and Michelle Booker for the weekly study sessions that prodded me to thesis completion. Of course, I accept sole responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Lastly to my husband, Joseph. Thank you for loving and supporting me in every way imaginable, during my graduate program and in all my endeavors. I could not have done any of it without you.

# Table of Contents

<b>APPROVAL.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
PURPOSE .....	2
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES .....	3
METHODOLOGY .....	10
<i>Thesis Data</i> .....	13
<i>Ideology and the Traditional Schooling Movement (TSM)</i> .....	14
<i>The Politics of Funded Research</i> .....	17
DATA ANALYSIS.....	21
LIMITATIONS.....	22
<b>II. MORALITY AND MARKETS - THE POLITICS OF "TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING" .....</b>	<b>23</b>
DEFINING "TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING" .....	24
TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING AND EDUCATIONAL CHOICE .....	32
Critical APPROACHES TO TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING AND "CHOICE" .....	38
TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING AS POLITICS OF THE RIGHT .....	43
CONCLUSION .....	51
<b>III. BC'S TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING MOVEMENT.....</b>	<b>53</b>
THE DISCOURSE OF TRADITIONAL SCHOOLING.....	54
THE TWO FACES OF THE TSM .....	56
<i>Moral Traditionalists</i> .....	56
<i>School Choice Activists – The Populist Base of the TSM</i> .....	64
<i>Profiles of TSM Program Activists</i> .....	68
<i>The Ideology of Educational Choice</i> .....	80
IMPACT OF THE TSM .....	88
<i>Teachers vs. School Boards</i> .....	88
<i>Parents vs. School Boards</i> .....	94
<i>Parents vs. BCTF</i> .....	101
RESPONDING TO THE TSM.....	104

<i>Educators' Responses</i> .....	104
<i>Parents' Responses</i> .....	110
<i>Community Responses</i> .....	110
<b>IV. PARENTAL ACTIVISM - THE "CAPITAL" OF THE TSM.....</b>	<b>113</b>
RAISING THE BAR FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT.....	114
MARKETS IN BC EDUCATION .....	117
ERODING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE THROUGH CULTURE WARS.....	121
MEDIATING INFLUENCES ON THE TSM.....	124
CONCLUSION: .....	126
<b>APPENDIX 1:.....</b>	<b>131</b>
DENIAL OF ACCESS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH DESIGN.....	131
RESEARCH AS PROPAGANDA.....	134
RESEARCH AND "RECIPROCITY" .....	138
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>142</b>

## **List of Tables**

<b>Table 1 – Summary of Growth of Traditional Programs, 1994 – 1999</b>	<b>pg. 66</b>
<b>Table 2 - Summary of Costs for Establishing A District-Wide Traditional Program in Richmond</b>	<b>pg. 99</b>

# **Traditional Schooling As Parents' Rights Movement in BC**

## **I. Introduction**

The "traditional schooling movement" (TSM) has affected British Columbia education like no other education movement in recent years. Prior to 1994, only one district had a "traditional" school, making Langley Fundamental Elementary School an anomaly in the BC public school system. Since 1994, however, over twenty additional school boards in BC have received traditional school proposals.<sup>1</sup> Four additional boards, Surrey, Abbotsford, Williams Lake and Prince George, have since established new traditional elementary schools.

In 1997, proposals for expanding traditional programs into the secondary level were made in Surrey, Abbotsford, and Langley districts. Of the three, Langley is the first to extend traditional schooling into the secondary level. New campaigns for traditional schools in Richmond and Vancouver surfaced in 1998.<sup>2</sup> Efforts of the TSM in Richmond have led to the adoption of a "foundations" program for all elementary schools in the district. This "foundations" program, beginning in September 1999, is a district-wide pilot process to address TSM concerns regarding student conduct, consistency in instructional strategies, assessment and reporting, homework, school dress codes and grade organization in public schools.

The TSM has also sought influence on curriculum and teaching practices used within the public school system. Their opposition to non-chastity based sex education programs and any educational initiative that addresses sexual orientation and

---

<sup>1</sup> Media accounts, anecdotal information collected from district offices and local teachers' associations, and reports from pro-traditional school groups (i.e. Parent Network) have identified traditional school organizing in the following districts: Abbotsford, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Central Okanagan, Chilliwack, Comox Valley, Courtenay, Delta, Duncan, Fort St. John, Fraser-Cascade (Hope), Howe Sound (Squamish), Langley, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, Nanaimo-Ladysmith, North Vancouver, Parksville-Qualicum, Peace River North, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, Victoria, Whistler.

<sup>2</sup> Informal telephone interview, Ingrid Wood, District Learning Services of the Vancouver School Board, June 22, 1999. According to District Learning Services staff (Ingrid Wood) of the VSB, as of Spring 1999, VSB has tabled the proposal for a Vancouver traditional school pending a task force on the subject.

homosexuality has inhibited such programs in various districts.<sup>3</sup> The movement has grown, yet most proposals have brought conflict and controversy and sparked heated debate in the community. Why?

"Traditional schooling" has been a lightning rod for ideological battles over educational philosophy, "parents' rights" and the function of public education in a democratic society. As in Britain and the United States, the recent impetus for "traditionalizing" public education in BC has come from a movement composed of moral conservatives seeking "traditional" enclaves within the public system and school choice activists aiming to compel more market-driven approaches to public education. Their convergence during the 1990s has resulted in an unprecedented number of "traditional" programs in the province and increasingly conservative approaches to school curricula.

Thus far, debates about traditional schooling in Canada have taken place via local media, fed by statements from local and provincial governments and other education stakeholders. Debates over what "traditional schooling" means and the significance of implementing new traditional schools have been divisive. A review of the education literature will illustrate the difficulties of defining "traditional schooling" and the analytical gaps in previous treatments of this phenomenon. Rather than focussing on the administrative issues of implementing "traditional" programs and curricula, this thesis will analyze the relationship between traditional schooling and New Right political movements advocating "educational choice" in Canada.

## Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to critically analyze the traditional school movement in British Columbia by examining individuals and organizations promoting educational choice through traditional programs and parental control over school curricula. This research looks at the motivations and ideological outlook of TSM members, the strategies they employ, the dynamics of TSM coalitions, and their impact on public education policy in BC.

The TSM's strategy for promoting greater parental choice has been to situate traditional programs as an "alternative" program, a framework historically associated with

---

<sup>3</sup> While policy debates over sex education, CAPP curriculum and use of resources depicting same sex families has been an issue at Surrey school district, all districts are affected by moral conservative activism against the BCTF resolution on anti-homophobia education and in the positions taken by BC Council of Parent Advisory Councils as a result of that activism. Coquitlam school district has also debated anti-homophobia policies and initiatives.

innovative programs for students at risk. This thesis will argue that such a strategy has been an effective vehicle for promoting school markets without direct privatization of governance structures – what British sociologists call “privatization by stealth.”<sup>4</sup>

A study of the TSM’s political dimension yields valuable insight into processes of social change. What makes the TSM unique is that, despite heated controversies, opposition from teachers unions and other parents groups and intense media scrutiny, traditional school proposals and TSM challenges to curricula persist, and in some ways, have gained public approval. This is all the more noteworthy considering they have gained momentum during two consecutive terms of a New Democratic Party provincial government opposed to their “choice” policies and their efforts to restrict student access to social issues curricula.

This thesis will, I believe, contribute to two distinct educational discourses. First, it will contribute to the body of analysis on policy frameworks dealing with educational pluralism in Canada. Second, it will add to the discussion of conservative political movements in education -- locally, nationally and internationally.

### ***Theoretical Perspectives***

My investigation of the TSM has been informed by critical approaches to the study of schooling. Critical approaches to social science research involve an analysis of social processes and are characterized by the intent “to delve beneath dominant conceptual frames, to reveal underlying practices, their historical specificity and structural manifestations.”<sup>5</sup> On public policy issues, critical research can draw attention to how such policies affect the lives of historically oppressed groups. Critical research differs from positivist and interpretative research approaches in that it includes analyses of processes and institutions that contribute to the legitimization and domination of certain forms of knowledge over others.<sup>6</sup> I view critical research as particularly

---

<sup>4</sup> Although the term “stealth politics” has been used to describe New Right and Religious Right strategies in both the US and Britain, they refer to different phenomena. Clarkson describes “stealth politics” in the US as an electoral strategy, associated with the Religious Right’s Christian Coalition, of running candidates for local elections without revealing their affiliations with and support from nationally-based Religious Right organizations (*Challenging the Christian Right – The Activist’s Handbook*. Great Barrington: Institute for First Amendment Studies Inc., 1992.) Brown describes “stealth politics” in Britain as the encroachment of privatization through policies which indirectly transfer more private influence on public institutions. (*Education, Culture, Economy and Society* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> L. Harvey *Critical Social Research* (London: Unwick Hyman, 1990), pg. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pg. 6.

appropriate for looking into areas of conflict and where the researcher must deal with diverse views and internal contradictions of social processes.

Critical approaches do, however, have their limitations, particularly in the field of education. Critical research is self-consciously political and strives for reflexivity about its own biases and the problems and limits of the research process. The politics of research certainly affected my research and access to data for this study. I discuss these issues in greater detail in both the methodology section and in Appendix 1.

Due to the qualitative nature of most critical research, and its critique of positivist, empirical approaches, critical research has yet to be embraced by professional educators. Since, as Lather (1991) points out, positivism retains its hegemony over practice in educational research,<sup>7</sup> such research does not easily lend itself to developing specific alternative policy recommendations or programs for existing institutional frameworks.

My analysis relies heavily on the reproduction theory of Pierre Bourdieu, particularly on its constructs of "cultural" and "social" capital. Cultural capital, for Bourdieu, refers to "dispositions, behaviours, habits, good taste, savoir faire, attitudes" learned in the home that reflect the values and ways of the dominant class.<sup>8</sup> He describes three forms that cultural capital can take: 1) cultural capital as embodied forms of knowledge, 2) cultural capital in its objectified state, as cultural goods that reflect dominant forms of knowledge, and lastly, 3) cultural capital as institutionalized recognition of a person's knowledge, skills and "value".<sup>9</sup>

Social capital, a related concept, "is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to membership in a group."<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu believes that a person's network of relationships is the product of that individual's conscious and unconscious efforts to establish or reproduce social relationships that yield material or symbolic profits over time.<sup>11</sup> According to Bourdieu,

---

<sup>7</sup> P. Lather *Getting Smart – Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern*. (New York: London, 1991) pg. 2.

<sup>8</sup> L. Bellamy "Capital, Habitus, Field and Practice: an Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu" in *Sociology of Education in Canada – Critical Perspectives on Theory, Research and Practice*, L. Erwin and D. MacLennan (eds.) (Toronto: Copp, Clark, Longman Ltd., 1994) pg. 121-124

<sup>9</sup> P. Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital" in A.H. Halsey, Hugh Lauder, Phillip Brown, and Amy Wells (eds.) *Education, Culture, Economy and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Pg. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pg. 51.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pg. 52.

*...class control is constituted through the subtle exercise of symbolic power waged by ruling classes in order to impose a definition of the social world that is consistent with its interests. Culture becomes the mediating link between ruling class interests and everyday life. It functions to portray the economic and political interests of the dominant classes, not as arbitrary and historically contingent, but as necessary and natural elements of the social order...By appearing to be an impartial and neutral transmitter of the benefits of a valued culture, schools are able to promote inequality in the name of fairness and objectivity*<sup>12</sup>

Cultural and social capital result from exchanges within one's group, placing great importance on control over the group's membership and identity, so as not to jeopardize or undermine the group's identity and status. These constructs are valuable for the study of education movements in modern society because they offer a theory of how differential access to educational opportunities is reproduced and concealed. Education movements, like the TSM, embody a group's "investment" of resources to legitimize and institutionalize particular economic values, interests and priorities.

Analysis of parental involvement in education as "activated" capital (Lareau, 1989; Looker, 1994; Brown, 1997) is an important development of Bourdieu's theory and presents a useful lens through which to view the "parents' rights" rhetoric of the TSM. Middle-class individuals, according to this analysis, no longer simply default into opportunities and positions of privilege by virtue of their upbringing or material wealth; families must "invest" these class resources in order to yield educational and social advantage.<sup>13</sup>

In her study of parental involvement in schooling, Lareau (1989) illustrates cultural capital as a determining factor in differences in home-school interactions. The reproduction of class hierarchies through education systems, according to her study, does not simply result from middle-class families valuing educational success more than working class families, or from teachers systematically discriminating against working class families. Rather, Lareau found that middle class parents were able to extract more meaningful information and assistance for their children from schools than were working class parents. Lareau found that middle-class parents were more able to link and follow teachers instructions and recommendations within the context of school curricula; that middle-class parents were more inclined to monitor their children's performance in

---

<sup>12</sup> H. Giroux "Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis" in *Harvard Education Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3., August 1983. Pg. 267.

<sup>13</sup> A. Lareau *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education* (New York: Falmer Press, 1989). Pg. 178.

school activities and adapt in such a way as to maximize their children's success; and lastly, middle class parents were more likely to be on equal footing with teachers, enabling them to more effectively interact with them for the benefit of their children as compared to working class parents.

Building on Lareau's critical analysis of "parental involvement", Brown (1997) further links parents' rights movements to a class reaction against social, legislative and political developments in education. His study of British education reform policies from the nineteenth century to the present has yielded the notion of "educational parentocracy" – the state where a child's education is increasingly dependent upon the wealth and wishes of parents, rather than the ability and efforts of pupils – that is useful for analyzing international education trends in post-industrial societies. Educational parentocracy, he argues, characterizes the current wave of British policy reforms and represents a de-prioritization of equity as a goal of public education. Brown argues that the economic restructuring of western, industrial nations has created an insufficient number of "knowledge-based" jobs, forcing middle-class families to attain increasingly higher levels of education in order to maintain their economic position. At the same time, efforts to democratize education implemented during the 1960s and 1970s have expanded the field of applicants vying for admission into universities and credential-granting institutions.<sup>14</sup> Brown views educational parentocracy as a retreat from comprehensive education, a middle class response to heightened competition for educational certification in advanced industrial/capitalist societies.

The reproduction of class dominance is not simply reflected in the differential capacity of parents to access educational opportunities for their children, it is also manifested in the ways institutions shape themselves to particular class interests. Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1995) extend a class analysis of "traditional schooling" and "choice" movements in their discussion of the "iconography of traditional selective schooling" and the shift towards "market values" in British public education following the 1988 *Education Reform Act*. Their research illustrates how choice policies facilitated school marketing strategies that emphasized academic excellence and de-emphasized comprehensive traits such as mixed ability grouping. According to their study, schools

---

<sup>14</sup> P. Brown (1997) "The Third Wave: Education and the Ideology of Parentocracy in Education" in A. H.Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A. S. Wells (eds.) *Education, Culture, Economy and Society* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pg. 401.

struggling to survive in this more competitive environment began to mirror the selective admission and waiting list practices of elite, private schools.<sup>15</sup>

Class and cultural interests are closely intertwined in the TSM. This thesis borrows heavily from the sociological literature that examines traditional schooling movements within an analysis of broader conservative movements. Analyses by Miner, (1996) Elliott and McCrone (1987); Elliott and MacLennan, (1994) and Diamond (1995; 1990) trace the different ideological and political strands of New Right movements and their points of intersection with traditional schooling movements. In the US, where controversies at the state and federal levels over the implementation of choice plans and "parents' rights" legislation have been paralleled by community battles over outcome-based education, creationism, 'age-appropriateness' of selected texts, whole language and sex education, traditional schooling and choice movements overlap considerably.

Sociologists in the US and Britain (Diamond, 1995; Elliott and McCrone, 1987; Elliott and McLennan; 1994) refer to the union between Religious and Economic Right as the "New Right." According to Miner (1996), the Religious Right, as characterized by groups such as the Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family are "clear in [their] goal of an authoritarian theocracy" while the Economic Right, referring to secular libertarians, entrepreneurs, free market ideologues, and cultural conservatives, are intent on raising national competitiveness within a global economy by focussing on "standards", efficiency and accountability of public education.<sup>16</sup>

How do conceptions of the "Right" inform our analysis of education movements? In comparing US and German neoconservative theorists, Habermas (1985) argues that "...the affirmative stand toward social modernity and the denigration of cultural modernity are typical evaluative schema implicit in all neo-conservative diagnoses of the contemporary situation."<sup>17</sup> According to Habermas, there are three anti-modernist elements to neo-conservative doctrine: first is the attack on "the new class" (i.e. the groups of professionals working in sectors that have been influenced by "Left intellectuals" such as teachers, publicists, social workers, humanists and philosophers)

---

<sup>15</sup> S. Gewirtz, S. Ball and R. Bowe. *Markets, Choice and Equity and Education* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995) , pg. 418.

<sup>16</sup> B. Milner "Splits on the Right – What Do They Mean for Education" in *Rethinking Schools* (Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Ltd, 1996), pg. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Habermas, Jurgen. "Neoconservative Culture Criticism in the United States and West Germany: An Intellectual Movement in Two Political Cultures" in Bernstein, R. (ed) *Habermas and Modernity*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), pg. 82.

as the root of a "hedonistic", morally questionable cultural revolution; second, is the argument that cultural modernity (referring to the Enlightenment's idealization of rationalism, individual and social progress and the notion of universal principles of morality) has been exhausted, and lastly, the proposition that cultural modernity must be dismissed in favour of a "healthy sense of tradition".<sup>18</sup> Habermas concludes that neo-conservatives, rather than locating the real sources of social crises in the economic and administrative imperatives brought on by advanced capitalism, instead falsely focus on the "specter of an expansive and subversive culture."

Elliott and MacLennan, referring to Habermas' schema, analyze the New Right in Canada, Britain and the US through its stance on modernity. They found that the New Right's agenda for school reform in all three countries embrace the technological revolution and the advancement of capitalism that characterizes social modernity, while simultaneously rejecting cultural modernity's concern with self-realization and the democratizing movements that have challenged traditional sources of authority - the state, the family, organized religion, the canon of Western civilization. It is this latter concern over contemporary society's "crisis of authority", according to Elliott and MacLennan, that the New Right attempts to remedy by restoring authority to traditional institutions and by actively promoting a state sanctioned education that instills traditional morality, high culture and the entrepreneurial spirit<sup>19</sup>

Diamond's (1990; 1995) historical analyses of American right-wing movements provide useful theoretical tools for analyzing social movements, namely an understanding of the Right as a movement that has moved from "pure antagonism to the status quo" to one capable of conceiving and selling a vision of a new, biblically-based society.<sup>20</sup> Particularly helpful is her analysis of the union between neo-liberals and conservatives. She traces the emergence of the New Right to post World War II "fusionism" – the process by which intellectuals and activists from three ideological camps (libertarian, moral traditionalism and anti-Communism) recognized their common causes and philosophies and "fused" their agendas.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pg. 93.

<sup>19</sup> B. Elliott and D. MacLennan "Education, Modernity and Neo Conservative School Reform in Canada, Britain and the US". *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol. 15, No. 2, June 1994, pp. 168

<sup>20</sup> S. Diamond *Spiritual Warfare* (Montreal: Black Rose Books ,1990), pg. 49

<sup>21</sup> S. Diamond *Roads to Dominion – Right Wing Movements and Political Power in the US*. (New York: Guildford Press, 1995)pg. 29

Diamond's account of "fusionism" as a feature of American conservative politics is useful for explaining how groups with contradictory ideas – libertarians and traditionalists – engaged in debates, bridged their differences, and coalesced to advance a common policy agenda. For libertarians and traditionalists, advocating traditional schooling and school choice is mutually advantageous for opposing "welfare statism", a paradigm opposed by both groups. The end result of "fusionist" compromises, according to Diamond, is "...the development of a sophisticated, flexible movement that could accommodate some level of diversity and internal contradictions without splitting apart at the seams."<sup>22</sup> This flexibility has led to an effective coalition for the purposes of supporting the state as enforcer of a religious moral order, and opposing it when it attempts to promote equality and rights for traditionally subordinate groups.<sup>23</sup>

In light of the above analyses of neo-conservative and neo-liberal social movements and their broad agenda for public policies, "parents' rights" movements, according to this literature, can be seen as simply the most recent manifestation of North America's predominantly white middle class reacting to the erosion of their cultural and economic dominance. Democratizing social movements (i.e. labour, civil rights, feminist movements) of the 1960s and 1970s and the shift to post-industrial capitalist economies have destabilized traditional social and economic hierarchies and patterns of capital accumulation in Western societies. Access to academic qualifications, provided to increasing numbers from non-dominant groups as a result of these social movements, has made for more competitive labour markets, thereby making it more difficult for traditionally privileged groups to realize, what Bourdieu calls, "the material and symbolic profits" of their educational investment. As a result, the advantages previously secured by acquiring the values and social networks of the dominant classes are no longer sufficient guarantees of reproducing class advantage.

This thesis raises questions about the role of social movements in enhancing cultural capital. Analysis of cultural capital has traditionally been framed around the values, behaviours and resources of individual families. Studies of social movements can elucidate the events, processes and structures that shape the orientations and practices of the state that favour certain families over others and may prompt more contextualized research and consideration of local conditions and relationships. The

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pg. 29.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pg.9

reproduction of class inequalities are significantly affected by the discourses, collective actions and resource mobilization of social movements that seek to entrench - through politically and legally accepted means - traditional power hierarchies as well as those movements seeking to redistribute status, resources and opportunities to the disempowered.

Ultimately, sociological theory that links specific developments in education to broader political movements provides insight into how ideological arguments founded on sharp class inequalities gain legitimacy and credence both at the popular and political level. Diamond and Elliot et al. agree, by and large, that right wing movement activism by the Religious and Economic Right has not only stalled progressive education reforms, it has effectively changed the terms of the education debate, building opposition to the state's role as a promoter of egalitarian social change.<sup>24</sup>

## **Methodology**

Research for this thesis was initiated through a year-long study commissioned by the BC Teachers Federation to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – BC Office (CCPA), an independent research institute based in Vancouver. I was the primary researcher and writer in a team of three that produced *In the Name of Choice – A Study of Traditional Schools in BC* (1998). The other members of the team were Dr. Arlene Tigar McLaren (Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, SFU) and Nadene Rehnby (freelance writer and researcher).

The CCPA has its head office in Ottawa and is a national progressive think-tank conducting analyses on social and economic policy. It has produced numerous publications on public education, including *Tech High: Globalization and the Future of Canadian Education* (1997), *Education Whose Business is it?* (1997) and *Charter Schools – Charting a Course to Social Division* (1997) and a new series *Education, Limited – Monitoring Corporate Intrusion in Canadian Public Education*. The CCPA also publishes the *Education Monitor*, a quarterly newsletter. Our study of traditional schools was the first work to be commissioned to the newly opened CCPA-BC office. Members of the research team and CCPA-BC staff jointly developed the objectives and methodology of the study. Our purpose was to provide the general public with information about BC's three "traditional schools" including their unique characteristics.

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid pg. 309-310.

how the schools developed, and how they were situated within the public education system. As the three existing traditional schools were located in different districts and two of the three were relatively newly-formed schools, we sought interviews with parents and teachers from each school, and interviews with community stakeholders from each district. As well, we collected media representations of the schools, school documents and existing technical data of each school's population.

The CCPA study was the first comprehensive attempt to document the historical development and implementation of BC's first three traditional schools. As it progressed, the process of research itself became part of the politics of traditional schools. As detailed in Kalaw et al. (1998), all three schools – Surrey Traditional Elementary, Langley Fundamental Elementary, and King Traditional Elementary - declined participation in the study. A discussion of the schools' denial of access and its implications for my approach and the design of this thesis deserve a much more detailed treatment than can be provided here and is discussed in Appendix 1.

In April 1997, Dr. McLaren submitted the final research proposal to the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Review Committee and received approval. The team sent out the proposal to each of the three school boards with a request to conduct on-site focus groups and interviews with parents and staff of traditional schools in the Spring of 1997. From April to November 1997 the researchers devoted most of their time attempting to identify participants in the study and to gaining formal access to the schools. Copies of the research proposal with requests for participation and approval were sent to district staff responsible for monitoring research activities. These requests were followed up with telephone calls and a second set of written requests, this time to each of the school boards, schools and school PACs. With each request, traditional school communities were informed that the study would proceed. During this period, interviews were conducted with non-traditional school stakeholders in Langley, Surrey and Abbotsford, along with one former traditional school parent and one traditional school teacher. Informal discussions were held with two traditional school principals and teaching staff in one school before final responses from the each of the traditional schools were received.

At Surrey Traditional and King Traditional, we conducted introductory discussions with principals, teaching staff and representatives of each school's parent advisory council (PAC) to introduce the project, answer questions regarding the research, and recruit participants. We also obtained names of prominent traditional school advocates

through media clippings and proposal documents. We selected our sample of interviewees on the basis of their experience or role in their respective school district and their point of contact with traditional schools.

Anticipating possible lack of cooperation from the schools, we consulted with the CCPA and the BCTF and decided to proceed with collecting publicly available sources of data and interviews with district stakeholders and/or individual traditional school staff or parents willing to participate in the study. We identified participants from Abbotsford by attending local school board meetings, and by asking for referrals from district parents' groups and teachers' associations. By Fall 1997, we focused our data collection strategies on retrieving traditional school documents.

Our document data included proposals, mission statements, school documents and handbooks, district assessments, reviews and surveys, Ministry policy and data, school board minutes, district policy and correspondence, and media clippings dating back to the first proposals for traditional schools. We also obtained school-level data from the schools, their districts and the Ministry of Education through the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

In BC, the "newsworthiness" of TSM activities distinguished it from other education movements. The attention directed at TSM activities by the print media was an essential source of information on new developments and initiatives of a movement active in disparate school districts across the province. Analysis of media coverage of traditional schooling debates was necessary for this thesis for a number of reasons: first, extensive coverage of traditional schooling debates by local, provincial and even national print and broadcast journalists distinguished BC's traditional programs as different, legitimizing their claims and, arguably, the view that they were more desirable than other programs within the public system.<sup>25</sup> Second, it was in the media that much heated, local debate on traditional schooling issues occurred. For these reasons, it was difficult to ignore the role of the media in the growth of the TSM.

In terms of qualitative data, we conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with five representatives of local teachers' associations, two district PAC (parent advisory council)

---

<sup>25</sup> During CBC-TV's The National, Feb. 16, 1999, a reporter's uncritical coverage reported on thousands of Vancouver parents who want traditional schools, was referring to reports of a 3500 signature petition collected by TSM groups. No context was given for the petition or the details of the support. Similarly, Vancouver Province and Sun newspapers have repeatedly covered the traditional schools as uniquely parent-friendly, popular, and academically-oriented, with headlines like "Students Like Uniforms" (June 14, 1998), "Parents Fight for Back to Basics" (June 14, 1998).

representatives,<sup>26</sup> one non-traditional school parent activist, one traditional school teacher, one former traditional school parent, one district administrator, one school trustee and two representatives of the BC Teachers' Federation during the CCPA study. Additionally, we collected data during informal interviews with two traditional school principals. All formal interviews were strictly voluntary, confidential and authorized by individual consent forms.<sup>27</sup>

Writing, editing and review of the CCPA report occurred between February to June 1998. During this last stage, all participants were contacted and upon request, were provided sections of the report in which their material was used and directly quoted. We included this process to ensure that all participants had an opportunity to ensure the accuracy of comments attributed to them. The final report was released in July 1998. The release of the report was covered in local print and broadcast media, and was made available to Richmond and Vancouver school district staff, Richmond trustees who were, at the time, engaged in local debates over new traditional programs, and to the general public.

### **Thesis Data**

While this thesis uses some of the data collected during the CCPA study, it departs from the CCPA report in a number of ways. Where the subject of the CCPA study was the traditional schools themselves, this thesis is devoted to examining the larger traditional school movement within the context of existing "choice" frameworks in BC.

First and foremost, this thesis undertakes an analysis of the TSM's ideology and structure. Shifting the focus from the programs to the movement required new data to more thoroughly analyze the different cultural and class interests within the TSM. The revival of traditional school activism in Richmond and Vancouver – led by predominantly newly immigrated, Asian parents – in July 1998 presented the opportunity to explore how racial minorities interpreted and engaged with the TSM. Where the CCPA study

---

<sup>26</sup> I also sought an interview with a DPAC representative from Langley but she declined stating she couldn't participate on behalf of the DPAC if the school had refused to participate in the study. She did not want to risk any possible tension/conflict between the DPAC and the Langley Fundamental PAC, as Langley Fundamental parents were also on the DPAC executive.

<sup>27</sup> The issue of guaranteeing confidentiality to participants was immediately problematic in this research because of the small number of traditional programs established in BC, the high level of contact and cooperation within and between traditional school communities, and the pre-existing high profile of traditional school advocates in the media in Abbotsford, Surrey, and Richmond.

was an opportunity to identify the nature and significance of traditional schools, this thesis addresses the nature of TSM activism, how it has constructed itself as a relatively successful "interest group" among education stakeholders and its impact on the policy and public discourse on education.

I submitted a new application to do research on the traditional schools movement to the Simon Fraser University Ethics Review Committee in July 1998. The University Ethics Review Committee approved my proposal to seek interviewees' consent to use data obtained during the CCPA study and to pursue interviews with new subjects for my thesis. In July 1998, I mailed out information and consent forms with copies of the CCPA report to all interviewees. The consent form requested authorization to use the information they provided (documents and/or interviews) for my thesis. In addition to interview data, traditional school proposals, district reports and correspondence, and traditional school related media clippings from ten BC school districts from 1994 to the present (collected during the CCPA study), I conducted new interviews with two members of the Richmond Traditional School Parents Group, one Richmond trustee, one Richmond District staff, and a second interview with a DPAC parent in Surrey, along with informal discussions with district staff, teachers' association representatives in Surrey, Richmond and Vancouver.<sup>28</sup>

### **Ideology and the Traditional Schooling Movement (TSM)**

Following the publication of the CCPA study, my decision to continue with researching the TSM for this thesis stems from an interest in how the exercise of social and economic power translates into political power in education domains. The CCPA's inquiry into the formation of traditional schools described the role of highly involved parents in conceptualizing, marketing, and getting institutional support for "traditional schooling" (see Kalaw et al., 1998). However, it was beyond the scope of that project to analyze class relations endemic to the TSM. Such an analysis is particularly difficult in societies such as the US and Canada that consider themselves "classless" and where class relations are mediated by relations of race, gender and nationality.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> While I have collected data about the TSM in BC prior to 1994, I have concentrated on the period from 1994 to the present because 1994 was the year when Surrey Traditional School was approved and whose founding essentially revitalized the TSM in BC. The ten districts for which I have proposals are: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Courtenay, Fort St. John, Nanaimo, Surrey, Parksville-Qualicum, Richmond, Vancouver, Williams Lake.

<sup>29</sup> W. Clement and J. Myles *Relations of Ruling – Class and Gender in Postindustrial Societies* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), pg. 4

The defensiveness of many TSM advocates during the CCPA study and the use of "war" metaphors to describe relations between different stakeholders on traditional schooling issues points to conflicting interests that have surfaced as a result of TSM activism. The grounds for the conflict, however, have not been sufficiently analyzed.

This thesis problematizes the notion of "parental involvement" and the existing framework for alternative education that has given rise to the TSM. In the face of over-stretched school district budgets and stiff competition among different school programs and services for resources, how have TSM parents succeeded where other interest groups have failed?<sup>30</sup> What can this analysis of the TSM's "parental involvement" offer to analyses of other alternative programs and neighbourhood schools? The TSM debates, paralleling the parenting and education discourses in the US and Britain, have given the notion of "parents' rights" local relevance.<sup>31</sup> Yet, there has been little critical analysis of the interests, resources and strategies of those who promote a "parents' rights" agenda in BC.

The TSM, as a case study, raises questions about the existing structures for choice in BC's public system. Notwithstanding the TSM's religious and cultural interests, this thesis analyzes the class interests served by promoting greater program differentiation and self-selection through parental choice of programs in the public system. TSM activists have pointed out that, even before the TSM appeared on the scene, districts with alternative programs for Fine Arts (elementary), French Immersion (elementary and secondary) and Montessori (elementary-level) and other enrichment/academic programs at the secondary level, have promoted self-selection and attracted parents who were "skilled choosers." The TSM's success in obtaining immediate approval for separate school status in various BC communities, however, appears to have exacerbated new tensions among different parent groups.

Adopting traditional schools as alternative programs, I would argue, marks a departure from the historical conception and framework of "alternative" education in

---

<sup>30</sup> Here, the comparison of the TSM as an interest group is made not only with other parent groups seeking "theme" schools such as Montessori, Fine Arts, Outdoor Education, but also with parent groups who have been lobbying the public system for greater resources (per student and in-class assistance) for students with special needs, ESL students, or for equity programs.

<sup>31</sup> According to *Rethinking Schools* (Vol.10, No. 3, Spring 1996), federal "parents rights" legislation was introduced in the US House and Senate in 1996 and similar statutes have been drafted in 20 states in the US. According to Bowe et al., the concept of "parents rights" in Britain has been enshrined in the *Parents Charter*, a widely distributed government document that corresponded to the 1988 Education Reform Act, that defines parents rights and their responsibilities with regards to school choice.

North America. In both the US and Canada, alternative programs have historically referred to secondary programs developed to promote rehabilitation and school retention for "at-risk" students and students facing difficulties within a regular neighbourhood classroom. The US Department of Education describes the components of effective alternative education programs:<sup>32</sup>

- ◆ *Lower student-to-staff ratio.*
- ◆ *Strong and stable leadership.*
- ◆ *Highly trained and carefully selected staff.*
- ◆ *A vision and set of objectives for the program that are shared by all staff and integrated into how staff and administrators interact with the program.*
- ◆ *District wide support of programs*
- ◆ *Innovative presentation of instructional materials with an emphasis on real-life learning.*
- ◆ *Working relations with all parts of the school system and with other collaborating agencies that provide critical services to youth*
- ◆ *Linkages between schools and workplaces*
- ◆ *Intensive counselling and monitoring.*

Within this paradigm of "alternative" education, additional resources are provided to maximize success for students in need. This framework has been similarly applied in Canada. In BC, alternative programs have proliferated, primarily in large urban school districts like Vancouver, and include day/evening programs for 'street involved' Native youth, a school/counselling program for behaviourally and emotionally troubled youth, a program for students in need of additional, individualized emotional support and hot meal programs, "bridging programs", and educational rehabilitation programs.<sup>33</sup> These reflect the historical development of alternative programs as interventionist strategies aimed at students who have historically struggled in regular school settings. Such programs, like their American counterparts, were established to interrupt cycles of predominantly poor and working class students and racial minorities from dropping out of school. Within this framework, students in need were to be provided more individualized attention and additional educational resources to maximize their chances of successful learning and personal development.

In Canada, discussions of parents' rights and school choice are further complicated by our unique constitutional arrangements for cultural minority rights.

---

<sup>32</sup> US Dept. of Education. "Alternative Education Programs for Expelled Students" in *Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools: An Action Guide* - September 1996, pg. 2 (Online: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ACTGUID/altersc.html> Downloaded July 17, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> Vancouver School Board. "Vancouver Alternative School Programs" (Online: [http://www.vsb.bc.ca/alternative\\_programs/index.html](http://www.vsb.bc.ca/alternative_programs/index.html) Downloaded July 17, 1999).

bilingualism and national and provincial policies for multiculturalism. Wilson and Laverson (1982) argue that since the nineteenth century, accommodating cultural minority rights in each province and territory has translated into acceptance of parents as part of the education system.<sup>34</sup>

Calls for educational choice, on the other hand, emerged during a period of "conservative restoration" of social and economic values in Britain, the US and Canada. These values reflect the post-Cold War skepticism with state-controlled economies and the welfare state, and increased reliance on competition and market forces as a means of promoting institutional efficiencies. Precipitated by the rapid technological changes, shrinking labour markets, and global shifts in power and economic dominance occurring in the late 1980s and 1990s, political supporters of "choice" policies in western societies link program diversification and greater school autonomy to innovativeness, academic "excellence", and minimized inefficiencies within the education bureaucracy.

Equity and excellence movements reflect divergent priorities for public education. Grafting "choice" programs onto an "alternative" programs framework entails a fundamental change in priorities and individuals served by those resources, essentially transforming a mechanism that was first developed to reduce educational disparities and support less privileged families into a mechanism that exacerbates those disparities in favour of the privileged.

## **The Politics of Funded Research**

### ***Ideology and Access***

There is relatively little in the qualitative research literature that problematizes funded research. Hammersley (1995) notes that research "has never been completely autonomous" and admits that, particularly in the late twentieth century, academic research has become increasingly affected by the corporate culture in universities and their dependence on the state.<sup>35</sup> Corporate interests have certainly played a significant role in how the discourse of traditional schooling and educational choice has been

---

<sup>34</sup> Section 93 of the Constitution Act 1867 guarantees government support for Catholic ("separate") schools in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and Protestant ("dissentient") schools in Quebec that existed prior to Confederation is a unique reflection of diversity within Canadian education. In BC, because no dual system existed prior to Confederation, there are no similar protections for independent, religious schools.

<sup>35</sup> M. Hammersley, *The Politics of Social Research*. (London: Sage Publications, 1995) pg. 104.

promoted in Canada and the US (see Chapter Three discussion on the Donner Foundation. Also see Miner 1996).

There is some discussion of the way in which funding and institutional support from reputable funding agencies can facilitate access to subjects and data that would otherwise be closed to the researcher. In a study on the development of policy for grant-maintained schools in Britain, Fitz and Halpin (1995), for example, discuss the importance of Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funding to their credibility as "serious researchers".<sup>36</sup> For the researchers, the prestige and perceived "neutrality" of the ESRC among civil servants proved instrumental in gaining contacts to officials and ministers involved in high level policy making.

In the CCPA study, funding from the BCTF proved problematic. While it facilitated access to data and subjects from BC's teaching community, it invariably prohibited access to traditional schooling communities. For TSM leaders, the ideological orientation of research funders became a way of "screening" research projects seeking their participation, particularly when it became clear that there were multiple studies being conducted on traditional schools. At the Surrey PAC meeting, some parents were more comfortable with another study that would feature their school as a "choice" school. This study was conducted by Dr. Daniel Brown of the University of British Columbia as a project of the Society for Advancing Excellence in Education (SAEE).<sup>37</sup> Designed as a two year study staffed by Brown and a team of graduate students, this study was funded by the Donner Foundation, an organization that has funded the start-up of both traditional and charter schools in Alberta.<sup>38</sup>

In our case, the CCPA-BC Office was a newly established branch of a national not-for-profit organization positioning itself as an alternative source for economic and social policy analyses to the Fraser Institute and other conservative think tanks. CCPA-BC, funded by individual members, donors and organizational members from across the country, also included among its membership various unions, including the BC Teachers Federation. CCPA's budget for this study, staffed by two part-time researchers for over

---

<sup>36</sup> J. Fitz and D. Halpin "Brief encounters" : researching education policymaking in elite settings" in J. Salisbury and S. Delamont (eds.) *Qualitative studies in Education* (Avebury, Brookfield: Ashgate Pub., 1995) .pg. 71

<sup>37</sup> Society for Advancing Excellence in Education "From the Field – New Research Projects" (On-line: <http://www.saee.bc.ca/research.html>) Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

<sup>38</sup> Donner Canadian Foundation. "Mission Statement of Donner Canadian Foundation" (On-line: <http://donnerfoundation.org/english/te3xt/mission.html>) Downloaded: Jan. 31, 1998.

one year was \$15,000. Consistent with the CCPA's policy, Dr. McLaren's contribution as a CCPA research associate – providing advice and guidance in research design and implementation, as well as editing the final report – was strictly voluntary.

CCPA's strong association with the labour community in BC posed dilemmas for the research team. The introduction of fundamental/traditional programs in BC school districts has drawn strong, critical reactions from teachers' associations and the Federation as unwarranted, unsupported attacks on BC teachers and the public school system. As well, the BCTF's position on other social, economic and education issues (i.e. on homophobia/heterosexism, opposition to charter schools) were not shared by TSM leaders. Thus, the CCPA study was seen as oppositional to traditional schooling from the start by parents and leaders within the movement.

Furthermore, "traditional schooling" activists and the BCTF had already crossed paths on numerous occasions. For example, John Pippus' group, The Parent Network, originally named Advocates for Education, was formed in 1993 during a period of job-action by Surrey teachers.<sup>39</sup>

Another example of historical relationships affecting the study is the history of opposition between Teachers for Excellence in Education (TFEE), the founding body of Society for Advancing Excellence in Education (SAEE), and the BCTF. Formed in 1987, TFEE began in opposition to union certification of BC teachers. The conflicting ideological and political views of these two organizations have been publicly aired in recent years. Since 1988, BCTF has documented ten major cases of legal action by BC Teachers for Association/Teachers for Excellence in Education against the union.<sup>40</sup> The opposing views of the two organizations on the issue of school choice and charter schools was aired publicly in November 1996 during the time of TFEE's charter schools conference held in Richmond, BC. The history of direct and indirect conflict between the BCTF and key members of the TSM prior to the study factored into the refusal of various bodies and individuals to cooperate with the CCPA study.

This thesis offers an opportunity to discuss the role of parents and school ideology in controlling research processes. The TSM members encountered during my

---

<sup>39</sup> Parent Network. "Advocates for Education District #36 – Feb. 25, 1993" (On-line: <http://www.enet.ca/parentnetwork/nwsfeb93.htm>. Downloaded: July 31, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Owens, BCTF correspondence, May 6, 1998. BCTF cites 1 court injunction against local contract provisions requiring BCTF membership (1988), and at least 8 cases of complaints or injunction applications regarding mandatory membership and payment of union dues to the Industrial Relations Council (all of which were dismissed) between 1988 and 1991.

research (e.g. organizational representatives from the Parent Network, TFEE and SAEE, PAC representatives from Surrey Traditional) showed an astute understanding of the role that research plays in legitimizing and 'marketing' specific programs and schools. Not only did they influence the terms of the school's involvement, they were able to influence district staff and administrators about the research activities they wanted to support, and thereby, the analysis and depiction presented to the public about traditional schools. Understanding the power of research is simply one of the first illustrations of the TSM's "cultural capital" I encountered in my research.

Conducting critical research requires recognition and reflection on one's own ideological biases. I viewed this thesis as an opportunity to reflect on my own schooling. My own personal experience with very "traditional" schooling, first in an independent Catholic school and then neighbourhood secondary schools in BC, left me with mixed feelings about the significance and merits of traditional schooling. "Traditional" private school provided me with a sound foundation of reading, writing and mathematical skills and perhaps most important to a first generation immigrant to Canada, a sense of community in a new culture. On the other hand, I also felt that the authoritarian culture of this kind of schooling – something rarely covered in any discussions about private schools - profoundly discouraged critical thought and exposure to other cultural and religious beliefs and class experiences other than my own.

I have pursued questions regarding culture, diversity and equality in my professional work. As an anti-racism educator and community programmer in the multiculturalism and immigrant services sector, and an immigrant of Asian descent myself, the emergence of immigrant groups spearheading a "traditional school" proposal made me wonder how intersections of race, culture and class would play out in social movements and in relations with school authorities.

Establishing traditional schools has required enormous commitments of time, energy, and emotional and material resources. For many traditional school parents, their concern and desire to give their children the best possible education was clearly the key motivation, a motivation shared by most parents regardless of ideological orientation. Despite the frustrations of conducting research involving reluctant subjects, I think I understood something of the traditional school communities' denial of access. Parental concerns that the schools may, through the CCPA study, come under further attack, were understandable and legitimate. Upon completing my interviews, I came to understand, if not to share, the logic of their defensiveness. These perspectives helped

to keep me grounded in the qualitative/ethnographic spirit of this inquiry and engaged with my subjects, despite our ideological differences.

## **Data Analysis**

In moving away from the CCPA study's focus on traditional programs to a focus on the traditional schooling movement, I had to review and reorganize previously collected data and collect new data. All new interviews were transcribed and reviewed for emerging themes and major areas of description.

Documents were divided into five categories: 1) primary documents generated by TSM (including proposals to districts, flyers, leaflets, web-site promotional material and archived publications, correspondence and media clippings which quoted key members of the TSM) 2) primary documents generated by those opposed to the TSM (publications, media clippings, presentations of groups to school boards opposing/questioning/asking for consultation, letters to the districts from concerned parents) 3) transcriptions of all interviews 4) demographic and contextual data (statistics, ministry and district policies, committee reports/findings) 5) secondary sources on traditional schooling movements in North America and Britain.

Given the exploratory nature of this research, I looked for themes that would describe the origins, constituencies, resources, activities and impact of the TSM. To describe the TSM, I analyzed the document data for recurring names of individuals, groups and districts with visible signs of TSM activism, promotional activities, evidence of inter-connectedness and coordination between different district parent groups setting up the schools, and the arguments used by TSM activists. I paid particular attention to language/terminology used with reference to alternative programs. Lastly, to assess the impact of the TSM on the education establishment, I looked for evidence of conflict directly related to TSM activities and changes in the application and language of policies by districts and the Ministry of Education over five years of TSM activism.

I took a similar approach in analyzing interview data as with document data. In addition, the interview data provided supplemental information on specific motivating factors for becoming involved in the TSM, the experiences and operating assumptions of TSM activists with private and public schooling, individual expectations and aspirations for children as a result of having traditional schooling.

## ***Limitations***

Attempts to describe social movements are always risky, particularly when these movements are still evolving. This analysis, which relies primarily on public documents supplemented by a small sample of interviews, is meant to be a first step in documenting the development of a complex and multi-faceted social movement. The thesis is not designed to assess or evaluate specific programs, but to investigate and analyze the class and cultural biases of the TSM, as raised by the CCPA study.<sup>41</sup>

Researchers trying to identify evidence of class-bias in alternative public school programs in BC face a number of limitations in terms of available data. First, socio-economic data on public school families attending alternative elementary programs may only be obtained with the cooperation of the schools or through the families themselves because of the open catchment policies of these schools. Students can be drawn from anywhere in the district or, in some cases, outside of the district. Other possible methods may include correlation of postal codes with district income levels by neighbourhood, or through school based data (i.e. school designation as inner-city school, or obtaining number of children who qualify for food programs). Obtaining this type of data, however requires substantial assistance from a governmental body.<sup>42</sup> More ethnographic work with traditional school families and other alternative school families would be beneficial to further understand the demographics of "choice" in BC.

Also, as noted in the Methodology discussion, the problems of the politics of research limited my access to the range of views and experiences within the TSM.

---

<sup>41</sup> For comprehensive evaluation of traditional schools, one needs to consult the provincial accreditations for King Traditional Elementary and Surrey Traditional Elementary (scheduled for 1999-2000 school year). Provincial accreditations include internal and external evaluators composed of parents and professional educators working to identify strengths and weaknesses of school services within the specific context of each school's population.

<sup>42</sup> This data was accessed by researchers from the Fraser Institute for their 1999 Secondary Schools Report Card, yet was not made available to researchers during the CCPA study. Ministry of Education staff cited lack of human resources as the reason for not complying with the CCPA request for this information.

## **II. Morality and Markets - The Politics of “Traditional Schooling”**

*The Abbotsford Traditional school will not be strictly “back to basics”, but will incorporate new methods and ideas into its traditional teaching methodology. The school is not elitist, not strict authoritarian, not private nor based on religion. It is not an attack on our teachers or our school system. It is a school of choice.*

### ***Founding Parents Proposal for a Traditional School in Abbotsford, BC***

Conceptualization of the TSM requires choosing between two dominant, competing paradigms. On the one hand, analysis of traditional programs, as simply one example of implementing “educational choice”, is often framed within a largely depoliticized discourse on “effective schools” or educational administration. Within this paradigm, reform-oriented researchers and theorists focus their scrutiny either on the “mechanics” of choice or on school features to identify “best practices” and determine the “essential” variables of educational success.

Critical theorists, on the other hand, have increasingly analyzed the ideological and political basis of “reforms” calling for increased choice and parental control and efforts to reintroduce Christian elements into public school curricula. “Traditional schooling” as an educational movement began in the late 1970s with the establishment of programs created by the activism of fundamentalist Christians reacting to the liberal education reforms of the 1960s.<sup>43</sup> During the 1990s, the electoral success of conservative political parties moved traditional schooling issues from the margins into the centre of public policy agendas. Both British Conservatives and US Republicans have supported “choice” schemes featuring traditional programs.

The work of recent education researchers in Britain and the US (Cooper, 1997; Smith, 1994; Jones, 1994; Scribner and Fusarelli, 1996; Adler, 1996) documents the moral agenda of Religious and New Right movements for public education. This agenda not only includes choice plans, but also the efforts of Religious Right groups to pressure school bodies to restrict multicultural/multi-faith education, sexual health and anti-homophobia education, introduce creationism and prayer in the classroom, and oppose outcomes-based education. A critical look at the TSM requires analyzing it in relation to

---

<sup>43</sup> H. Myers *Fundamentally Speaking*. (San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1977), pg. 51.

the broader political agenda of conservative political parties and interest groups and the state's response to their efforts to transform public education.

In their critique of traditional approaches to educational choice, Bowe, Gewirtz and Ball (1994)'s observe that de-politicized analyses of "parental choice" movements tend to "operate inside the discourses of choice and consumption" and,

*Project designs, methods, analysis and representation are generated by the assumptions, language and politics of choice, rather than 'breaking out of the discourse' to analytically and critically, 'get our heads around what we are inside and up against'...The task is therefore to look in a more concentrated fashion and question what is happening in the landscape of choice and to reveal and critically assess the 'carefully managed, prescribed viewpoints'"*<sup>44</sup>

Concurring with this observation, I believe educators need analyses of traditional schooling movements that address its explicitly political dimension. The emerging literature on educational politics in both Britain and the US present compelling reasons for broadening the definition of traditional schooling to include the New Right's efforts to re-inscribe religious fundamentalism into public schooling practices. In effect, the TSM represents the complex, sometimes contradictory efforts to create public policy that allows individual parents to choose and control a child's education based on their private views and philosophies as well as policies that, in effect, define public morality.

In the following literature review, I aim to locate the traditional schooling movement historically and ideologically. To this end, I illustrate the traditional schooling movement as an international phenomenon, closely linked to middle class reactions to structural shifts in the economy and the state as a vehicle for egalitarian social change. By touching on the different forms of research framing the traditional schooling debates, I hope to initiate a more integrated analysis of the TSM among education practitioners, theorists, and other community groups on matters of educational policy, practice and politics.

### ***Defining "Traditional Schooling"***

Drawing from numerous education movements, "traditional schooling" is a problematic concept. The literature on specific teaching strategies such as direct instruction is not sufficient to capture what is meant by "traditional schooling." Carlson (1992)'s definition of "traditional ideology" in the context of sexuality curriculum is useful for discussing moral elements included in traditional schooling paradigms. According to

Carlson, "traditional ideology" in the curriculum associated human sexuality with sin, and later, with sickness. This traditional ideology is deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian morality, a system of beliefs that valued asceticism, affirmed sexual activity only within the context of marriage and procreation, and supported a network of patriarchal authority structures in family, church and state as protection from the conditions of "modernity."<sup>45</sup> The rejection of "non-productive sexuality" is the foundation for prohibiting pre- or extra-marital sex, "sodomy", and homosexuality.<sup>46</sup> Carlson also notes that traditional ideology towards sexuality, when incorporated with social Darwinist scientific theories, revived the argument for repressing and sublimating sexuality as a necessity for "civilization".<sup>47</sup>

In practice, traditional schooling is used loosely and interchangeably with other terms such as "fundamental" and "back to basics" programs. In her study of traditional schools, Dickson (1991) dates traditional schooling movements to the 1930s, when the Essentialist movement first proposed that schools specifically focus on reading, writing, arithmetic, history and English while stressing student discipline and obedience. Popular appeal for traditional schooling has been cyclical, often corresponding to public reactions against educational policy directions and social and economic events. According to Dickson, post-war, "adjustment-based" courses of the 1950s were blamed for the perceived loss of American dominance in science and technology and led to demand for English, math, science, history and foreign languages.<sup>48</sup> Traditional education programs experienced another revival in the mid-1970s in the US following widespread experiments with child-centred, democratic approaches of the 1960s and the civil rights efforts to desegregate schools.

"Fundamental" schools were first introduced in the late 1970s in Pasadena, California as alternative programs that promised to restore, for the committed few, a return to competition, classroom order, strict discipline, virtuous patriotism and high achievement. The process of establishing the first alternative fundamental school in the US, the John Marshall Fundamental School, was documented by one of its founders.

---

<sup>44</sup> R. Bowe, S. Gewirtz, S. Ball "Captured by the Discourse? Issues and Concerns in Researching 'Parent Choice'" *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1994, pg. 76

<sup>45</sup> D. Carlson "Ideological Conflict and Change in the Sexuality Curriculum" in J. Sears (ed) *Sexuality and the Curriculum – The Politics and Practices of Sexuality Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), pg. 34.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. pg. 36.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. pg. 36.

<sup>48</sup> L. Dickson. *Focus on Fundamentals: A Longitudinal Look*. Mesa: Mesa Public Schools, July 1991.

Henry Myers, in his book *Fundamentally Speaking*.<sup>49</sup> This “manual” for establishing fundamental schools in North America illustrates how this movement fomented parent dissatisfaction with public education and mobilized grassroots activism. Promoters of fundamental schools encouraged parents to read books such as *Why Johnny Can’t Read*, *Programmed Illiteracy in Our Schools* and *What Are They Doing to Your Children?*, which validated the view that public schools were failing to meet their most basic mandate of imparting basic skills. Despite the efforts of committed, fundamentalist parents, these schools remained anomalies in an era of progressive change within the field of education.<sup>50</sup>

While the historical lineage of traditional programs of the 1990s can be traced back to the fundamental programs of the 1970s, it is important to note the differences. Traditional programs in the 1990s have toned down the Eurocentric language of “traditional, Christian values” and have tried to broaden their constituencies beyond white, religious conservatives. In BC, schools established in the 1990s modelled after Langley Fundamental School changed its nomenclature from “fundamental” to “traditional.” While the program philosophies are nearly identical, the shift from the term “fundamental” to “traditional” reflects a conscious distancing from organized religion. Also, where the fundamental schools were initially set up to inculcate “values” (in Langley, they were initially named “values schools”), traditional programs in the 1990s have defined themselves as simply another choice and an alternative to child-centred instructional approaches.

Traditional schooling movements of the 1990s owe much to the “excellence” movements that swept the US and Canada in the 1980s, beginning with the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s report, *A Nation At Risk*. It established a framework for measuring educational excellence that continues to dominate today. Scores on standardized tests and SATs (Scholastic Aptitude Tests), international comparisons of achievement, and the number of remedial courses at the college level are widely perceived as the only accurate indicators for assessing education. This report, along with a number of other studies, concluded that American public education

---

<sup>49</sup> Myers, Henry. (1977). *Fundamentally Speaking*. San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press.

<sup>50</sup> American sociologist Fred Pincus (“From Equity to Excellence: The Rebirth of Educational Conservatism”. *Social Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Winter 1984 pg. 50-56) describes the 1960s and 1970s as a period of “liberal consensus” when equity was a key concern and the federal government took the lead to end racial segregation and increased opportunities for minorities, women, and the poor. He notes that federal spending in the US in education at all levels sharply increased between 1960 and 1980.

was failing to provide its students with the adequate skills and knowledge to ensure US "preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation" against world competitors.<sup>51</sup> The report became the North American model for renewed public and political attention to "basics" education.

*A Nation At Risk* concluded that massive changes were needed in all areas of education content, standards and expectations, time, teaching, leadership and financial support. It defined "Five New Basics" - Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies and Computer Science - as mandatory course work and recommended state and local high school graduation requirements be raised.<sup>52</sup> The Commission advised that college-bound students be required to complete two years of foreign language study. It also recommended raising criteria for college admissions, lengthening the school day and school year in imitation of friendly foreign competitors, certification tests for teachers, and offering "merit pay" as strategies for improving education standards.

*A Nation at Risk* had its critics. In Bracey's (1997) critique of *A Nation At Risk*, he concludes that the repeated attacks against US schools, though unsubstantiated, continued despite the public system's successes in accommodating the complex demands placed upon it by a much larger, more diverse population.<sup>53</sup> Bracey observes that criticisms continued even when the contention of a decline was not supported by SAT scores and trends of achievement tests, as was the case between 1955 to 1965. Furthermore, when education indicators declined between 1965 and 1975, but then reversed and climbed to new heights, "...people noticed the decline, but not the rebound."<sup>54</sup> Bracey notes that achievement test scores rose virtually every year from 1975 to 1988, when they flattened out at all-time highs. Even SAT results, adjusted for the changing demographics of the test takers, have been rising since 1975.

Bracey concludes that *A Nation at Risk* was "a masterpiece of propaganda" that used very selective data to justify its conclusions. He cites many examples, including one where the Commission reported "a steady decline in the science achievement of 17

---

<sup>51</sup> According to R. Manzer, Canadian provincial governments came to similar conclusions in the late 1980s. (*Public Schools and Political Ideas – Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pg. 212.

<sup>52</sup> National Commission on Excellence in Education "A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" *Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 83, No. 5, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> Bracey, Gerald. "A Nation of Learners: Nostalgia and Amnesia" *Educational Leadership*, (Feb. 1997), pg. 55.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. pg. 53-57

year olds as measured by national assessments" but failed to note that the results for science and 17 year olds, "...was the only trend that supported the Commission's "crisis rhetoric":

*The science scores for 9 and 13 year olds did not drop. For reading and math, the national assessment scores at all three ages were slightly up. Of nine trends (three ages times three subjects), only one showed "a steady decline." The commission picked that one to publish.*<sup>55</sup>

The excellence movement, epitomized by reports such as *A Nation At Risk*, encoded "traditional" education into North American education policy as a 'distinct' form of pedagogy represented by particular student and teacher practices. By the 1990s, "traditional" or "fundamental" programs are interpreted as those with one or more of the following features:<sup>56</sup>

- a stated emphasis on the "basics" of reading, writing and arithmetic over other curricular areas within a given state-defined curriculum, where emphasis is placed on computational arithmetic, phonic drills in reading and reliance on consistent homework assignments. Such programs tend to minimize the importance of other areas in the curriculum such as career planning, multiculturalism and diversity, sex and lifestyle education, anthropological and sociological studies, and fine arts; and/or
- a stated emphasis on moral or character education (to the extent allowable under the province or state's education legislation); and/or
- a stated emphasis on enforcing student conduct and dress codes through school uniform policies, policies encouraging home-school communications, stated expectations for students and parents, clearly defined classroom and school procedures and the consequences for infractions that remain consistent with the provisions of the province's *School Act*, its regulations and its teachers' collective agreements; and/or
- a stated emphasis on "traditional," direct instruction methods; and/or
- a stated reliance on norm-referenced evaluations.

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. pg 53 - 57

<sup>56</sup> Dickson, pg. 3-4. She discusses various definitions of traditional schooling, as used by other researchers and theorists. This definition was one developed and used for the CCPA study.

Effective schools discourse, which analyzes the relationships between school culture variables (e.g. school leadership, staff collegiality and home-school cooperation) and student achievement, has popularized traditional programs and the choice movement as a whole. Mortimore (1997) notes that effective schools research is a "growth" area, "welcomed by governments and their agencies" in the UK, Singapore, the Netherlands and Australia and by educators themselves. He argues that research on effective schools can provide tools for individual school improvement, thereby assisting schools to attain the highest possible student outcomes, and provide opportunities for schools to "compensate" for society's inequalities.<sup>57</sup>

Yet, research on the effectiveness of traditional programs is itself sparse. Existing studies primarily are descriptive analyses of "traditional" curriculum and pedagogical methods. This is one of the ironies of the traditional schooling movement; while many of its advocates persistently critique public education systems for poor performance (as measured in international comparisons) and lack of accountability, this movement has failed to provide compelling research that traditional curriculum or traditional teaching practices are able to produce higher levels of achievement.

Even in cases where traditional school features are isolated, the results fail to support the argument that they are superior pedagogical approaches. For example, Dickson's (1991) 13-year longitudinal study of fundamental elementary programs in Mesa, Arizona provides empirical data on traditional elementary and secondary programs. Using data on school achievement and controlling for ethnicity, primary language, type of dwelling and parental structure of students, she found that students who consistently attended a fundamental school program throughout their elementary school years did not differ remarkably from comparison schools except in a somewhat higher index of ability when compared with one school. She also found that higher scores by fundamental school students on some subscales of standardized tests at grade 6 were not sustained at grades 9 or 11.

In terms of linking traditional schooling in elementary and secondary grades to student success in post-secondary education, Dickson's results suggest no significant advantage to fundamental schooling. In fact, fundamental school graduates tend to take college entrance exams required for local and state institutions rather than SATs, which are needed for more prestigious institutions. She found no difference in scores on

---

<sup>57</sup> P. Mortimore "Can Effective Schools Compensate for Society?" A. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown and A.

college entrance exams between fundamental school graduates and comparison school graduates. Lastly, she found that fundamental school graduates did not take more advanced placement courses than comparison school students.

Although not a focus of Dickson's work, the issue of "cultural capital" did surface in her results. She found that while fundamental students did not achieve more academic honours in high school, they did participate more in school activities and were found in leadership positions more often than comparison school students. School leadership positions, referring to volunteer, extracurricular activities that, in many ways, define particular school "cultures" (e.g. student councils, athletic teams, clubs, student newspaper, etc) are experiences that individual students can directly convert into economic capital as "marketable" skills. In so far as they reflect which students have accumulated the skills, status and power within schools, Dickson's work can be used to support cultural capital theory. Further, Dickson found that fundamental school students exhibited somewhat differing rates of dropout, withdrawal, or absenteeism than comparative school students; a higher per cent of students withdrew to private or home schools and may have transferred within district.

In fact, as we noted in the CCPA study, other analyses (Rosenholtz and Cohen, 1983; Cummin and Cameron, 1994) which look at the effect of "traditional" pedagogical methods such as direct instruction on minority students show that students who have been historically marginalized in public schools tend to be at a disadvantage in "traditional" classrooms, a consideration for many North American communities.<sup>58</sup>

While it is desirable to monitor and provide empirical data on how specific traditional programs operate, who they serve and their outcomes, as Dickson has done, such approaches seem narrowly focussed on specific types of educational "outcomes" and individual school features at the expense of analyzing larger economic and political trends that shape the goals, structures and delivery of public education systems. Recent scholars have analyzed social movements opting for curriculum that restores primacy to Judeo-Christian world views and Western Anglo-Saxon culture and policies that increase parental control over their children's education (Apple, 1988; Boyd, Lugg

---

Wells (eds.) *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pg.476.

<sup>58</sup> J. Cummins and L. Cameron "The ESL Student is the Mainstream: the Marginalization of Diversity in Current Canadian Educational Debates" in *English Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 3, Spring 1994, pg. 31. Cummins and Cameron state that norm-referenced testing undermines the ESL student's academic potential for at least six years after they have started to acquire English. Furthermore, they argue that rigidly sequenced, whole class instruction tends to be more difficult for ESL students to follow.

and Zahorchak, 1996; McCarthy, 1996; Fitz and Halpin, 1995; Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe, 1995; Cooper, 1997), yet these approaches confine the definition of "traditional schooling" to specific types of alternative programs. Literature from the United Kingdom has begun to analyze the significance of politics in education in light of Britain's 1988 *Education Reform Act*'s and the subsequent implementation of direct parental/consumer choice over schools. Increasingly, researchers are studying the role conservative interest groups played in creating a policy climate favourable to site-based management, grant-maintained schools, and increased skepticism for local education authorities. Analysts are also looking at the processes that encourage publicly funded schools to take on characteristics of private schools as a way of attracting students in a more competitive education market.

In the US, activism by religious traditionalists whose efforts to return "traditional schooling" to public schools has been characterized by attempts to: 1) eliminate objectionable materials and programs from public schools, 2) secure exemptions for their children from public school activities considered objectionable, 3) return devotional activities in public schools, and 4) increase opportunities for parents to select private schools that conform with their religious beliefs.<sup>59</sup>

In Canada, Cummins and Cameron note that the "back to basics" discourse attacks "progressive" or child-centred education generally, particularly "whole language" approaches to reading, "process" approaches to writing instruction and even multicultural education.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, in BC, education groups, boards, and parents are engaged in heated battles over sexual health, and anti-homophobia education.

Within the context of a conservative restoration in the UK, US, and Canada, education theorists describe "traditionalism" in schooling as a far-reaching ideological project, permeating all layers of the education system.<sup>61</sup> Parallel developments in all three nations suggest class based support for an education process that is Euro-centric, prescribes a religiously-based moral order, restores parental authority as paramount in all matters related to a child's education, and rejects egalitarian and anti-authoritarian approaches to education.

---

<sup>59</sup> M. McCarthy "People of Faith as Political Activists in Public Schools" in *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pg. 311-312

<sup>60</sup> Cummins and Cameron, pg. 30.

<sup>61</sup> S. Aronowitz and H. Giroux *Education Under Siege : The Conservative, Liberal, And Radical Debate Over Schooling* (New York : Bergin & Garvey, 1985.)

## ***Traditional Schooling and Educational Choice***

The TSM in BC has relied on the rhetoric of choice to gain political and public support for its policy agenda. In this section, I describe existing "choice" policy frameworks and give an overview of the TSM in relation to the school choice literature. Educational "choice" refers to a number of different policy schemes that promote, to varying degrees, program differentiation and greater parental initiative.<sup>62</sup> Some choice plans allow families to redirect state funding to designated private schools. The following is an overview of dominant "choice" plans in Britain and North America.

Within North American public systems, **alternative programs** are the oldest form of "choice." Alternative programs include both programs housed within an existing neighbourhood school (dual track programs) and separate alternative schools. Both can draw students from their catchment as well as other parts of the district. School districts throughout BC are authorized to offer locally developed courses and various alternative programs under Section 85 of the Schools Act.

While the number of alternative programs in BC districts is increasing, they are still concentrated in large, urban districts and predominantly at the secondary levels. As discussed earlier, alternative programs were historically associated with students at risk. In recent years, however, districts such as Vancouver, Surrey and Richmond have approved a growing number of alternative programs for high-achieving and gifted students. Vancouver, for example, which has the largest number of alternative programs offers Bridging Programs, Teen Parent Programs, French Immersion, International Baccalaureate, "Mini-Schools", and Montessori Programs within existing neighbourhood secondary schools.<sup>63</sup> In some cases, separate schools are needed to house an

---

<sup>62</sup> Glatter, Woods and Bagley (*Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997, pp7-28) develop a useful "typology of diversity" which describes the different ways through which schools can differentiate themselves from each other and from neighbourhood schools. A school's organizational structure/governance structure, its curriculum emphasis, its autonomy from education authorities are features for differentiation.

<sup>63</sup> "Bridging" programs are aimed at students who need remedial assistance to enable them to return to courses required for high school completion. According to the VSB "Options 99" Brochure (VSB: January 1999) International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are two-year option for gr. 11-gr. 12 aimed at students with good academic standing and strong reading and verbal skills. The program provides coursework in the languages, humanities, sciences and math and give graduates extra graduation credits; Challenge Programs are accelerated, enriched programs that allow students to finish three years of course work in a subject area in two years; mini schools are academically oriented secondary programs that focus on leadership development, and cooperative learning in small classroom settings. Minischool programs, only available in Vancouver thus far, attract hundreds of applicants and accept only 28 per year.

alternative program (i.e. career and technical centres).<sup>64</sup> At the elementary level, where there are far fewer alternative programs offered (i.e. Montessori, French, Mandarin Immersion), new programs are usually first introduced within an existing neighbourhood school.<sup>65</sup> All traditional schools in BC have been approved as alternative elementary schools.

Alternative programs typically have limited-enrollment thus requiring policies to deal with access and registration. This feature of alternative programs bears particular resemblance to private schools. Where neighbourhood schools have historically been required to accept all students registering within their catchment area even after school budgets have long been allocated (potentially contributing to school underfunding and overcrowding), alternative schools with capped enrollment are not similarly obligated. Moreover, while alternative programs must, in theory, be made accessible to all students in the district, demand for admission into academic and enrichment style alternative programs has become highly competitive. Programs at the elementary level typically regulate admission at the kindergarten level, with space allotment being decided on the basis of sibling preference, first-come/first-served, waiting lists, or lotteries.

At the secondary level, admission to alternative programs may require either a district assessment or a screening process upon entry. For most alternative academic programs, admission is highly competitive and may require qualifying examinations, a minimum grade point average, and an interview process.<sup>66</sup>

**Magnet programs/schools** is another term used to refer to special focus programs within American public education systems. They resemble enrichment

---

<sup>64</sup> In BC, public schools breakdown in the following way: 91% are neighbourhood schools (including those with alternative program streams), 3% are alternative schools, and the remaining 6% are composed of youth custody/residential attendance centres, and short and long-term provincial resource programs.(1994/95 Min. of Education Annual Report Statistical Supplement, pg. 32.)

<sup>65</sup> The only enrichment/academic oriented alternative programs offered in separate schools in BC aside from the Traditional Programs (Surrey, Abbotsford, Langley, etc) are Montessori (Vancouver and Surrey), Fine Arts (Langley) and Discovery School (Surrey), a learner-centred elementary program that is based on Adlerian philosophy. Program Cadre schools, while governed by a provincial Francophone Education Authority, are constitutionally protected programs available to Canadian Francophones. They receive federal funding and are not considered alternative programs.

<sup>66</sup> In Vancouver school district, eight alternative programs, dubbed "Options" programs, are available to "qualified" students who meet a minimum grade requirement (normally B or higher), entrance tests/questionnaires, and who are selected following an interview process. These programs include: City School (King George Sec.), Hamber Challenge Program (Eric Hamber Sec.), Ideal Mini School (Churchill Secondary), International Baccalaureate (Churchill and Britannia Sec.), Point Grey Mini (Point Grey Sec.), Prince of Wales, Templeton Mini (Templeton Sec.), and the VSB/UBC Transition Program. (source: VSB flyer "Options 99")

oriented alternative programs in that they offer special curricula or specialized instructional approaches. However, magnet programs evolved and proliferated in the US during the 1970s, specifically as an incentive for middle-class white and black parents to stay in the public school system. Magnet schools were programs designed to promote voluntary racial desegregation in various states, and as such, could receive supplemental funds from the federal government. Magnet school policies made provisions for low-income, minority families (e.g. subsidized transportation). Magnet schools are uniquely American forms of school "choice".

**Charter schools** are public school programs created by provincial or state legislation that allows groups or institutions other than locally elected school boards to form and govern schools. Such schools are governed by a school committee/council and may operate independently from locally-elected school boards, depending on the specific legislation adopted by the school province or state. Charter schools remain part of the public system in that they receive public funding and are subject to provincial/state legislation and regulations. Authority for school governance, however, may be transferred to private entities rather than an elected body. Charter schools may be exempt from certain sections of their province's *Schools Act* and regulations and granted the autonomy to determine budget, personnel, and other administrative matters. Accountability to the public system is limited to adhering to the provincial/state curriculum and conducting and reporting internal assessments of success in meeting its own 'charter' or 'constitution' to the Minister of Education. Charter schools operate with limited class sizes and open catchment policies. As of 1997, charter schools exist in 21 US states. In Britain, charter schools have their parallel in grant maintained schools, publicly funded schools which could "opt out" of their Local Education Authority in favour of site based management. These were programs created by statutes when the Conservatives' passed the *1988 National Education Reform Act*. In Canada, Alberta is currently the only province to adopt legislation to create charter schools.

**Voucher schools** refer to schools within a competitive system of providing state-funded education whereby state-regulated, public schools compete with other education institutions – including private schools – for students. Each student is entitled to a prescribed number of 'education credits' that can be used to offset the costs of education at recognized institutions. Currently there are no voucher systems in Canada.

In BC, there are also alternatives outside of the public education system – home schooling and independent/private schools - that entitle families to government funding for education, although not at the levels equivalent to public schools.

**Independent schools, or private schools**, are regulated under the *Independent Schools Act* and administered by their own boards. They must have a minimum enrolment of 10, provide statistics to the Ministry, and undergo inspection by the Ministry to ensure that: 1) no program promotes racial or ethnic superiority or persecution; religious intolerance or persecution; social change through violence; sedition, 2) facilities comply with provincial, municipal or regional district bylaws for zoning, health and safety; and 3) the school complies with the Act and regulations.

In 1997-98, BC had 359 independent schools serving 60,222 students, representing approximately nine percent of BC's student population.<sup>67</sup> Of these schools, 229 receive fifty percent of their per student costs from the Ministry of Education, the maximum available amount for independent schools.<sup>68</sup> Independent schools offset the remaining costs by charging families a tuition fee.

Independent schools vary in their non-profit status, the operating costs per FTE student, their compliance with the provincial curriculum and employment of provincially-certified teachers, evaluation procedures, facilities, and type of student accepted. In BC, 80% of independent schools are religiously based.<sup>69</sup> They are also permitted to establish their own selection criteria for student admission.

**Home schooling** is another option available to BC families under sections 12 to 14 of the *School Act*. Under these sections, a parent is required to provide an educational program to his/her child, and must register the child each year at a school of the parent's choice in their catchment area, at a distance education school providing services to the school district, or at an independent school. Public schools and Ministry

---

<sup>67</sup> Federation of Independent Schools Association. "Enrolment Comparing Public and Independent – Historical", Online: <http://www.direct.ca/fisa/enrolment.htm> Downloaded: June 22, 1999.

<sup>68</sup> Federation of Independent School Associations. "Basic Independent School Data 1996-97 – Number of Schools and Enrolment by Group Classification". Online: <http://www.direct.ca/fisa/enrolment.htm> Downloaded: June 22, 1999. Independent schools that qualify for 50% government funding are those schools which meet zoning, health, curriculum, pupil assessment, teacher certification requirements, pupil operating costs not exceeding public school per pupil operating cost. Must be non profit.

<sup>69</sup> Federation of Independent Schools Association, as of 1998-1999 school year, there are 359 independent schools in BC; 78 from the Society of Catholic School, 43 from the Society of Christian Schools (evangelical Protestant), 18 from the Independent School Association (non-denominational, boarding schools based on the British model) and 100 from the Associate Member Group (one of a kind/small associations of schools).

funded independent schools receive a grant for each home school child registered. This grant enables families who home-school their children to access educational programs and resources available from public schools or independent schools in which they are registered.

Given the relatively recent adoption of charter and voucher policies in the US and Britain and the variations among these policies, it is not surprising that the research on "choice" programs is limited. Young (1992) notes that choice options and plans have not been studied equally, that there is disparity in the quantity and quality of research conducted on each choice option, and that most of the existing research is correlational and far from conclusive.<sup>70</sup> Thus far, research on educational "choice" can be classified into three categories: research that assesses the effectiveness of different "choice" programs (Hirsch; 1996; Gamoran, 1996; also see Young and Clinchy's (1996) review of this literature)<sup>71</sup>, research that analyzes parents who participate in school choice and their "choosing" behaviours (Lee, Croninger and Smith, 1996; Martinez, Godwin & Kemerer, 1996; Goldring, 1996) and lastly, research that studies how individual schools and school systems respond following the introduction of "choice" plans (Hardman and Levacic, 1996; Levin and Riffel, 1996; West and Pennell, 1996).

Recent studies from the US have generated empirical data on the implementation of choice plans, attempting to defuse the highly charged rhetoric and thus far, largely unsubstantiated claims, made on both sides of the political spectrum over school choice. For example, Fuller et Elmore's (1996) volume, *Who Chooses, Who Loses* sums up the results of eight recent studies on school choice in the United States (Witte; Lee, Croninger and Smith; Wells, Martinez, Godwin and Kemerer; Henig;) and concludes that educational choice, in the context of American public education, is likely to increase separation of students by race, social class and cultural background and is unlikely, by itself, to increase either the variety of programs available to students or the overall performance of schools. They further conclude that the details and context of choice policies are critical factors in the effects of implementing "choice."<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> T. Young and E. Clichy. *Choice in Public Education*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992). pg. 20.

<sup>71</sup> "Effectiveness" in these studies can be measured as improvements in student retention, student achievement, cost-effectiveness, staff , student or parent satisfaction – depending on the design and goals of the choice policy.

<sup>72</sup> B. Fuller and R. Elmore, (eds.), *Who Chooses, Who Loses – Culture, Institutions and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997). pg. 188.

Despite the relevance of such findings to educators, variations in choice policies, cultural, legal and demographic factors limit the usefulness of empirical studies for international comparisons. Gewirtz et al. have argued that the first two approaches in particular – the “program assessment” approach and the “factors-of-choice” approach – tend to portray school choice as a decontextualized, undifferentiated, and neutral mechanism that operates on rational, unambiguous, clear-cut processes when in fact, the process may often be “messy”, multi-dimensional, and involving non-rational elements.<sup>73</sup> In so doing, Gewirtz et al. argue, these studies promote the “language of choice” and are themselves “caught up in market theory.”<sup>74</sup>

Gaskell (1994) points out that much of the research on American experiments with school choice, while suggestive, are of limited use in Canada where the provision of alternative education programs varies enormously from province to province and even among school districts in each province, and where state funding of private schools has been legally enforced and politically accepted in the national education landscape since Confederation. Notwithstanding global trends of economic restructuring and increasing privatization of public services, educational diversity in Canada is still cast within a legal and political framework designed to accommodate cultural, religious and linguistic pluralism and to minimize regional disparities in population and social services.

While providing much needed empirical evidence on the outcomes of school differentiation, studies that focus on the effects of choice have not adequately analyzed the context for “choice” programs. For example, American magnet programs were generally developed in inner city districts, within a context of pervasive racial segregation and significant economic disparity among racial groups, and the failure of government sanctioned desegregation to stem white flight. Alternative programs developed within this context, regardless of how similar in description and policy framework, have no parallels thus far in Canada.

These approaches have not been able to capture the ‘grey areas’ in the choice debate, i.e. shifting definition of “alternative” programs towards academic or enrichment “options”, the ambiguities of financing and administering alternative programs in contrast to neighbourhood schools, and how alternative programs are perceived and accessed by parents. In BC, we need analytical tools to address the growth of the TSM and the

---

<sup>73</sup> Gewirtz et al., pg. 6-7.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

increasing number of academic/enrichment programs alternatives, the significance for neighbourhood schools and the implications of alternative program processes and policies that are blind to class, racial and gender inequities.

### ***Critical Approaches to Traditional Schooling and “Choice”***

In the 1990s, critical theorists have undertaken analyses of the ideological dimension of “parental involvement”, “choice” and “traditional schooling” by focussing on the interplay between existing social inequalities and market mechanisms in shaping schooling practices. Griffiths and Smith (1991) situate “traditional schooling” in relation to a broader, class-based discourse on parenting. British theorists such as Edwards and Whitty (1997), Halpin Power and Fitz (1997) and Gewirtz et al (1996) contextualize the promotion of “choice” and the re-appearance of “traditional schooling” in terms of class-based responses to state initiatives to transform the British education system into a more comprehensive, egalitarian system. Other theorists from both Britain and the US (Cooper, 1997; Carr and Hartnett, 1996) have added analysis of right-wing political movements into the education policy discourse. In exposing the assumptions, values, interests and contradictions of “traditional schooling” and “choice,” critical approaches have broadened and politicized education policy discourses.

Critical theorists’ attention to language as the transmitter of ideology has promoted analysis of how TSM and choice movements draw on broader parenting and consumer discourses, and liberal discourses on multiculturalism to mobilize a broader following.<sup>75</sup> “Parental involvement” in education, for example, is a maxim of both moral traditionalists and choice activists that is mirrored and espoused in daily newspapers, numerous magazines, popular and academic publications, government and school district literature and policies and school practices. Yet, there have been few attempts to analyze the normative assumptions about gender roles, and race and class differences

---

<sup>75</sup> A. Griffiths and D. Smith “Constructing Cultural Knowledge: Mothering as Discourse” in Gaskell, J. and McLaren, A. (eds.). *Women and Education Second Edition*, (Calgary: Detselig Ent. Ltd, 1991). pg. 90-91. They define “discourse” as an organization of relations among people participating in a conversation mediated by written and production processes. A discourse has a social organization of authorities, sites, production processes, etc. It does not consist only of ‘statements’ but of ongoing interchanges among ‘experts’ doing research and developing theories in the context of universities and similar sites, the training of teachers in the theories and categories thus developed. The discourse provides the working language coordinating teachers’ classroom experience with that of other educators and administrators; it provides material for the writing of newspaper stories and materials for women’s magazines; it links the preparation of courses in high school and colleges to practices of reading and learning on the part of professional and lay practitioners..

of this discourse. Mass culture's portrayal of parenting promote a definition of parental involvement that negates difference, and particularly more onerous barriers facing minority parents in dealing with school institutions.

The issue of "parents rights" and the demands of "traditionalists" are framed by existing policy paradigms to deal with group differences. Canadian discourse on multiculturalism, shaped by over twenty years of government-funded initiatives and public relations campaigns, idealizes the integration and accommodation of cultural and racial minorities into a common "mainstream" society. Transforming the mainstream, according to this model, is the route to cultural and racial equality. In terms of the TSM in BC, the influence of this paradigm is to create a discomfort with the idea of self-selecting racial and cultural enclaves (as is the case with the Richmond and Vancouver TSMs), while simultaneously accepting the idea of self-selecting class enclaves.

Analysis by Griffiths and Smith (1991) argue that the dominant paradigm for parental involvement in education stem from the broader "mothering" discourse that assumes a singular type of family organization (the complete nuclear family), makes no concessions or variations for the practical and material struggles of mothering work or the reality that mothers have limited ability to control the school situation. The dominant parenting discourse orients educational authorities, school, parents and voters to interpret class-based differences in education and student outcomes as simply differences among individual families, and in particular, individual mothers. Their interviews with both middle-class and working class mothers on their experiences with schools led them to conclude that:

*The division of labour in socializing and educating children has come to be defined in ways that take for granted middle-class family knowledge, time and resources. What may properly be considered the work of parents (and mothers in particular) and the boundaries of school responsibility has been and continues to be negotiated within a discourse that presupposes middle-class resources and familial organization.<sup>76</sup>*

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of cultural and social capital, Gewirtz et al.'s study of parental choice and evolving school level responses to the new 'market'-driven policy environment created under the Conservative Regime of the 1980s richly illustrated the market as "a middle-class mode of social engagement." This approach suggests a model for analyzing public language and discourse – as data – across different policy contexts and communities at different stages of the "comprehensive-market" continuum.

---

<sup>76</sup> Griffiths and Smith, pg. 93.

It also depicts the agency of school administrators within community and national movements.

Using a qualitative approach, Gewirtz et al. conducted 137 interviews with parents, headmasters, and teaching staff and reviewed school-related literature and LEA documents of 14 secondary schools in three LEAs (school districts).<sup>77</sup> By studying changes in school language and relationships articulated in the data, Gewirtz et al. found schools were increasingly oriented towards meeting the demands of middle-class parents. This was evidenced by school administrators who, in competing for students and funding, increasingly believed school survival depended on 'oversubscribing' schools and "balancing" the numbers of students who would require special assistance or learning resources with "able" students who are most likely to enhance the school's performance (those published in district "league tables") with the least expensive forms of instruction.<sup>78</sup> Further, they found that parental choice of school is based on the perceived class, and in cases, racial composition of schools.<sup>79</sup>

Gewirtz et al. point to changes in the discourse directed at parents from schools as a reflection of shifting education values. They found that, as schools compete for "customers", information provided to the public about school activities, i.e. individualized school mission statements, school brochures and of course, published examination/school evaluation results, increasingly resembled corporate, promotional materials designed to attract families that would benefit the school rather than to meaningfully inform and involve families in the education process.

Gewirtz et al.'s concluded that choice policies reinforce pre-existing social inequalities and represent a systemic retreat from two decades of attempting to create an education system that would be socially and educationally advantageous for all children, regardless of ability, class or ethnic background. This study addresses how the Eurocentric bias of parenting discourses mystify racism and class relations that permeate education institutions. For example, they observed that some South Asian families chose schools known to have high attendance from other South Asian families because they characterized it as "safe" and because of its emphasis on traditional

---

<sup>77</sup> Gewirtz et al., pg. 13. School-related literature refers to reports, performance indicators from each school. LEA documents refers to LEA/district material on parental choices and school enrollments, minutes, plans and documents related to school choice and LEA planning and spending.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. pg. 186-187.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. pg. 184.

approaches and academic achievement. At the same time, white working class parents in the same district rejected the school because of its high intake of South Asian pupils. Within the framework and discourse of school choice, these dynamics of racism and class conflict are simply absorbed and legitimized in the rhetoric of individual choice.

Gewirtz et al.'s discussion of a typology of parents ("privileged/skilled choosers", "semi-skilled choosers" and "disconnected choosers") and how gender, class and racial identities mediate parents' choices on schooling enriches the literature on choice. This study notes that "skilled choosers" refer to those parents that have both the social and economic resources to effectively 'decode' the choices that would most benefit their children and the skills and inclination to effectively maneuver through complex school systems and organizations on behalf of their children. Moreover, Gewirtz et al. found that skilled choosers were drawn to programs perceived to be high profile, elite and selective based on traditional school symbolism such as highly emphasized codes for student discipline, school uniforms, league [standardized test results listed by school] results, and teaching styles.

Studying the institutional responses of schools to increased competition has also forced a critical appraisal of whether the coupling of "choice" and decentralized governance will improve public education. Halpin et al. (1997) studied the effect of self-governance on the organizational features, management structures, and educational identities of grant maintained schools within the "new" education market.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, they found that, to be successful, grant maintained schools were more likely to have additional administrative positions and more teacher support than LEA managed institutions and more hierarchical and traditional organizational structures than in LEA schools.<sup>81</sup> They also found that curricular innovation and diversification was "an exception" rather than the rule. Instead of new, more innovative approaches to teaching or to curriculum content, school administrators reported curriculum changes either "gloss[ed] on the National Curriculum" or were "revivals of academic selectivity and traditional modes of education generally".

In a similar investigation of parental choice and diversification within Britain's new education "market", Edwards and Whitty (1997) found that private schools remain the

---

<sup>80</sup> Halpin, Power and Fitz, in *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects* ((London: Routledge, 1997), pg. 61). Halpin et al conducted fieldwork in 17 secondary schools, of which nine were grant maintained, seven were LEA maintained, and one was privately funded.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. pg. 63

standard for "traditional" and modern versions of educational "excellence" in the British educational system. Despite modernized elements in the curriculum, traditional values and symbols remained important features of the grant-maintained schools in their study.<sup>82</sup> Interviews with students reveal that despite being aware that school rules and routines were superficial indicators of the level of discipline and learning taking place, students at grant maintained schools were beginning to perceive the quality of their school as superior to adjacent LEA [school board] governed schools.<sup>83</sup>

The critical research on educational choice discussed here not only addresses the stratifying outcomes of "choice", it also grounds discussions of "traditional schooling" within the historical significance of private schooling in Britain and other western nations. In Britain, where graduates from elite, private schools have obtained a disproportionate number of university placements and high status occupations, legislative reforms increasing school choice in the public sector effectively encourage public schools to reinvent themselves to resemble private schools. This analysis lends itself to critiques of "traditional schooling" in North America, where private schools modelled on the British system have been transplanted and emulated. The historical link between elite private schools and the professional and business classes is part of the appeal of "traditional" and other academic track programs.

Professional educators have generally not theorized the "common sense" appeal of traditional school symbolism and the discourse of school choice. Traditional schools are defended on the basis of the value of assemblies, systems of rewards and punishments and dress codes, thereby reinforcing conventional notions of rigour and discipline. According to Halpin, this amounts to a defense of tradition by "asserting its formulaic truth without regard to consequences" and reaffirms education values that cherish academic achievement at the expense of any critical interpretation of authority, something that Halpin finds "profoundly paradoxical".<sup>84</sup>

*In a society which requires them to choose among alternatives, we have a group of schools which deny, without serious reflection, the possibility and utility of other ways of doing things. Instead, they are uncomplicatedly wedded to the past; they inherit old rather than create new working patterns. They reinforce, even actively promote, a growing disjunction between the world of school and worlds outside.*

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. pg. 63

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. pg. 62-68

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. pg. 67-68

While Halpin finds the cultural nostalgia of the New Right to be in contradiction to reality of diversity in advanced capitalist societies, Elliott and MacLennan (1996) observe that,

*Reaffirmation of high culture is compatible with one aspect of a modern economy; it provides a means of sorting and selecting, by purportedly objective and universalistic criteria, individuals who can then take their place in a highly stratified social structure.<sup>85</sup>*

In the next section, I will discuss the recent spate of articles and publications addressing the role of conservative politics in the revival of "traditionalism" in education. This literature broadens the scope of education discourse and demands that developments in education policy be analyzed in the context of larger social and political movements.

### ***Traditional Schooling as Politics of the Right***

Few education movements have generated the same level of direct involvement from powerful political interest groups as has the TSM. Morality and markets are tightly linked in the impetus for traditional schooling in the US and Britain. Analysis of education movements have generally focused on legal and administrative processes and ignored the significance of Religious and Economic Right activism on local and national policy making.

Sociologists, education practitioners and community activists are now taking note of the role religiously-based citizen groups play in promoting "basics" curriculum and parental control over education. Organizations such as Citizens for Excellence in Education, the Rutherford Institute, the Council for Basic Education, the National Association for Professional Educators and Focus on the Family (see pg. 61) have been critical of the secular public system and promoted the growth of fundamental alternative programs since the late 1970s.<sup>86</sup> But now, their efforts to change education are on a much larger scale. By mobilizing voters in school board elections and state-wide referenda, and lobbying strongly for "family values" policies within state and federal

---

<sup>85</sup> Elliott and MacLennan, pg. 172.

<sup>86</sup> According to Clarkson, the Charlottesville-based Rutherford Institute is the "premier legal arm of the religious right, acting as a sort of reactionary version of the ACLU" (Clarkson, F. and Porteus, S. *Challenging the Christian Right – The Activist's Handbook*. Great Barrington: Institute for First Amendment Studies Inc., 1992.)

political parties, Christian conservatives emerged in the 1980s as an influential voting bloc in American politics. To them, public education is a particularly important site of political struggle. They have engaged in conflicts over school prayer, sex education, the retention of Christian celebrations within the school year, evolution vs. creationism, outcome-based education, multicultural education, etc. while simultaneously calling for adoption of charter and/or voucher choice plans in over twenty US states. By mobilizing the necessary resources to take these moral battles to the electoral arena, the leadership of the Religious Right have taken advantage of high levels of voter apathy in civic processes such as local, state and national elections to set the tone, direction and pace of educational change in American education.

A notable example of Religious Right activism is the National Association of Christian Educators and Citizens for Excellence in Education (NACE/CEE). NACE/CEE was formed in the wake of early experiments with fundamental schools and became very involved in advocating "traditional" approaches to education reform. Since 1983, NACE has functioned as a support organization for Christian teachers in public schools. CEE started shortly after to "enable parents to exert pressure from outside the bureaucracy." NACE/CEE has since operated as a unified organization of parents and teachers, sharing information and strategies, with an explicit mandate to work with Christians and conservatives to restore academic excellence and traditional moral values to public schools.<sup>87</sup> Its services and activities include helping individuals develop "opt-out" policies for sex education and outcome-based education, forming local "chapters" that lobby for conservative policy and curricula, promoting election of conservative school boards, and publishing resources that "help parents and professionals understand issues and research from a conservative world view."<sup>88</sup>

National organizations like NACE/CEE have gone beyond simply lobbying individual school districts for traditional programs. They have mobilized nation-wide efforts to shape public education policy around fundamentalist Christian values. NACE/CEE publications like *How to Elect Christians to Public Office* (1985), *Reinventing America's Schools Vol 1* (1992), and *A Guide to the Public Schools For Christian Parents and Teachers and Especially Pastors* (1993) convey its agenda - radical restructuring and redefinition of public education.

---

<sup>87</sup> National Association of Citizens for Excellence in Education (NACE/CEE) "Welcome to NACE/CEE" Website: <http://www.nace-cee.org> Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. "Resources and Products" <http://www.nace-cee.org/resource.html> Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

Widespread recognition of the Religious Right as a political movement has, in turn, added new approaches to analyzing activism in public education. On the one hand, administrators and policy makers like Vondra (1996), Burron (1996) and Brandt (1996) frame the fundamentalist agenda as simply another set of issues that requires negotiation, like any other group, with the main thrust being "conflict resolution" and consensus. The titles of their work - "Resolving Conflict Over Values", "Building Consensus – On Finding Common Ground with Religious Conservatives", "Parents Rights – Society's Imperatives: A Balancing Act" – illustrates the dominant paradigm offered in professional publications such as *Educational Leadership* (April 1996). Representing traditional approaches to conflicts in education, this analysis invites strategizing over how to de-fuse crises, avert "negative publicity" and attempt to prevent an "us-against-them" climate, rather than a real deconstruction of power relations between families and the institution or even relations between parent groups.

Adler's (1996) study of public school curriculum challenges in California cautions liberal educators who interpret challenges from religious groups as "transitory" aberrations caused by "fringe" groups. Her research suggests that conflicts over the role of religion in public schools will be a continuous and widespread phenomenon.<sup>89</sup> She provides a useful, statistical snapshot of the types of curricular challenges received by school districts. She identifies who files challenges, offers a breakdown of curriculum challenges by school sites, and explains how districts are influenced by challenges and the reasons why challenges are difficult to resolve.

In marked contrast, teachers' groups and community groups in the United States have taken an active role in critiquing the trend and the ideology of "traditionalism" and choice in US public education. The work of McCarthy (1996), Scribner and Fusarelli (1996), Sorenson (1996), Boyd, Lugg and Zahorchak (1996), Cooper (1997) Jones (1994), and organizations such as People for the American Way (PFAW) provide analysis that reflects the political discourses and experiences of teachers, parents, administrators. Their research and analysis offers an ideological critique of the Religious Right and its exclusive vision of public education and public policy in general.

Jones (1993) describes the Religious Right as "politically and theologically driven, nationally orchestrated, locally played, and focussed on state, judicial, school,

---

<sup>89</sup> Adler, L. "Institutional Responses – Public School Curriculum and Religious Conservatives in California" *Education and Urban Society* May 1996, pg. 331.

church and family institutions.<sup>90</sup> Her research includes a historical account of its leaders and their activities, an assessment of its base of support, key organizations and individuals who wield power within the movement and the significance of the movement to classroom and school practices.

PFAW, a national watchdog on the electoral and grassroots activities of the Religious Right in the US, has published numerous reports on the Religious Right's campaigns in public education with detailed analyses of organizations such as the Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council, Focus on the Family, the Traditional Values Coalition and the American Family Association.

Carr and Hartnett (1996) address the role of conservative think-tanks and policy papers in Britain in building the intellectual foundation for a New Right policy shift in education. The Black Papers, for example, was a series published between 1969 and 1975 that attacked egalitarian school reforms. Collectively, publications such as the Omega File and *Whose Schools?* (which advocated greater "consumer power" for parents, local control over education authority and financing, and the de-professionalization of teachers) and the 1992 White Paper, *Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools*, had an effect similar to that of *A Nation at Risk*, bringing widespread suspicion about the public system's efficacy.

The promotion and dissemination of research from conservative think-tanks like the Economic League, Freedom Association, Salisbury Group, Council for the Preservation of Educational Standards, Social Affairs Unit, the Hillgate Group, and the Parental Alliance for Choice in Education became an important component of New Right strategy in Great Britain. They revived policies in the 1990s that had been politically unpopular in the liberal climate following the 1960s.<sup>91</sup> The result was that, by 1996, Britain was among the first nations to deregulate public school governance, implement a national curriculum (based on traditional English grammar school subjects) and place an even stronger emphasis on standardized testing while at the same time, virtually removing policy reforms implemented in the 1970s and 1980s to reduce class inequity in the British education system. Other studies of the 1988 and 1993 *Education Reform Acts* (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Halpin, Power and Fitz, 1997; Edwards and Whitty, 1997) document the links between Britain's Conservative Party and policies that brought back

---

<sup>90</sup> J. Jones, *No Right Turn*, (Federal Way: Washington Education Association, 1993) pg. 13.

<sup>91</sup> W. Carr and A. Hartnett, *Education and the Struggle for Democracy: The Politics of Educational Ideas*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), pg. 143-145.

"traditional" approaches to curricula, methods of instruction and efforts to decentralize and de-regulate public education.

Though predominantly focused on the New Right and the class interests in the school choice movement, the sociological literature from Britain is beginning to address the intersections of race, class and gender in their education movements. Cooper (1997) refers to a "New Christian Right" in Britain that seeks to "reinscribe the terms of religious settlement in Britain's schools" and whose mission was "to remake schools as communities of belief and to locate Christianity at the heart of those communities." Cooper's analysis of the Christian Right in Britain looks at the religious aspects of neo-conservatism in British education. In her analysis of legal texts and policy documents, she concludes that the 1988 *Education Reform Act* facilitated "the resettlement of Christianity within the British school system."<sup>92</sup> She describes the *Act* as a means of legislating "Christian" power in state schools through statutory provisions which mandate: 1) all pupils to take part in a daily act of collective worship; 2) religious education as part of the basic curriculum for all students within maintained [publicly funded] schools. Syllabi are to "reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain."<sup>93</sup> According to Cooper, the effect has been to deny religious autonomy to British youth, even those over the age of consent (18 yrs), through the education system.

*Young people, even those who are 18 cannot choose whether to participate in religious worship or study. Any sense that they may have a religious identity separate from that of their parents is denied by the statutory provisions, which throughout, refer to safeguarding parental rights and interests.*<sup>94</sup>

Unlike the other forms of education research described earlier, this type of analysis confronts the ideology and structures of the movements for traditional schooling and school choice. By pointing out the political machinery behind these movements and by bringing attention to the potential effects of traditionalism and choice movements on

---

<sup>92</sup> D. Cooper, "At the Expense of Christianity: Backlash Discourse and Moral Panic" in *Dangerous Territories – Struggles for Difference and Equality in Education* L. Roman and L. Eyre (eds.) (New York: Routledge, 1997), pg. 45

<sup>93</sup> Cooper, pg. 46-47

<sup>94</sup> Cooper, pg. 53.

education systems that serve culturally, racially, and socio-economically stratified societies, they disrupt the “inevitability” and populist appeal of New Right public policies. In the US, for example, civil rights groups and teachers unions have used information on Christian Right groups to mobilize the public and breed skepticism about the motivations of the Religious Right campaigns (Jones, PFAW). Analyses of these movements are accompanied by sample policy documents, petitions, etc. to encourage counter-activism among community groups, teachers unions, district policy makers and parents and explicit calls to contest the Right electorally and in public forums.

Arguably, this contrast in tone and analysis between education administration theory and political and sociological approaches points to the discursive divide between education researchers and theorists and education practitioners. As the practice of education becomes increasingly consumed by ideological and political questions, much of education research appears to be increasingly de-politicized and unable to provide practitioners with the analytical or empirical tools they need to address the conflict between competing visions of public education.

Critical analysis of traditional schooling movements, however, requires more than “naming” its ideology and its components. Michael Apple (1998) argues that an informed and effective response to conservative movements requires an analysis of their ideas about education and the state's role and efforts to create an education system for a free and democratic society. In his essay, “Becoming Right”, Apple uses a case study of one community facing a curriculum challenge to critique the education establishment's process of response, noting that these issues are more complex and warrant more informed action than simply pitting “responsible parents” who support education professionals in their decisions against “irresponsible, right wing censors.”<sup>95</sup> Apple adds:

*The construction of this binary opposition created a situation in which the only ways that parents and other community members could be heard was to occupy the spaces provided by the state. These were expanded and partly transformed, of course. But, the only way these concerned individuals could get attention was to become increasingly aggressive about their claims and increasingly organized around conservative cultural and religious themes. Social identities are formed in this way. Thus, moderately conservative and “moderate” community members are slowly transformed into something very different.<sup>96</sup>*

---

<sup>95</sup> M. Apple, “Becoming Right” in D. Carlson and M. Apple (eds.) *Power, Knowledge, Pedagogy – The Meaning of Democratic Education in Unsettling Times* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), pg. 142.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. pg. 142.

One of Apple's main points is that the education establishment has developed 'pat' responses to particular political and ideological conflicts that may fail to recognize legitimate concerns raised by conservative parents. It is the task of educators and administrators to identify and acknowledge the ways that the structures of public education system do stratify, marginalize and fail to serve all families equally. Apple's analysis highlights the importance of structures and practices that build mutual understanding and cooperation between educators and parents and encourage the articulation of more democratic visions of public education than what the New Right offers.

In Canada, analyses of educational politics have focussed either on the effects of constitutional issues or economic restructuring on national social programs such as education. Wide differences between provincial education systems and jurisdictional issues between federal and provincial governments make national debates on education difficult. Wilson and Lazerson (1982) for example, ground discussion of religion, values and "parental choice" in Canadian education on our nation's unique legal and historical framework. This discussion of legal status and funding arrangements for "traditional", private, religious schools, Aboriginal education, and minority languages in Canada documents how educational pluralism has been a hallmark of Canadian schooling, making it distinct from both the British and the American experience. Constitutional protection for funding various forms of "traditional", religious, private education distinguishes the tenor and thrust of Canadian debates from those that occur in the US.

Research on specific traditional school movements in Canada, albeit extremely limited, suggest that traditional schooling movements have had bouts of popular appeal, but have not achieved political gains comparable to their counterparts in Britain or the US. Elliott and MacLennan (1994) note that fundamentalist religious organizations "committed to restoring traditional values", were formed in the late 1970s to advocate for Judeo-Christian principles in schooling in BC.<sup>97</sup>

In their study of the Genuine Education Movement (GEM), Morgan and Robinson (1981) described this precursor to the TSM as an isolated, politically conservative movement with a middle-class, Protestant constituency. Their attempts to affect "higher standards, more discipline, and moral education" into public schooling in Vancouver during the 1970s met with little success after their defeat in the 1974 school board

---

<sup>97</sup> Elliott and MacLennan, pg. 169.

elections.<sup>98</sup> This study also took note of a particular feature of the early traditional schooling movement that may still have bearing today - that it was highly dependent on key individuals to "change diffuse, unorganized discontent to organized collective action."<sup>99</sup>

Barlow and Robertson (1994) staunchly argue that "traditionalism" in education has resulted from increasing corporatization of education policymaking in Canada and conservative alliances between moral conservatives and neo-liberals that have come together on an agenda for school reform to restructure public education, albeit for different reasons.<sup>100</sup> Noting the American Religious Right's influence on Canadian groups such as the Quality Education Networks and Associations and the critique of "whole language" and "child-centred" instruction, they too argue that the "right wing alliance" is gaining credence with the Canadian public. Parents anxious over the state of the economy want guarantees that their children will succeed in a fast-changing, technology driven, global economy.

Canadian mainstream media's fascination with traditional schooling controversies has made for populist debate and a piece-meal analysis of traditional schooling and parental rights movements. In BC, media has converged on traditional school activists during the early stages of traditional school organizing and dwindles as districts pass resolutions to approve or reject proposals for traditional programs. Curriculum controversies have also drawn attention to Abbotsford and Surrey, districts located in 'bible-belt' communities, where moral traditionalists have fought for restricted student access to curriculum and policy for sexual health education, anti-homophobia education and where the right to teach creationism [in Abbotsford only] has been included in science courses.<sup>101</sup> Few Canadians are aware of the proliferation of traditional schools proposals circulating in various BC school districts, the links between organizers of "traditional" charter schools in BC and Alberta, or the financial resources directed into the movement and to shaping public opinion about education issues.

Developments in other Canadian provinces indicate a rapid adoption of American style parents' rights agenda. In Ontario, a recent report by the Education Improvement

---

<sup>98</sup> M. Morgan and N. Robinson, "The Back to the Basics Movement". *Canadian Journal of Education*. Vol. 1, no. 2 Pg. 1-11.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. pg. 8.

<sup>100</sup> M. Barlow and H. Robertson, *Class Warfare*. (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1994).

<sup>101</sup> P. Brook, "War over Words" in *Chatelaine Magazine*, December 1998, pg. 46-58.

Commission has recommended the creation of a "parents bill of rights", standardized report cards for schools and boards so taxpayers can compare schools and boards across the province, and that parent councils must be consulted on program and curriculum priorities, field trip policies, and the hiring and evaluation of school administrators.<sup>102</sup> The extent to which these developments will be emulated in other Canadian jurisdictions certainly points to an area requiring future study and research.

## **Conclusion**

Despite significant controversies, traditional programs and the notion of school choice continue to appeal to the public and policy-makers alike. In order to critically assess the appeal of traditional schooling and parents' rights movements, one must consider the existing research on traditional programs and choice plans, and the critical sociological literature that analyzes the ideology of traditional schooling and educational choice. While traditional schooling has been identified as a type of educational program, it represents much more than a specific instructional strategy or curriculum. This literature review places traditional programs within the social and political context of the conservative restoration in Britain and North America in the 1980s and 1990s and establishes the groundwork for a critical examination of the TSM.

The symbolic appeal of "tradition" and the rhetoric of choice harnessed with effective schools discourse have allowed conservatives to present "traditional schooling" unproblematically, situating traditional schools as simply another choice backed by consumer demand. It is important to refer to the lack of research on the long term effects of traditional programs and choice policies. What currently exists suggest that both tend to exacerbate and obscure educational inequalities between students from working class and minority culture backgrounds and their middle-class counterparts.

I have discussed the symbolic appeal of private schooling in the UK and North America and the TSM's attempts to revive academic selectivity in place of comprehensiveness as the bedrock values for public education. British education sociologists studying the effects of school choice after the 1988 *Education Reform Act* demonstrate how public schools forced to compete with historically selective, private schools began to market themselves to resemble such schools. In this climate, public

---

<sup>102</sup> "More parental access to schools urged in Ontario", in the *Vancouver Sun*, Nov. 21, 1998

schools “reinvented” themselves into hybrids of technological and curricular innovation and social conservatism. In considering this comparison between BC’s traditional schools and private schools, it is interesting to note that as part of their rhetoric, traditional schools claim to be able to draw private school families back to the public system.<sup>103</sup>

Traditional schooling and parents’ rights movements are inherently political challenges to the idea of a “welfare state” and the liberal consensus that has dominated western education since the post-WWII era. In exploring the links between education policy developments and locally specific political movements, it is possible to identify more clearly the overlapping conservative interests served by increasing parental control over education.

As Gewirtz et al. point out, the distributional outcomes of educational choice policies depend on both parental behaviours and the schools’ responses to market-oriented discourse and policies. Educators, trapped by the diverse and generally depoliticized discursive practices of their profession and working in isolation from researchers and political theorists, are divided in their analysis of “traditional schooling” movements. Educators immersed in liberal conceptions of diversity and pluralism, interpret the demands of highly motivated and committed parents in the same light as any other demand made of the public system. Without an analysis of power and privilege, these educators perceive their challenge to be finding ways to accommodate the demands of these persistent and increasingly resourceful parents within existing resources and contractual arrangements.

For those teachers and community groups engaged in localized issue-by-issue battles to stem even greater religious influence over the curriculum and to resist Eurocentrism or class-bias within the public system - the demands of highly motivated and politicized parents are necessarily debated on ideological grounds. Yet, while education researchers and theorists accumulate much-needed empirical and theoretical analyses on the implications of these movements, they seem dissociated from the “actors” in the public realm. The result, it seems, is that a politically informed critique of the concept of traditional schooling remains largely unarticulated and the notion of

---

<sup>103</sup> In the CCPA study, we noted that according to Ministry of Education data, 11 students from Surrey Traditional and 4 from King Traditional’s founding classes were originally students at Traditional Learning Academy.

traditional schooling as a solution to the problems of public education continues to gain popular appeal.

The range of analytical approaches reviewed in this chapter illustrates a growing gap between what is happening “on the ground” and much educational research and theory. This review establishes how, in other jurisdictions, the ideology of traditional schooling and choice have given rise to education policies with strong political appeal. In the following chapter, I will trace the roots of the TSM in BC, identify the motivations, class and cultural interests, and the structures driving the movement.

### **III. BC's Traditional Schooling Movement**

#### **Introduction**

Document research supplemented by interviews with key TSM “activists” suggests that the traditional schooling movement has evolved into a significant, political movement in BC. Supported by well-resourced think tanks, mainstream political parties and committed grassroots activists, the TSM of the 1990s successfully framed education policy debates in BC’s largest school districts. By focussing their efforts on issue-specific, “hot button” campaigns, religious traditionalists effectively challenged the province’s Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) curricula and created a chilly climate for educators wanting to raise student awareness of their own sexual health and social issues pertaining to sexual orientation and homophobia. School choice advocates, for their part, not only obtained public and school district recognition of the “right” to “traditional” programs, they exacerbated the competitive dynamic among public schools. This chapter will examine the different roles played by these two groups within the TSM and how, jointly, they are redefining “parent power” and radicalizing parent groups against the idea of an equitable and comprehensive public education system.

The impact of the TSM in BC education can be measured, in part, by the number of traditional school programs created to date and in the policy and public reaction to their campaigns. My research suggests that the movement’s greatest success has been to legitimize academic-track programs, via the traditional schools, as an “alternative” to neighbourhood schools. The accommodation of traditional schools into alternative program frameworks propels what Gewirtz et al. call, a “values shift” away from “comprehensivization.” The TSM’s successes has resulted from a number of strategies: ‘recruitment’ of local trustees, effective local organizing at the community level, de-

emphasizing associations with religious conservatives and broadening its base of support to include cultural minority groups.

The TSM's successes may be credited to its network of grassroots "activist" parents and an organized leadership composed of groups and politicians with political and social power to promote its goals and objectives nationally. Groups such as Parents for Healthy Children, the SET-dominated Surrey School Board, Focus on the Family, Parent Network, Society for Advancing Excellence in Education and Donner Foundation have created an infrastructure and discourse capable of advancing the TSM policy agenda in BC.

While TSM activists convey the view that the drift towards more differentiated programs and market-style choice schemes as "inevitable" or natural, this research finds that non-TSM parents, teachers and even students have resisted and mediated TSM activism. The opposition by individual district stakeholders such as district parent advisory councils (DPACS), local teachers' associations and other employee groups, the mediating influence of districts' senior management and superintendents, and the resources and political will within the district to accommodate requests of the TSM are all factors determining the adoption of TSM policies and programs. This thesis finds that, to the extent that educators have succeeded in countering the TSM, they have done so by articulating opposition to the programs on the basis of costs, educational soundness, and its negative portrayal of the public system. Yet, by pressuring boards to follow due process with traditional school programs, educators have failed to address the competitive, and stratifying dynamic inherently present in the structure of self-selecting alternative programs, traditional or otherwise.

The TSM is significant because it has become the primary vehicle for promoting traditional schooling and "educational parentocracy" in BC, a restricted strategy of "privatization" in public education that will serve the TSM until a provincial government more sympathetic to deregulating public systems is elected.

### ***The Discourse of Traditional Schooling***

The discourse of traditional schooling is more than the statements made by individual traditional school proponents. Using Griffiths and Smith's definition, "discourse" refers to "an organization of relations among people participating in a conversation mediated by written and production processes" that has a social organization of authorities, sites, production processes and includes the ongoing

interchanges among ‘experts’ doing research, the development of related theories within accredited learning institutions and the training of teachers in the theories and categories developed from this “conversation.”<sup>104</sup>

The “conversation” about traditional schooling links local debates about specific traditional school proposals to larger New Right economic positions, particularly on the type of labour pool and social programs needed in Canada. Specifically, the discourse on traditional schooling encompasses the content of each traditional school proposal, international debates about “basics” in the curriculum, policies of education ministries, school boards and teachers’ groups over parental involvement in schooling, discussions about educational choices in parenting and education magazines produced by both TSM groups and commercial publishers, and the educational research oriented towards reform. Lastly, the portrayal of traditional school controversies by Canada’s major media outlets and the growing body of literature discussed in Chapter 2 are all part of this “conversation.”

What are the components of the discourse on traditional schooling? Initiatives to create traditional schools in BC school districts have fuelled a populist discourse of discontent with the public system. Traditional school proposals, as expressions of the TSM’s critique and vision for the public system, have been catalysts for heated debate over the state of the public system. In reviewing school district proposals from eight BC school districts, without exception, they have called for:<sup>105</sup>

1. Schooling experiences that strive for individual excellence and specifically, “content mastery” and basic skills acquisition;
2. Organizing and regulating educational environments for consistency and order through reliance on direct instruction over other learning approaches; separation of knowledge into discrete subject areas and minimizing mixed ability groupings;
3. An educational environment fostering order through clearly defined authority structures both within the classroom and outside of the classroom;
4. An educational environment that recognizes the primacy of the family as the source of ultimate authority on all educational matters.

---

<sup>104</sup> Griffiths and Smith, pg. 59.

<sup>105</sup> Proposals reviewed are from the following districts: Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Courtenay, Fort St. John, Langley, Nanaimo, Surrey, Richmond and Vancouver.

In all cases, these documents reaffirm “traditional schools” as “part of the existing public school system.” As such, “traditional values” are framed in general, codified terms acceptable in a secular society. One proposal’s introduction, though, conveys the interconnectedness between values and school achievement viewed by the TSM:

...Competition in the future economy will require solid skills and capabilities, and parents want their children not to be at a disadvantage in getting access to the best colleges and universities....While supporting the traditional values of home and society, the traditional school would produce, independent, self-disciplined, life-long learners, ready to take their place in our ever changing society.<sup>106</sup>

These ideas, promoted by the TSM to parents, politicians, mainstream media, academic researchers, trustees and education bureaucrats, have generated a far-reaching discussion that has mirrored and reconstituted broader debates over public education priorities.

### ***The Two Faces of the TSM***

As a socio-political movement, BC’s TSM reflects the New Right union between “moral traditionalists” advocating Christian fundamentalist-inspired interpretations of public school curriculum and policies and ultimate parental authority in education, and “choice” activists working towards the expansion of parental choice. Choice advocates differ from the moral traditionalists in a number of ways: first, they constitute a much larger portion of the TSM than do the moral traditionalists; second, their involvement with the TSM is not overtly motivated by any religious convictions; and lastly, their main concern is to access the educational resources required to best compete for post-secondary and employment success in a global economy rather than to advance a particular religious agenda.

#### **Moral Traditionalists**

While traditional school proposals have garnered significant public attention, moral traditionalists have similarly impacted public education debates in BC. Moral traditionalists of the movement represent a loose network of key conservative actors in regional and national politics working on specific “moral” and parental rights issues who have provided rhetorical and political leadership for the movement. They have provided material and other forms of support and assistance in grassroots organizing, and the

---

<sup>106</sup> Proposal in Brief Submitted to the Abbotsford School District, Abbotsford, Nov. 28, 1994.

intellectual framework for the TSM. Additionally, they have focussed media, public and governmental attention on to TSM issues, thereby succeededing in framing the education debate.

The TSM has made headway toward its political agenda by generating controversy over specific, local issues. In BC, moral traditionalists have mobilized citizen groups to contest curriculum areas dealing with social and personal development. In 1996, mandatory Career and Personal Planning (CAPP) courses became part of the BC curriculum. Although it involves diverse components – self-esteem enhancement, social skills development, career research and training, and a wide range of social issues dealing with social diversity – the TSM has been highly critical of the components pertaining to sexual health. This section will discuss how moral traditionalists have waged its war on CAPP.

TSM mobilization has also been fuelled by a recent BC Teachers Federation resolution to support anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism education and by a decision by the Surrey School Board to ban use of resources depicting same sex families for elementary students. These incidents have become rallying points for moral conservatives to wage a high-profile “parents’ rights” campaign opposing discussions of homophobia, heterosexism, or homosexuality in virtually every educational context.

This research finds a number of groups have played significant roles in lobbying for a Christian-based form of moral traditionalism in public schooling in BC. While this is not a definitive list of the TSM’s moral traditionalists, Parents for Healthy Children, the SET-dominated Surrey School Board, and Focus on the Family are illustrative of the religious influence within the TSM.

Victoria-based **Parents for Healthy Children** (PHC) has been at the forefront of the crusade for a re-traditionalized curriculum. Composed of “individuals who support traditional values”, PHC defines its mandate as addressing “the physical, social, emotional and spiritual health of children”.<sup>107</sup> PHC publishes a regular newsletter entitled, “Whose Children Are They”, operates a library of resources, and organizes monthly meetings, information sessions and seminars for communities in various parts of BC. PHC has almost exclusively focussed their activism on opposing sex education and anti-homophobia education within the BC curriculum. Their key targets for opposition are BC’s CAPP Curriculum, education programs addressing sexual orientation such as the

"Toronto Homosexual Curriculum", "Outcome-Based Education", "Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC" and "Planned Parenthood, and Privacy Issues."<sup>108</sup>

PHC activities include a comprehensive policy and public relations battle to limit the right of public schools to educate children on issues of sexuality and sexual health. PHC has appeared on local radio programs, disseminated a 21-page critique of both elementary and secondary CAPP curricula, and petitioned the Minister of Education to "stop the development and delivery of any curriculum which denigrates the heterosexual lifestyle, and which normalizes the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered lifestyle and identifies it as a healthy, alternative sexual orientation".

PHC reliance on the resources and support of local churches and Focus on the Family (see below) is one example of the implicit religious influence within the TSM. In the tradition of the original fundamental schools, PHC's resources borrow heavily from American Christian Right treatises that are highly critical of secular public education. The PHC Newsletter updates readers on the status of their activism and lists print and video resources such as "Children at Risk" by Focus on the Family founder, James Dobson, "Failing Grades" by the Society for Advancing Educational Research, books such as "The De-Valuing of America" by ex-Republican Secretary of Education William Bennett, and "chastity kits". PHC also offers seminars, many of them delivered by Focus on the Family speakers, on homosexuality and adolescent sexuality. Moreover, PHC meetings have regularly been held in Protestant churches in Saanich and Victoria.<sup>109</sup>

Another voice for moral traditionalism in BC is the **Surrey Electors Team (SET)-dominated Surrey School Board**. This board has gained national notoriety for its advocacy of "parents' rights" in public education. Led by current trustee Heather Stilwell and recently resigned trustee Robert Pickering, this school board was not only the first to invigorate the 1990s movement for traditional schools, it has also consistently taken various controversial positions on sex education and multicultural education. A review of their decisions since 1994, when SET gained the majority, is revealing. It has reversed existing board policy and forced the removal of condom machines in district secondary schools; it passed a resolution requiring Board approval for all guest speakers and the

---

<sup>107</sup> Parents for Healthy Children, "Critique of Personal Planning Curriculum: Gr. K-7," Appendix A, pg. 18, Feb. 1996.

<sup>108</sup> Parents for Healthy Children, "Whose Children Are They?", Vol. 97, No. 2, April 1997.

<sup>109</sup> Parents for Healthy Children, "Whose Children Are They", Vols. 96/2-September 1996; 97/1-January 1997, 97/2-April 1997. According to the newsletters, PHC meetings are often scheduled at Glad Tidings Church in Victoria and Saanich Baptist Church.

content of presentations (even by Public Health Nurses) used for sexual health education components of CAPP;<sup>110</sup> it has eliminated professional development programs dealing with child abuse; it has attempted to remove books on Wicca and Aboriginal spirituality from the traditional school library; and most recently, banned the use of books that depict same sex parents for use in the district's elementary grades. With a clear majority on the Board, SET trustees have used the powers of the school board to promote traditionalism in education policy like no other group in the province.

The roles of trustees Stilwell and Pickering are noteworthy in this discussion of moral traditionalism in education. 1998 Board Chair Heather Stilwell was not only a founding parent of Surrey Traditional School, she is a two-time elected trustee re-elected in the 1996 municipal elections. She served as a trustee while also sitting as the traditional school's 1997 PAC President. Unlike other involved parents, trustee Stilwell has a long and distinctive track record of religious right political activism. She was a former president and founding member of the Christian Heritage Party (CHP), a federal political party that believes "the decision-making processes by civil government must not in any way contravene ... Biblical ethics".<sup>111</sup>

Fundamental to its platform and policies is CHP's definition of family. The CHP's policy states that families are "heterosexual monogamous marriage", "God ordained" and "any other form of union is Biblically prohibited." CHP supports the recriminalization of "sexual deviancy", abolishing the Charter and a return to biblically-based rule in Canada.<sup>112</sup> Aside from the CHP, Stilwell was also affiliated with the Family Coalition Party (FCP), a provincial party that advocates parental choice in education, the promotion and protection of "the rights of traditional, marriage-based, two-parent families" and opposes gay adoptions.<sup>113</sup>

Until 1998, SET trustee Robert Pickering worked closely with Ms. Stilwell in advocating a fundamentalist Christian interpretation on school policies. With Stilwell,

---

<sup>110</sup> Minutes, Meeting of the Surrey School Board , 1996-01-25, Surrey, BC.

<sup>111</sup> Christian Heritage Party Website, "Principles, Policies and Programs" Online: <http://www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/chp/#policies>, Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

<sup>112</sup> Stilwell's conscious use of politics as a tool for imposing Christian morality on constituents/public is well documented. In June 1992 Conference of Campaign Life Coalition and Alliance for Life in Toronto, she gave a speech entitled, "How to turn Pro-Lifers into Politicians". In the May 1996 and 1993 issues of Christian Info News, Stilwell is quoted, "the world view of the person making the laws is what prevails and that is 'exactly what being in power has always been about'. "Let's stop being ashamed of what our religion has to offer. Christian rules are good for all."

<sup>113</sup> Family Coalition Party Newsletter, May 1997.

Pickering has been an avid pro-life activist with Campaign Life Coalition, leading to a conviction for blockading a Vancouver abortion clinic.<sup>114</sup> While serving on the School Board, both Pickering and Stilwell were also members of the Citizens Research Institute, an organization that initiated a petition campaign entitled "Declaration of Family Rights". This petition, aimed at BC parents, would prohibit schools from engaging students in educational activities that "discusses or portrays the lifestyle of gays, lesbians, bisexual and or transgendered individuals as one that is normal, acceptable or must be tolerated."<sup>115</sup>

Since 1994, the controversy around the Surrey School Board's political agenda has not abated. In 1998, the Board escalated the war over "traditional family values" and "parents' rights" in the district when they decided to appeal a Supreme Court decision requiring the Board to rescind its ban of three children's books depicting same sex parents – *Ashas Mums*, *One Dad, Two Dads*, *Brown Dad, Blue Dads*, and *Belinda's Bouquets*. Parents and teachers in the district have expressed outrage, not only because of the Board's intolerance of any form of education that refers to homosexuality, but also because the Board's legal actions regarding the books – expected to reach over \$500,000 - are paid out of the district's operating budget.<sup>116</sup>

Despite denials that the decision to pursue the book ban was motivated by religious beliefs, it is clear that religious groups have invested in the Board as their "voice" in educational policy. The Board, for its part, justifies its continued action on this front as an obligation to "the majority of parents" who support their position and have donated approximately \$4,000 to the legal challenge. Yet media reports revealed that ninety percent of the signatures and monetary donations supporting the Board's position were identified as non-Surrey residents and many were from church groups in Burnaby and Vancouver.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, it would appear that in this "war", the Board has taken a "no holds barred" approach to the issue by allowing Stilwell to openly appeal for support in the *BC Catholic Newspaper* while another "traditional values" group, Canadian Family

---

<sup>114</sup> *The Interim*, October 1993. *BC Report*, April 12, 1993, and *Vancouver Sun*, Oct. 2/93.

<sup>115</sup> Citizens Research Institute, Declaration of Family Rights. (attach to appendix).

<sup>116</sup> Jon Bermingham, "Board Holds line on Same Sex Stories", *Vancouver Province*, Jan. 13, 1999.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

Action Coalition, has distributed literature at local churches, asking for donations to support the Board's appeal.<sup>118</sup>

The Surrey School Board's staunch advocacy of "parents' rights" in education has become a media icon, yet it is not without its contradictions. In 1998, without consulting the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), the Board passed a number of policy changes that cripple parental participation in district affairs. It reduced funding for the DPAC's activities by initiating higher charges for meeting space which had previously been provided free of charge; it reduced the DPAC's allocated photocopying budget by more than half, and it eliminated district support for sending DPAC to BC Council of Parent Advisory Council (BCCPAC) events which facilitate parent networking and education.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, in February 1998, the Board adopted policy that allows the Board to choose parent representatives for policy committees (such as the existing committees on Multicultural Education, CAPP, etc) in addition to DPAC-nominated representatives, potentially pitting Board-appointed parents with duly elected representatives from the district.

According to one former Surrey DPAC executive officer, these changes reflect the Board's disfavour with DPAC's positions. As a group, DPAC had decided "not to touch" the books issue, citing it as being "too divisive" and "not a priority". This has resulted in the Board accusing the DPAC of being "pro-homosexual". With the DPAC experiencing its highest levels of attendance from PACs in the district, high visibility and success in involving district parents in democratic processes of debate both within DPAC and with district stakeholders over matters of policy, these policies have raised questions about the Board's intent and objectives regarding parents' rights.

The activities of groups like Parents for Healthy Children and the Surrey School Board represent efforts to systemically re-traditionalize schooling in BC. Another group, Focus on the Family, while featured less prominently, has played an important role in advancing moral traditionalism nationally.

James Dobson's Colorado-based, **Focus on the Family**, is at the hub of the traditional schooling movement in North America. To understand Focus on the Family's

---

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Interview. R. Balabanov, former Chair of Surrey DPAC, July 10, 1998. According to this participant, these policies were developed in Fall 1997, and were not passed in the same manner as other policies (i.e. regularly, the public is informed of a regular notice of motion; when these policies were passed, they were not included in agenda, and copies of the motion were not circulated until the night of the vote.)

role in the traditional schooling movement, it is necessary to understand James Dobson's brand of traditionalism. Dobson characterizes the late twentieth century as a "Second Great Civil War" where Christian society is engaged in "a struggle for the hearts and minds of people". In this war between "traditionalists", whose values are deeply rooted in Scripture, and "secular humanists" who Dobson considers "a wasteland of values" conspiring for control over all children, the public school system as a site of ideological struggle is singularly important.<sup>120</sup>

*Children are the prize to the winners of the Second Great Civil War. Those who control what young people are taught and what they experience – what they see, hear, think and believe – will determine the future course for the nation.... The hottest battles in this civil war are being fought on educational turf, and that is where eventual victory or defeat will occur.*<sup>121</sup>

With its Canadian head office in Vancouver, it is one of the largest clearinghouses for Christian literature and resources in North America. It publishes eleven different magazines, books, tape and video cassettes, and broadcasts radio programs in both the US and Canada. It has international affiliates in every continent in the world.<sup>122</sup>

Focus on the Family's evangelical zeal has had great impact on Canadians and Americans alike. Dr. Darrel Reid, ex-chief of staff for the Federal Reform Party leader Preston Manning and current president of Focus on the Family Canada, sees a common vision between the Reform Party and Dobson's group. He states,

*The definition of family is under attack in Canada. When I read the policies of the Reform party, which supports the traditional family and parents' right to raise their children according to their conscience and belief, I became engaged politically....the battle is not lost. I believe conditions are right for a pro-family revolution....*<sup>123</sup>

Focus on the Family Canada has actively pursued grassroots political mobilization of Christians through various programs, including Community Impact Seminars (CIS). Initiated in 1992 "to provide Canada's Christians with a biblical mandate for social action", CIS seminars consist of day-long training sessions by Focus on the Family authorized speakers designed to "inform participants about the social and political issues of our day, inspire them with the scriptural mandate for involvement, and

---

<sup>120</sup> Dobson, J. and Bauer, G. *Children at Risk*, (Vancouver: Word Books, 1990) pg. 27.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. pg. 39.

<sup>122</sup> Focus on the Family Web Page Online: <http://www.fotf.ca>

<sup>123</sup> "Focus Canada Welcomes a New President", Focus on the Family Newsletter, June 1998, pg. 14.

equip them with resource and strategies to make a positive change in their community." Listed among the CIS successes are the removal of condom machines in public schools, boycotting pornography in supermarkets, province wide conferences on education and letter writing campaigns to defeat "pro-homosexual" legislation.<sup>124</sup>

Focus on the Family fosters a type of moral traditionalism that runs counter to the principles of an education system that strives to respect diversity, cultivate individual autonomy and freedom of thought, and offer relevant choices for students regardless of disparate philosophical, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. At the core of Focus on the Family's traditionalism and vision of public education is a rejection of diverse family values and family situations that goes beyond sexual preference: According to Dobson,

*Social disruption is inevitable when government accepts these humanistic tenets: 1) committed lifelong faithful families are outmoded or expendable 2) sexual experimentation of the young is healthy if done right. 3) education should be utterly valueless and relativistic; 4) there is no absolute right or wrong non ultimate truth on which to base our decisions 5) homosexual preference is simply another valid lifestyle 6) he who can work but chooses idleness shall be sheltered and fed, 7) there is no God and therefore no transcendent purpose and meaning in living.*<sup>125</sup>

Based on this rationale, Focus on the Family, for example, opposes the need for national child care on the grounds that it undermines the role of women in parenting; multicultural programs are suspect because they advocate cultural relativism and "the liberal agenda", and the notion of children's rights (as distinct from what their parents may want from them) are perceived as part of a "plan to isolate children from parents in order to win the Civil War of values".<sup>126</sup>

It is perhaps not surprising that moral traditionalists like Focus on the Family are strong advocates of choice policies for education. To them, the primary client of the public school system is the parent. Dobson, for example, supports the voucher system as a remedy for the public school system and as a way of promoting morality:

*A mother or father with a voucher in hand is suddenly transformed into a customer with money to spend. The entire relationship is changed. We believe schools will be better for it. If for example, an*

---

<sup>124</sup> Focus on the Family Website, "Events: Community Impact Seminars General Information", On-line: <http://www.fotf.ca/EVENTS/CISGENT.HTM> Downloaded: Feb. 2, 1999, 12:40 pm.

<sup>125</sup> Dobson, J and Bauer, G. pg.22

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. pg. 31

*offensive sex education program could be expected to cause three hundred parents to choose another school alternative. you can be sure moderation will prevail.*<sup>127</sup>

Moral traditionalists have captured political support by recasting attempts at equity and human rights education as the state's interference with "family values." As the above discussion of Stilwell, Pickering, and Focus on the Family suggests, their political activism may be centred on opposing equality for gays and lesbians, but their agenda is much broader. Radical traditionalists within the TSM such as PHC, the SET trustees of the Surrey School Board and Focus on the Family see education as an all-or-nothing battle for the "soul" of society.<sup>128</sup>

Pragmatically, recognizing the religious fundamentalism involved in TSM debates serves to inform policy makers on what avenues, if any, may be most fruitful for addressing legitimate concerns or building consensus. It also conveys the points of intersection between Christian religious beliefs and neo-liberal demands for school choice. Lastly, it points to potential rifts between the religious fundamentalists and the non-religious members of the traditional schooling movement. How such conflicts are negotiated within the movement, and whether or not these conflicts within the TSM will curtail TSM activism or growth are areas for further study and analysis in terms of responding to the TSM.

### **School Choice Activists – The Populist Base of the TSM**

The TSM, and the profile of 'traditional schooling', has grown rapidly, largely due to the organizing efforts and successes of the school choice activists. School choice activists include hundreds of British Columbians who have invested personal or group resources into traditional schools/programs including the families registered in traditional schools or programs, families that have put themselves on the waiting lists of existing traditional schools, parents who develop traditional school proposals and organized support for them at the district level, teachers and administrators who support traditional school programs and groups that have led efforts to establish traditional schools as "choice" programs.

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, pg. 299

<sup>128</sup> Their commitment to their religiously-based policies was evidenced in January 1999, when Supreme Court of BC ruled that the Surrey School Board did act on religious reasons in banning the three books and instructed the Board rescind the ban, the Surrey School Board decided that it would take the case to appeal. ("Board Holds Line on Same Sex Stories", The Province January 13, 1999)

Since the opening of the first, "new" traditional school in Surrey, the number of schools/programs specifically designated as "traditional" grew from one elementary school to five elementary schools and one traditional middle school.<sup>129</sup> They have been adopted in five BC districts and in 1999, Vancouver and Richmond school districts are also considering ways of accommodating TSM demands. Moreover, at least fourteen other school districts have received proposals for traditional schools or formed traditional school parent groups. Table 1 (see next page) lists districts that currently have, or have considered traditional school proposals.

In 1998, efforts to establish a traditional school in Richmond and Vancouver were renewed when a predominantly Chinese-Canadian group of parents, assisted by John Pippus and the Parent Network (see pg. 82), submitted new proposals for traditional schools in both districts. These parents became organized through a local Chinese Canadian radio program (CJIB) hosted by Chinese Canadian broadcaster, Hanson Lau. The program generated a number of phone calls from its Chinese Canadian audience and precipitated Lau to organize a workshop on "traditional schools and schools of choice." In this way, TSM activism has brought hundreds of parents – many who have never before engaged in local education debates – to write letters, attend local school board meetings, rallies, fund-raisers and consultations.<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> BC's traditional **elementary** schools are: Langley Fundamental Elementary, King Traditional Elementary, Surrey Traditional Elementary, Anniedale Elementary (approved by Surrey School Board in Spring 1999), Kwaleen Traditional Elementary, Central Fort George Elementary. To date, BC's only traditional **middle school** is the Langley Fundamental Middle School.

<sup>130</sup> In public meetings I attended in Richmond (April 20, 1998, Jan. 14, 1999) and Vancouver (Jan. 20, 1999) about traditional schools, traditional school supporters were predominantly Chinese Canadian, most of them new immigrants without high levels of ESL oral fluency. In both Richmond and Vancouver, District PAC representatives and district staff acknowledged the low levels of attendance and representation of such parents at the school PAC level.

**Table 1 – Summary of Growth of Traditional Programs, 1994 - 1999<sup>131</sup>**

District (by number)	# of traditional schools/traditional programs	Description of TSM in the district
23 Kelowna	0	Proposal was submitted and rejected by the board in 1996.
27 Williams Lake	1 – Kwaleen Traditional Elementary	KTE, a former neighbourhood school, was changed to a district wide traditional program in 1997 after a 2 year pilot program. The change was initiated by PAC and principal at Kwaleen.
31 Merritt	0	Trustees attended Fall Charter School Conference following which, they released a press statement to introduce autonomy and site-based management as a step before charter schools to accommodate parental choice. <sup>132</sup>
32 Fraser Cascade (Hope)	0	Researched by trustees but no proposal was ever submitted.
33 Chilliwack	0	Proposal was made in June 1995; Ad Hoc Committee was struck to study the proposal and make recommendations. Proposal was defeated in January 1996.
34 Abbotsford	1 - King Traditional Elementary (KTE)	KTE opened in September 1995. Unsuccessful attempts were made for designating a newly built school as a second traditional school in the district in 1997. In 1998, a proposal was put forward for establishing a fundamental secondary program.
35 Langley	1 – Langley Fundamental Elementary 1-Langley Fundamental Middle School	Langley Fundamental Elementary was preceded by two fundamental elementary programs established in 1975. They were amalgamated in 1995 after Langley Central burned down. Attempts to expand the fundamental program into secondary levels began in 1995. A middle school was finally approved in 1998.
36 Surrey	1 – Surrey Traditional Elementary 1 – Anniedale Elementary	STE opened in September 1994; Proposals were made to the Board in 1996 and 1997 for traditional middle school; these proposals were defeated. In 1998, Anniedale Elementary was closed and in April 1999, a proposal to turn it into a district alternative program with an environmental/rural focus was considered. Instead, the Surrey Board subsequently approved a motion to designate Anniedale as a district alternative traditional school, "to accommodate" parents on the waiting list at Surrey Traditional.
37 Delta	0	Traditional parent group established but no proposal was submitted to the board.
38 Richmond	Although the proposal for a traditional elementary program was approved in	Proposal for traditional school was first raised in 1996 and rejected by the Board; A second traditional school proposal was submitted to the Board and was approved in principle

<sup>131</sup> Data for Table 1 was collected through informal telephone surveys conducted in June 1997 to school district offices and local teachers' associations as to the dates and status of traditional school proposals for each district. They were also documented in the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Traditional Schools, Chilliwack School District, Dec. 1995. Only the districts which had documentation to support the existence of traditional school organizing activities in BC were included. In addition to these BC school districts, traditional school organizing has also been documented in Edmonton, Alberta and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>132</sup> Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Traditional Schools, Chilliwack School District, Dec. 1995, pg. 8

		principle in July 1998. It was not approved in the final vote. In March 1999, new recommendations from the Superintendent for "a foundations" program was approved instead of a traditional program.	in July 1998. A traditional program committee was struck to develop and define the program that would be voted on for final approval and implementation. On March 1, 1999, the board accepted the Superintendent's recommendations to instead approve a district wide "foundations program" which would increase communication among teachers, parents and students at elementary schools. The program would be voluntary, beginning Sept. 1999 and incorporate the following 6 areas of emphasis, stemming from the traditional program planning committee's report: teacher-led instruction, assessment and reporting, homework guidelines, code of conduct, dress code and grade organization. This program is designed to be phased in at all elementary schools by September 2000.
39 Vancouver	Proposal pending Board decision		Proposal submitted to the board in March 1998. In February 1999, VS8 Senior Management Team Committee recommended against approval of traditional program until: 1) it is further developed in consultation with elementary principals, teachers and parents. 2) provincial accreditation of other traditional schools can be reviewed. and 3) implementation of communication plan with parents about the existing school system. A distinct task force is now studying the issue.
41 Burnaby	0		Proposal was submitted in 1995 and rejected in 1996.
42 Maple Ridge	0		Proposal was made to the board and rejected in 1994
44 North Vancouver	0		Proposal was made to the board in 1994-95. Proposal was not approved but prompted the creation of an "alternate school policy" that would determine criteria for approving future proposals for any alternate program
48 Howe Sound /Squamish	0		Proposal was submitted but tabled for further study and subsequently not approved.
57 Prince George	1 - Central Fort George Elementary		Proposal for changing CFGE to a district wide traditional program came after the adoption in 1997 of a district "choices" policy; the proposal came from the school community and CFGE.
60 Fort St. John	0		Proposal submitted and rejected by the school board in 1996.
66 Duncan	0		Traditional School Parent Group established but no proposal was submitted to the board.
68 Nanaimo	0		Parents for Traditional Schooling submitted proposal in 1995. Proposal was rejected by the school board in 1996.
69 Qualicum/Parksville	0		Proposal submitted to the board in 1994-95; proposal was rejected in 1995.
71 Courtenay	0		Proposal made by Comox Valley School Choice Coalition to the board in 1995.

In Kalaw et al. (1998), we referred to the fact that responses to traditional schools in BC were shaped by a strong identification between traditional schools and predominantly white, fundamentalist Christian groups in those communities. What was perhaps obscured in Kalaw et al. are the points of difference between moral traditionalists and others in the movement, one of which is the willingness of some school choice activists to distance themselves from staunch moral positions in order to gain legitimacy and support for "choice" programs. This was the case with the TSM's

new constituencies in Richmond, where TSM representatives denied having any positions on "the homosexuality issue". As will be described in the next section, differences between the moral traditionalists and the choice activists also materialized in the school level relations between parents.

To understand the traditional schooling movement, it is valuable to study the people involved in organizing the local grassroots efforts to create "traditional schools" in BC. The following activists were chosen because of the leadership role they played in promoting traditional programs in their districts. It is acknowledged that these three activists displayed a greater investment of time and resources (social and material) into the TSM than most others within the movement. They represent the constituency within the TSM, mobilized largely by the desire to exercise greater individual choice of schools for their children and who, thus far, have represented the more popular arm of the TSM.

### Profiles of TSM Program Activists

#### Marie<sup>133</sup>

Marie is a housewife and mother of two children, one of them a sixth grader in the Abbotsford School District. In her late thirties, Marie moved to BC from Ontario and was herself in BC's public system since grade seven. Her eldest child was in the BC public school system since kindergarten. She has been an involved parent, participating in school events, bake sales, and teacher appreciation events. She recently married her husband, her partner for over ten years and the biological father of her second child. Marie and her husband have raised both children. Marie is college educated and her husband has a university degree. Marie is a member of the Church of Religious Science, a non-denominational, inter-faith group. By her account, she spent approximately 40 hours per week over a period of one and a half years towards the creation of a traditional school in her community. After attending the traditional school in its inaugural year, Marie removed her son from the traditional school and re-registered him in a neighbourhood school.

Marie recalls that prior to her involvement with the TSM, she had had a frustrating year in dealing with her son's school. She cited one teacher who corrected her child's written work and, when reviewed by Marie, left numerous spelling mistakes.

---

<sup>133</sup> As the traditional schools debate continues today, a pseudonym has been used for the protection of the participant's privacy.

including the teacher's own. She experienced lack of responsiveness from administrators when she raised concerns about this teacher's performance and when she requested her child to be moved to another teacher and was refused.

*I pay an enormous amount of taxes; I should have a little bit of a say who I want as a teacher. I've done my duty. I've done the bake sales, the hot dog days, did the right things....unbeknownst to me, that ten other parents had already approached her [the principal] to [have their children] moved. But to me, she said, "well, if you don't like it, you can always leave". I found that to be an inappropriate comment a principal should make to me..*

Marie identifies this as a turning point in her involvement with traditional schooling. Marie recounts that the principal, while offering assistance in getting a cross-boundary to a different school, did not offer information on district processes for filing a complaint or other solutions. Marie's activism was borne out of frustration and anger. As a parent, she was very involved in her child's schooling, daily going over his homework and reviewing his assignments. Some of the frustration she felt was from not receiving information from teachers about how her son was doing and what additional assistance he may benefit from. Referring to public schools as "a closed system", she described how impossible it was to get a written overview from teachers at the elementary school level, the lack of meaningful information conveyed in report cards, and what she sees as a lack of honest assessment of children's work and skills.

*It's been very frustrating. Whether it's trying to get more information...even report cards. Read any one that's been written and they are so blasé' its ridiculous. "Johnny always does well and he's a good boy", ...and then at the end of the year, you learn that Johnny didn't really grab the language concept. [you learn this on] June 29<sup>th</sup> [the end of the school year].*

*...I wanted an honest individual assessment of my son and if you felt he was weak in math, I just wanted you to tell me. Don't brush me over don't say he's doing fine. .... I'm not saying this is anyone's fault, because every teacher will say it is the teacher before that should have taught phonics or should have taught this and that.*

With regards to specific courses such as CAPP, Marie had specific concerns:

*The government introduced some new lifeskills course and I wanted to know, what is it? I've never heard of it. I've seen work come home and I'm disgusted by it. I don't think anyone has the right to ask my son when his parents fight and how many times they fight. I don't think that's got anything to do with education. I want to see the stuff before..[my son does it], I want to filter some of it...I just tell him to put nothing...They're way too personal and what has that got to do with school...I just want someone...if someone explained this to me, I wouldn't be so opposed to the program...and I think that goes for a lot of parents...you would be, 'okay, I can see where they're going with it'.*

Another primary concern of Marie's was the issue of student conduct and discipline in public schools. She believed that high levels of violence and unacceptable student conduct were occurring at neighbourhood schools and attributed these kinds of school problems to "differences" between families and dysfunction in some families:

*So when you have a [neighbourhood] school like the one we're in now....where you have parents whose children swear and threaten them...You phone those parents or the principal tries to phone those parents and they'll swear at the principal and hang up. So how can you get anywhere with this child when you know at home they don't care anyway.*

Marie's experience with public schooling told her that for schools, some families were more problematic than others and the likelihood of those families being in neighbourhood schools was higher than in programs like the traditional school program. Marie expressed what she saw as distinctions between "traditional school families" and "neighbourhood" school families when she described a parent-organized teacher appreciation potluck lunch at the traditional school:

*At [the Traditional School], we had 95 parents, a staff of 10 and we ended up...they could have eaten for a week...Parents would bring three dishes. And it's not that these parents economically had more money. It's not [the reason]. That's a myth. Its just their dedication and when you have extremely supportive parents who make their child do homework whether their teacher issued it or not, you have an entirely different thing happening. Because you had 99% parents were like-minded in their after-school life. That's why its so different. ...all the parents that go to that school believe that children should have manners, they believe you should put your hand up. They believe you should talk to a grown up using Mr. or Mrs. They believe that when your work is handed in to a teacher, your final draft is done neat, that your name should be underlined. These are things we all believed in before we went there.*

She explained the lower levels of fighting and harassment at the Traditional School as due to the efforts made by the school's principal to clarify the school's expectations of all students and parents in written form and in the like-mindedness of families:

*Because these families were telling their kids at night, 'this is not nice'. And that doesn't happen to a lot of kids that go to [neighbourhood school]. I think that's why private schools work. In a private school, you have to sign a declaration ....Because all parents believe the same way. That's the key.*

Her experience with the Traditional School taught her that it was familial "like-mindedness" that contributed to the school culture and the "quality" of the school environment, rather than actual "traditional" policies or practices.

Contrary to the belief that traditional school activists did not have an accurate view of public schools, in fact, Marie had an intimate knowledge of and involvement with public schools that gave her a sense of the complexity and sometimes powerlessness of staff to control school environments in the face of socio-economically, culturally, and individually varied students and families.

*At the school that my son attends now, there's a kid in gr. 7 that says to a kid in gr. 5, "After school, I'm gonna beat you up". And if that kid in gr. 5 doesn't have his mom to pick him up after school, he will get beat up. And you know what happens to the parent whose child got beat up and tries to*

*deal with this the next day? You will be told by our principal that its out of his hands. because it didn't happen on school property. Well none of these things ever happen on school property.*

Marie's activism and leadership, a highly valued quality in school communities, was directed into the TSM after she responded to an article in the local community paper that featured the Superintendent's analysis of the district's declining student numbers. Marie's letter to the editor sparked a response from other community members:

*I responded with, '...when will you wake up and smell the coffee? More and more people are leaving public schools for private schools and home schooling because parents have had enough of a system that is a complete failure....Our public school system's complete lack of structure, Year 2000 and inability to be honest is why you're seeing such a drastic reduction in enrollment rates and that enrollment will continue to decline'.this is what I responded on September 17<sup>th</sup> and right away, over two days, people I've never met started phoning and I just thought, if Surrey could do it, how hard could it be...*

For over a year, Marie dedicated countless volunteer hours to achieve her vision of a school that would promote educational excellence using healthy competition and achieve higher levels of student discipline, a school that would establish greater rapport between school staff and parents. Mostly, she wanted a school where parents would be given a role in the day-to-day affairs of the school via an "education committee" which would discuss school policies and school curricula with the teaching staff. Marie spoke of the assistance she got from trustees and senior management of the district. She gathered other interested parents around her kitchen table to develop the proposal and strategize how to get it approved by the Board. Upon the Board's approval of the traditional school she was voted the PAC chair for the new traditional school, was involved in the hiring of the principal. Marie even volunteered to provide child care at the school.

Marie's experience at the traditional school was a unique one. Few members of the traditional school movement have invested so much of their time and energies, as did Marie. Because of this, it was all the more surprising that after her son's first year at the traditional school as a sixth grader, Marie and her husband decided to pull her son out of the school. She recounts some of the reasons for their decision:

*Even if the school had the academic [focus], you know, that I expected it to do, there's no point in going to a school where you had all the academics and socially you had nothing in common with a single child that goes there. I couldn't do that to him...For an entire year, he didn't play with anyone. And there were things that happened. He would get invited to someone's house to play and he would be asked, 'what church do your parents go to?' And I've always taught him to respond "to all". He would never get invited back again to play. So the community got wind that I wasn't religious.*

*I was a single parent which someone found out in this town. Actually I just married my husband of twelve years last summer and we had two children out of wedlock. And someone found out and it became an enormous issue in this town. And I resent that. That focus took everything away from education...and then it spread [outside of school]...my son was so badly outcasted that I needed the permission of the superintendent and the principal to address this issue at a PAC meeting. I needed three consents to bring up what was happening and that if anyone had a personal problem with me, they by all means could take it out on me,...but when you cross the lines and take it out on my son, then I have a real problem with you...people were telling this to other people – that I wasn't married, that I had these kids out of wedlock, and that I lied. The funny thing is that no one ever asked me and so I don't think I lied.*

Marie felt that the conflicts surrounding her were exacerbated by political conflicts within the PAC group. Combined with personal tragedies that struck her family that year, Marie finally stepped down from the Traditional School PAC at the end of 1996. In 1997, she and her husband decided to send their son back to a neighbourhood school in preparation for attending a local high school.

#### Daniel<sup>134</sup>

Daniel, an immigrant to BC from Hong Kong, has been a parent in the Richmond school district for six years. He is in his mid-to-late thirties, married, and has three children, one in grade four, one in grade six and another in grade eight in the public school system. He owns and operates a thriving business located in one of Richmond's numerous predominantly Asian-oriented shopping centres.<sup>135</sup> Admitting to not having been a good student himself, he laments about his own academic ability. His elementary and secondary education in Hong Kong was through government supported religious schools (Christian and Catholic). After two years of "form 1" (the equivalent of gr. 8) in a Catholic high school, he attended boarding school in England.

Daniel's expectations for Canadian public schools are clearly shaped by his experience with the Hong Kong system. Under this system, he recalls that students begin to learn their alphabet at the age of three and by the age of five (grade 1), they

---

<sup>134</sup> As the traditional schools debate continues today, a pseudonym has been used for the protection of the participant's privacy.

<sup>135</sup> While the growth of ethno-specific services and retail outlets is not new in BC, in recent years, it has been the most visible in the city of Richmond. There are about five Asian-oriented shopping centres in Richmond where all signage is in Cantonese or Mandarin, and all stores are operated by Cantonese or Mandarin speaking staff with limited English fluency. Richmond has undergone rapid population growth and demographic change over the last decade. According to 1991 Census Data, 35% of Richmond's total population is foreign-born, and of that foreign born population, 33% arrived between 1986 and 1991. In 1996, census data indicates that 47% of Richmond's population did not speak English or French as their primary language. The majority of foreign-born Richmond residents are Cantonese or Mandarin speaking.

learn sentences and words. He prided the Hong Kong system of education for providing students with “strong basics” and that as a result, students “know how to take homework, they know how to study, they know how to read and write”.

*In Hong Kong, the system push everything into [the student]. ...but they also learn things...they learn to behave, they learn to respect people, that's more important. They learn to see right and wrong...here students are too free...when children are young, you have to support [them]. Here, to my understanding, kids don't go to class until 5 or 6 yrs old. Before that, they go to preschool, they learn nothing academically, nothing to prepare them for higher grades – reading, writing, spelling. Five years old is [getting to be] too late for academic learning. You need academics to go on to university.*

Of the three traditional school supporters interviewed, Daniel was the most passionate in his criticisms about Canadian schooling, something he linked closely to Canadian social values. His involvement with the traditional schools movement comes from a desire to share what he feels are the strengths of his Chinese culture and upbringing. He joined the TSM when he attended a meeting sparked by the CJIB Chinese language radio program interview with John Pippus. To Daniel, the TSM was a way of affecting change within the existing system. To him, the problems with the education system were a reflection of what he saw as larger problems with the political and social orientation of Canadian governments and the Canadian populace. Daniel's involvement in the TSM reflected his alarm over the province's economic recession during the late 1990s, which according to him, was to be blamed on “big government”:

*There are quite a lot of things...because of the government here, the policies here...too many failures other than schooling...[In] This country, the politicians don't have a vision. In Richmond, there's so many vacant shops now, and the entrepreneurs and investors are leaving. I know [people like that who have already left].*

His activism for traditional schooling in Richmond reflects anxieties common among newly immigrated Canadians. He spoke about financial sacrifices and losses his family incurred to move to Canada, all in the hopes of “better opportunities” for their children. He criticized provincial government policies and union activism for what he felt was their role in eroding both his ability to provide for his family and for inadequately training his children for a successful future.

Daniel's support for traditional education is very strongly connected to his personal experiences with British-based education systems and culturally-based views of character formation:

*The best is to mix education system with the British system...you let children know discipline, morals, to respect people, you let them know responsibility, and strong academics. In British schools, you learned this. In this school system here, you don't...*

To Daniel, "good schooling" was also "efficient schooling". When speaking of limits to class sizes, Daniel commented:

*You have a system that can only handle 20 students: isn't it too easy [for the teacher]? If they have a good system, one teacher can manage 30-40 students. It's about management.*

Perhaps most surprising about Daniel was his hostility towards ESL programs in the public system. Daniel's concerns about ESL are complex. On the one hand, he recognizes the need for ESL programs. Yet, he feels that schools take inappropriate advantage of ESL funding, placing students who no longer needed ESL assistance in order to get additional funding. Not distinguishing between fluency in speaking, writing or comprehension, he believed students were stereotyped as ESL simply because of having an Asian last name, questioning how students who were born in Canada could be considered ESL. Foremost among his concerns about ESL programs is the separating out of ESL students from mainstream classrooms:

*ESL - they teach them grammar, verbs, tense, nouns, adjectives...why do they have to teach them that [separately] and not in the classroom together with the group of students. Why not? You can teach the whole class together, why just the ESL [kids]? And besides these things, [why] just two hours a day? How much can you learn? Nothing. And instead of putting the students back in the class, they took them out to get money from the government. That's their main point. That's why they want to keep ESL and put the blame on immigrants.*

Daniel's concerns about the delivery of ESL services stem from the perception that time spent in ESL classes separate from other students results in a loss of opportunity to "learn academics." Daniel's concerns about facilitating English language fluency for his children and other Asian immigrant students were shared by his colleague, Christopher.

#### Christopher<sup>136</sup>

Christopher, another immigrant to BC from Hong Kong, moved to BC in 1990. Christopher is in his mid-thirties, married, highly educated, and works as an instructor at a local post-secondary institution. In Hong Kong, he attended private elementary school

---

<sup>136</sup> As the traditional schools debate continues today, a pseudonym has been used for the protection of the participant's privacy.

and public high school. He attended universities in the United States where he received both a bachelors degree in Finance, a masters degree in Economics and was in a Ph.D. program for computing science. He has two children, a four year old, and a third grader, who is now in his second year of private school.

Christopher's activism in traditional schooling, like Marie's, came out of personal frustrations with registering his child for kindergarten and grade one in the public system. Following a positive experience with Montessori preschool, Christopher had high expectations for his child's learning upon entering him into kindergarten in his neighbourhood school. After two months, Christopher was disturbed by what he saw as an unchallenging classroom:

*After three months, I compared the kindergarten in the public school to the Montessori pre-school, compared to the daycare centre; he was learning nothing in the public school...*

Christopher immediately took his concerns to both the teacher and the principal, who discussed with him the differences in knowledge and skills among children entering kindergarten. Christopher admits to being "uncomfortable" with the explanation, but kept his child in the class.

Like Marie, Christopher spoke of high level of involvement in his child's education, giving his child advanced exercises in math and other subjects at home to supplement activities done at school. Christopher's frustrations turned into anger in 1996, when, in the first day of grade one in the same school, his child was placed in a mixed-grade class of kindergarten-grade one, in a classroom with no tables and chairs, and where children appeared to be "playing", "exactly like kindergarten". Christopher questioned the school's process of assigning his child into a kindergarten-grade 1 class as opposed to a split grade 1-2 class. When he was told that it was based on the student's previous school performance, he tried to verify the assessment with his child's former teacher. When the teacher informed him that she had changed schools and had left none of her records at the school, he concluded that the principal "had lied". He sums up the impact of this incident:

*The most important thing is you lost the confidence of the public school. Those teachers, they are so irresponsible. Do you still have trust in them? You lost the trust. You lost the confidence of them. And so, since that time, that was September, we tried to move him to private school...but we didn't take action immediately. We still put him in the school and observed...for half a year. We gave the public school system another six months and we found that just wasting time.*

Following this incident, Christopher's activism in education issues grew. In 1996, he conducted a survey regarding what education issues parents were concerned about.<sup>137</sup> He also ran for school trustee as an independent candidate, "because [he] wanted to raise my ideas from the inside, not the outside". During the election, he campaigned vigorously for a traditional program, but failed to win a seat.

Since then, Christopher has been at the forefront of the TSM in Richmond, leading the Traditional School Parents Group, speaking to trustees and to the Board on behalf of the group. He observed that the involvement of Asian immigrants in the traditional schooling movement may have taken time to develop because for many newcomers, "they may not have the idea to participate in public activities". He also credits media support (Chinese media, radio, TV), dedicated peers, and improved communication between parents and a parent-organizing infrastructure (i.e. coordinator, Web resources) for the influx of Chinese families supporting traditional schools.

Like Daniel, Christopher believes in the inherent superiority of traditional "structured teaching approach", stating,

*if you explain this structured teaching approach to all the existing primary school parents, I would say 85% to 90% you would get support for that immediately...if they say no, its only because they don't know what's going on. So definitely it's not a cultural issue. It's something that if you understand what's going on, you'll support [the traditional schooling] concept because you know that this is the right thing.*

Christopher shared Marie's insistence in traditional schooling's emphasis on teaching style and creating higher academic results rather than "moral" education. When asked whether he saw traditional schools as addressing morals directly, he stated:

*I never see that part. I never...personally, everyone in our group never addressed this point in our proposal. Just like we never addressed our issue to any other controversial issue like homosexual issue and so on. But people try to ask us. We say we never say anything like that. We are just talking about teaching method.*

While there is not sufficient evidence to suggest their views were in conflict with fundamentalist Christianity, choice activists such as Marie, Daniel and Christopher were willing to put the "wedge" issues (i.e., issues involving sex education or homosexuality) aside in order to achieve their goal of an academically focused traditional school. This distinguished their approach to moral traditionalism from those of PHC, members of the Surrey School Board, and Focus on the Family.

---

<sup>137</sup> The subject described the survey as "a random, multiple choice, written survey. Distributed to "a few hundred people on the street." (Interview, July 17, 1998)

Though not motivated by religious zeal, their "faith" in more authoritarian approaches to schooling was something to which they were committed. Christopher felt it was possible that, in future, he may work not only on promoting particular teaching methods but also what is contained in the curriculum. He sees a need for government to enforce "strict policies" regarding the use of teaching methods in order to gain consistency within the public system. He attributes this inconsistency as the main source of differences in the quality of education received in different public schools.

These three profiles, while not definitive, do provide valuable insight into some of the characteristics shared by members of the TSM. Like the moral traditionalists of the movement, Marie, Daniel and Christopher all share a certain nostalgia for, and acceptance of, the authoritarian, hierarchical, competitive models of schooling they had experienced, and a certain level of confidence that schooling practices reflecting these values of authority, order, and competition were best for their child and, they would argue, for most children.

All three parents were "do-ers" and confident of their ability to "get things done". Marie and Christopher, in particular, exhibited high levels of involvement in their children's schooling, were experienced in interacting and getting information from teachers and administrators, and in providing assistance and supplemental activities for their children's learning. Daniel's parental involvement was directed in extra-curricular programs, teaching at the Richmond Chinese School (a heritage language program). He also served with the City of Richmond's Intercultural Advisory Committee. Marie expressed her understanding of how to get things done given the specific power dynamics in PAC groups:

*I mean the only way you can make changes, if you're a parent,...you have to show up at a PAC meeting with a minimum of 15 parents because, like I said, only 9 or 10 ever go. Then instantly you have a change. But you, alone, single-handedly, if you have a problem....and your 10 friends didn't make it that night, you don't get heard and that's really frustrating.*

Other pro-traditional school parents shared this type of involvement and a concern that their children's compulsory schooling adequately prepared them for future academic success. In a letter, one traditional school advocate in Richmond, hoping to persuade her trustees, expressed the sacrifices her family was willing to make:

*I am eagerly expected there will have traditional school(s) set up in Richmond as I found my children [also my relatives and friends] were very weak in academic and moral learning which they learn from the present public schools. We the parents have to spend extra time/money/effort to enrich same by sending them to other learning centres after school. That is actually no good to the children because it means they have less time to rest, to have other activities, to enjoy family time.*

All three interviewees reflected high expectations for their children's academic achievement, and normatively assumed university entrance as the primary goal of public schools. Marie lamented at what she perceived to be a large discrepancy between public school and private school students' acceptance into university:

*I believe he [Dr. Freedman] told us that at UBC now, they have 2 different kinds of entrance exams and 1 is for the people coming out of the public system and the other one is for those who are coming out of the elite private schools because [only] 1 or 2 % of all kids in BC coming from public schools could make those entry exams. I have a real problem with that. Why is that so low? What is the difference between the kids coming out of private schools? What are they doing that is obviously it's working...that isn't working in the public schools.*

Concern for their children's post-secondary success is a trait expressed by others in the movement. In another letter to a trustee, one man (a certified general accountant) explained his support for the traditional school proposal in the following way:

*I have been a Richmond resident for twenty years and both of my children were born and educated in Richmond through the public school system because we cannot afford private school. My older daughter is very bright and an excellent student, who is currently in 3<sup>rd</sup> year UBC on honour roll. My younger one is in grade 9 and her academics are C average. We are very worried about her and we do not know how to help her. She is the type of person who needs a demanding teacher, more homework and strict expectations from the school and the teacher. I think a traditional school is more suitable for my younger daughter. I am sure it will make a difference on her academic subjects.*

Teachers, trustees and district administrators have referred to the fact that the activism of many traditional school supporters has been cultivated on erroneous, distorted or incomplete information about a complex public system. For example, based on information he got from his son (a first grader) on how students get placed into grades, Christopher concluded that the school was lying, or incompetently administered. Marie's impression that there are two different types of entrance exams – one for private school graduates and one for public school graduates – for UBC admissions reflects the power and the distortion in TSM rhetoric. In public meetings regarding the proposed Richmond Traditional School, many parents in attendance reflected a lack of information about what occurs in neighbourhood schools, the rationale for certain parts of the curriculum and specific teaching strategies. Some complained during small group sessions that they didn't know what was being taught over the course of the year, (information they wanted to enable them to help their children succeed in those curriculum areas), asking why their children didn't bring home textbooks. More troubling to these parents were occasions where their children's writing exercises, when done

'incorrectly' or contained "mistakes" (i.e. spelling, grammar) were not 'corrected'. To senior management in both Richmond and in Vancouver, the traditional school advocates' lack of understanding of neighbourhood schools' practices was at the heart of their efforts to create a new program.

Lastly, all three interviewees shared a strong belief in individualism and the need to teach children early on about the "realities" of competition as a way of preparing them for future careers. For Marie, competition was part of her "vision" in starting the school. To her, public schools have stopped encouraging competition. She showed contempt for non-competitive approaches to sports, as one example:

*What a load of – can't say the word – but to have sports and not have it be competitive. ...These kids take it really seriously. Sports day? What is sports day? Half of the grade 7's didn't go this year [in her neighbourhood school] Why? 'Cause everybody wins...In high school, it's very different. You do get timed and it's only the top three from your school that go. So why don't they instill in them in elementary school when this is how it's going to work in high school?...this is something I wanted done at King...I'm sorry, but when you're in the Olympics, only one makes gold and you may as well teach kids that at day one. ...you go out these days and apply for a job: one of you gets it. There's no "nice-nice" going on.*

Daniel's views on education were also very individualistic. When asked how he reconciled traditional schooling with the need to accommodate different students' needs (I gave the example of poor families that may need different resources like hot lunch programs and different approaches to education), Daniel interpreted this as justifying a lower standard for less privileged students. He didn't believe one should have lower expectations for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, yet at the same time, expressed that a "good system" would be good for all students, regardless of personal or family circumstances.

Daniel and Christopher spoke of wanting a system they could trust. Both expressed a strong belief in creating the "best" system of school practices. To them, the "best" system was one characterized by clear and unequivocal indicators of progress in relation to other students and which promoted mastery over concepts through directly teaching which responses were "right" and "wrong." To them, the role of parents is to ensure that their children have access to the schooling that allows them to compete most effectively for post-secondary and employment opportunities. Daniel was comfortable with the historic roles given to parents by the schools in the past, i.e. fundraising and supporting teaching staff. In fact, Daniel felt that it "wasn't fair to expect parents to do the work [of teaching professionals]." "Students spend more time with teachers than they do with parents. They are the experts."

Of the three TSM activists, Marie was the only one who viewed parental involvement as inclusive of decision-making powers. She felt it an "exciting" precedent that she was one of the first parents involved in the hiring of a school principal. Ultimately, Marie understood parental involvement in traditional schools as an integral part of a school's culture that, in material and non-material ways, enriched the learning environment in ways that benefitted its students. In comparing her experience with traditional school and neighbourhood school, she linked high levels of parental involvement to the inherent "quality" of traditional schooling:

*The parent involvement there [in traditional school] is so high. There were only 90 parents/families who go there [in 1996]. And it didn't matter what event that school had: you would have 50 parents show up. I've never seen that. I mean...There must be 350 parents that go [to our neighbourhood school now]. I have a teachers' appreciation lunch a while back and there's 32 staff at this school and I didn't think I would have enough dishes. Parents [at the neighbourhood school] would just bring a salad and leave.*

These profiles illustrate an important feature of the TSM, i.e. that it has pragmatically accommodated different variations of moral traditionalism. Religious fundamentalism, exemplified by Focus on the Family, PHC or the Surrey School Board may represent elements within the TSM, but the movement has attracted a range of parents with different experiences with the public education system and whose views on moral education are being shaped by TSM arguments that the state has overstepped its role in determining and meeting the needs of children.

### **The Ideology of Educational Choice**

While local media in BC have exposed moral traditionalists and their religion-based politics to scrutiny, TSM choice activists have preached the benefits of market-models of educational choice such as charter schools without substantial critique. While moral traditionalists hammer away at narrowing the scope of school knowledge and preserving parental control over what their children are exposed to within public school curricula, "choice" ideologues within the TSM such as Teachers for Advancing Excellence in Education/Society for Advancing Excellence in Education (TFAEE/SFAEE), Parent Network, Society for Advancing Educational Research (SAER) and Donner Foundation have effectively shifted the focus of education debates away from equity goals in favour of parental authority and consumer accountability.

**Teachers for Excellence in Education/Society for Advancing Excellence in Education (TFEE), and its executive director until 1997, Helen Raham, are central**

choice advocates within the TSM. Formed in 1989 as BC Teachers' association for Excellence in Education, TFEE initially represented teachers who resisted the unionization of teachers and mandatory membership of all public school teachers in the BC Teachers' Federation. It promoted the option of "association" instead of union certification and collective bargaining. It has repeatedly initiated litigation to challenge the bargaining rights of the BCTF.<sup>138</sup>

In recent years, TFEE's stated mandate is to "promote[s] higher performance in the Canadian school system", "support a growing parent network, promote business involvement in education and [strive to] unite reform-minded educators across Canada."<sup>139</sup> In fact, they have provided the ideological training for choice activists in BC and nationally, organizing education conferences and workshops, developing and publishing position papers, and making submissions to government and policy committees related to the performance of the education system. TFEE markets itself as "the alternate voice whenever the union position does not serve the best interests of education." It currently sells informational materials and policy papers on "Restructuring for Excellence," "Charter Schools," "Responsible Bargaining in the Public Education Sector," "Year 2000 Report Card," "Reaching for Higher Standards," "Agenda for Change: The Role of Business in Education Reform," "Traditional Schools," "School Choice" and "Education Finance: Incentives for Excellence."

In 1996, TFEE expanded its reach by forming the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE), an education and research organization with charitable status. Raham, now its executive director, has been a long-time opponent of the BCTF and a supporter of both charter and traditional schools. In 1997-98, SAEE, through Donner Foundation funding (see below) initiated a two-year study of Alberta's charter schools to be completed in September 1999, and established the Calgary-based Canadian Charter Schools Research and Professional Development Centre. Given that, as of 1998 – the only province to pass charter legislation and establish charter schools is Alberta, the creation of this Centre signals the intent to more concertedly promote charter schools nationally.

It is also noteworthy that TFEE/SFAEE has been the recipient of funding and support from powerful groups on the political right, including the National Citizens

---

<sup>138</sup>Peter Owens, BCTF correspondence, May 6, 1998

<sup>139</sup> undated, Teachers For Excellence in Education Organizational Flyer

Coalition (a conservative lobby group), the National Business Council, the BC Business Council and the BC Chamber of Commerce. SAEE's board directors include former Hong Kong Bank of Canada economist and charter school supporter, David Bond, and William Robson of the CD Howe Institute.<sup>140</sup> The Fraser Institute, Canada's foremost conservative think tank, has featured SFAEE executive director Helen Raham's pro-charter school articles and reports, including "Revitalizing Public Education in Canada: the Potential of Charter Schools" (1996), which was released as a special issue of the *Fraser Forum*. Presently, Raham is also a speaker for the Fraser Institute.<sup>141</sup>

Another significant character in the story of BC traditional schools is John Pippus, a founding parent of the Surrey Traditional School and self-described parent activist and former coordinator of the **Parent Network**. Since 1993, he has become a leader in organizing parents in favour of traditional schools and other "choice" models in BC. Pippus was responsible for leading the parents' group in discussions with the Surrey school district for the establishment of Surrey Traditional. Pippus' role became a professional position in 1994 when the Network received grant funding from the Vancouver Foundation (\$24,500) and the ultra-conservative Donner Canadian Foundation (\$70,000).<sup>142</sup> The Parent Network's mandate is to "speak for parents seeking the best education possible for their children; monitor what's working and what isn't; and seek out effective and positive school reform solutions and help implement change."<sup>143</sup>

TFEE/SAEE and Parent Network have cultivated close associations between "choice" activists and religious traditionalists. One of their early jointly sponsored events illustrates the way that the TSM has created an almost seamless blend between morality and markets. In September 1994, the Parent Network and TFEE organized a workshop

---

<sup>140</sup> Letter from Helen Raham, Executive Director, Society for Advancing Excellence in Education to Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. October 23, 1998.

<sup>141</sup> Fraser Institute. Conference flyer "Student Seminars on Public Policy Issues 1998-1999." Raham is a scheduled speaker on "Charter Schools: Problem or Solution" in Edmonton, Jan. 30, 1999.

<sup>142</sup> Pippus, John. "Parent Network Receives Grant", *the Net*, Vol. I, Issue #2, Feb. 1995. Pg. 1; and (on-line <http://www.enet.ca/parentnetwork/newssept.htm> downloaded 7/31/98) Pippus, John. "Donner Foundation Awards Grant" in *the Net*, September 1996.

<sup>143</sup> Parent Network. Undated flyer, "Who We Are". This organization has consistently used flamboyant, militaristic rhetoric, pitting Pippus' organization as "frontline" soldiers against the "big guns" of the education bureaucracy (which lumps together teachers' associations, the BCTF, and the Ministry of Education). Depicting his group as representing all parents, the Parent Network website (<http://www.enet.ca/parentnetwork>) solicits and promotes anecdotal stories of teacher misconduct, and "nightmare" stories about Canadian public schools.

on "how to start a public school of choice."<sup>144</sup> The event, held at the hall of Vancouver's Ryerson United Church, was attended by a small number of school trustees, teachers and parents. Along with Pippus and Raham, the event featured Robert Pickering, Sandy McCormick, a Vancouver school trustee in favour of voucher school models for choice; Liz Robertson, PAC chair of the newly approved Surrey Traditional School; and Dr. Don Andrews, board member of TFEE and a communications consultant leading an initiative to create a Coalition for Excellence in Education that would "...unite teachers, business leaders, parents, politicians, civic leaders and the media into a conservative education lobby group."<sup>145</sup>

The session, according to Pippus, "was designed to be the next logical step in helping dissatisfied parents channel their anger into a battle plan for making the school system give them the education they want for their children." Pippus' workshop on "Tactical Warfare" and Raham's presentation on "Choice Models" demonstrated the bread-and-butter issues of this "choice movement": explicit scapegoating of teachers and the centralized structure of school administration, and indirect, but none-too-subtle attacks on learner-centred educational practices and liberal approaches to social issues in the curriculum.<sup>146</sup>

Groups outside of BC have also had a hand in building the movement. The **Society for Advancing Educational Research (SAER)**, based in Red Deer, Alberta and headed by Dr. Joe Freedman, has played a leadership role for the establishment of traditional schools. Freedman, a medical doctor, parent and a one-man public-relations spokesperson for charter schools, was a featured speaker at a TFEE conference on charter schools. He has promoted charter schools in western Canada, Ontario and Atlantic Canada. He was a featured speaker for the newly formed Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, a conservative research institute similar to BC's Fraser Institute. He has released two videos dealing with education reform (with annotated bibliographies), *Failing Grades - Canadian Schooling in a Global Economy* (1993) and *The Charter Idea* (1995), which featured the Surrey Traditional School. Freedman also visited BC school districts in support of traditional schools.

---

<sup>144</sup> John Pippus, "Last Call for Choice Workshop" *The Net*, Vol. 1, no.1, (Surrey: Parent Network, Sept. 1994.)

<sup>145</sup> TFEE/Parent Network Conference Package

<sup>146</sup> I was a member of the audience at this event, September 24, 1994 held at Ryerson United Church in Vancouver, BC.

BC traditional school activists have credited Freedman and Raham for the inspiration and the resources to run effective campaigns for traditional programs. Abbotsford TSM activist Marie cited both individuals as sources of research articles, Freedman's "video" [Failing Grades], "the Time Magazine article" and other materials – the tools she needed to convince her school board to approve the school.

A common, but almost invisible thread running through the traditional schools and education choice movement has been the financial backing of the **Donner Canadian Foundation**, one of Canada's top 10 charitable foundations with an endowment fund of close to \$100 million. Founded in the 1950s by American steel magnate William Henry Donner, its mission statement is to "...encourage individual responsibility and private initiative to help Canadians solve their social and economic problems." It has provided essential funding for research into the effects of competition and privatization in all areas of social policy in Canada.

The Donner Canadian Foundation has contributed more than \$75 million in grants to over 600 projects across Canada since 1967.<sup>147</sup> Between 1994 and 1999, Donner Canadian Foundation has consistently funded the Society for Advancing Excellence in Education, the Society for Advancing Educational Research and BC's Fraser Institute. The Foundation's role in the TSM has been integral: its funding has resulted in two studies on "choice" in education (a University of Calgary study of eight charter schools and the University of BC study of "choice" schools that features two BC traditional schools), the Aurora Charter School, the Fraser Institute and SAER's "Report Cards" on Public Education in BC and Ontario, and perhaps most importantly, seed funding for the activities of BC Teachers for Excellence in Education, SAER's Parent Network, and the Ontario Coalition for Education Reform (a coalition of taxpayer groups, teachers and parents groups seeking a return to traditional schooling).<sup>148</sup>

The work of Donner Canadian and its US counterpart, the William H. Donner Foundation, are related. The Donner Foundation's US and Canadian branches work closely together, seeking opportunities for funding joint projects. Education is one of the

---

<sup>147</sup> Donner Canadian Foundation Web Page. (Online: <http://donnerfoundation.org/english/text/mission.html>) Downloaded: Jan. 31, 1998

<sup>148</sup> Donner Canadian Foundation *Annual Reports* for 1994 (cited in , "Money Buys Minds," *Canadian Forum* (July-August 1996), pg. 17) and 1996 (Donner Foundation *Annual Report* Toronto, 1996, pg. 7) list the Fraser Institute as receiving \$209,840. In its listing of recent grants for 1997-98 (Online: <http://donnerfoundation.org/english/text/grantbody.html>), Donner Foundation lists the Fraser Institute as receiving additional grants for an analysis of the impact of the Delgamuuk decision and the Donner Public Policy Intern Program. Amounts for these grants have not been disclosed.

Donner Foundation's (US) major program areas, constituting over \$2 million in 1996 to 20 projects, including the Boston Renaissance Charter School (US\$150,000), the Center for Education Reform's National Network for Charter Schools (\$87,700), the Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research's publication, *Towards School Choice in Massachusetts* (\$100,000), and the Foundation for the Study of National, Civic and International Affairs' upcoming book, *Spotlighting the NEA* [National Education Association] (\$200,000).

A feature article on the Donner Foundation in a 1996 issue of Canadian Forum entitled, "Money Buys Minds: The quiet US dollars behind noisy Canadian neo-conservatives" sums up the role of the Donner Foundation in the effort to legitimize New Right paradigms for public policy. Donner Canadian's former president Bob Couchman describes the Donner family's philosophical orientation as having "...always been conservative. They tended to be, in American terms, to the right of the Republican Party."<sup>149</sup> Journalist Krishna Rau observes:

*With the emergence of the Donner Foundation as the new sugar daddy for right-wing groups in this country, Canada has taken its place in the labyrinthine puzzle that is the organized right in North America. Canada has always lagged behind the US in conservative activism, but with a multi-million dollar foundation eager to fund controversial projects and to exploit its extensive ties to American groups, Canadian right-wingers are on the rise. The over \$2 million that the Donner Canadian annually disburses has already gone a long way to directing public debate and opinion in this country. The foundation funds most of Canada's prominent right-wing think tanks, various anti-equity groups and a number of conservative university studies.*<sup>150</sup>

Despite the current acceptance of traditional school program models, there is evidence to suggest that British Columbians' support for traditional schooling is complex and highly contingent on how traditional programs might affect the public system at large. For example, a Chilliwack school district survey sent to all families with children registered at the elementary level found strong support for the idea of traditional schools/programs. This survey was conducted to measure support for establishing a traditional school in the district. Of 1750 survey respondents, 1249 (71.4%) felt that their school board should support the establishment of a traditional model public school in their community; 1375 (78.6%) responded that they would like to have the choice of their

---

<sup>149</sup> Rau, Krishna, "Money Buys Minds," *Canadian Forum* (July-August 1996). pg. 17

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

child attending such a school.<sup>151</sup> It is important to note, however, that there were only two questions on the survey and that a number of respondents who were in favour of the school board establishing a traditional model program in the district, qualified their support for traditional programs; they supported a traditional program to the extent that it did not undermine existing neighbourhood schools, which they strongly supported. The following written comments included in the survey responses suggest that while parents in this district were supportive of diverse programs and parental authority to choose such programs, that support was qualified on various grounds and was contingent on not exacerbating stratification between schools:

*"the school district already does the things the traditional school proposes"*

*"if it does not decrease allotments to existing schools"*

*"if it will not affect the funding for the public schools open now"*

*"[yes. I feel the school board should support the establishment of a traditional model public school in our community] but at this point, I will not move my children to a different school"*

*"I may not elect to send my children to a traditional model school, but I feel very strongly that parents should have the choice to select this alternative in our community"*

*"but not school uniforms".*

In fact, community members publicly called the survey's designers to task for "creating forms designed to generate the response the writers desired" and failing to include "information about the costs of setting up and maintaining a traditional school". Interestingly, despite receiving survey results in favour of the program, the school board for this district did not approve a traditional school.

The outcomes of TSM activism in Chilliwack, a rural community neighbouring another district that did approve a traditional school, reflects the locally specific dynamics of TSM politics. The Chilliwack survey, along with the responses of Marie, Daniel and Christopher, do suggest, however, that linking traditional programs to the concept of "school choice" has been strategically effective for the TSM. New forms of school differentiation and parental choice of schools, particularly those that advocate academic excellence, have been legitimized by the survey and by equating the "choice" paradigm with alternative programs.

---

<sup>151</sup> "Summary of Ad Hoc Committee Survey on a Traditional School", Report to Education Policy and Planning Committee, Chiliwack School Board, Dec. 14, 1995.

### Long Term Unity or Short Term Pragmatism?

For the purposes of mobilizing public support for “parents’ rights” policies, moral traditionalists and choice advocates have remained united. This coalition, held together by a common rhetoric that is deeply suspicious of government’s role in education and calls for the primacy of parental authority in schooling, extends to a common hostility to the provincial New Democratic Party. Interestingly, the presence of a labour-friendly NDP government during most of the 1990s has had its advantages and disadvantages to the TSM. While the NDP’s opposition to adopting market-style reforms such as charter schools or a voucher system for public education has limited their pursuit of choice policies in public education, the TSM has benefitted from a backlash against the provincial government. In 1997, a forum on homosexuality held in Prince George (whose school district recently approved designating a neighbourhood school into a traditional school) attracted 500 people and, by blaming the NDP for promoting a “dangerous homosexual agenda”, organizers for the forum were also able to recruit 100 forum attendees to join the recall initiative against Education Minister and Prince George MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) Paul Ramsay.<sup>152</sup>

TSM has done similar groundwork to ensure market style reforms are on the policy agenda of right of centre political parties. At the 1995 charter school conference, TFEE’s invitation to members of the BC Liberal Party and the BC Reform Party yielded those parties’ support for charter legislation.<sup>153</sup> The two-pronged campaign of the TSM – i.e. re-traditionalized curriculum and parents’ rights to choose their child’s education – has been a potent political combination that is consistent with mainstream discourses on parenting. It is noteworthy that, despite the current government’s opposition to the TSM during this period, TSM growth suggests that it would be all the more influential should the political landscape change in favour of right-of-centre parties. In light of the TSM’s “successes” within the current system – i.e. the popularization and legitimization of self-selecting programs created through parent activism, one must wonder whether charters or vouchers are necessary if the structure of alternative programs already enables

---

<sup>152</sup> Holekstra, G. “Organizer of Forum That Led to Recall Campaign Ponders Running For Reform if Ramsay Loses seat”. *Vancouver Sun*, Dec. 16, 1997, Final Edition, p. B7.

<sup>153</sup> Balcom, Susan “Charter Schooling Chalks up Liberal Support”, *The Vancouver Sun*, January 26, 1995, Final Edition, p.B8. Then Liberal MLA Lynn Stephens and BC Reform Party MLA Len Fox were panelists in favour of Charter Schools during TFEE’s 1995 Charter School Conference.

motivated, middle-class parents to readily “opt out” of neighbourhood schools for more enriched programs.

Despite the unity the movement has exhibited thus far, this “fusion” is not something that can be taken for granted. Marie’s experience with her traditional school PAC reflects potential incompatibilities between moral fundamentalism and neo-liberal ideologies of the TSM. One DPAC representative interviewed observed that traditional school PACs experience their share of conflicts, citing that their executive positions have been tightly contested, an unusual occurrence among school PACs. This observation was supported by our own experience with the Surrey Traditional PAC, where a substantial number of parents disagreed with the executive’s decision not to participate in the CCPA study.

In demanding greater control over curriculum content and in the school communities their children will belong to, the TSM is recasting the idea of “public education” to an earlier paradigm where education was a private contract between parents and the educator. This notion reduces the notion of “public” simply to individual access to tax-payer funding for the pursuit of private aims rather than a broader vision of “public” that refers to a process of citizenship and the construction of a collective vision for society.

### *Impact of the TSM*

The impact of the TSM cannot be assessed solely on the numbers of traditional programs that have been established. The creation of traditional school programs and curriculum and policy issues advocated by the TSM’s religious conservatives has contributed to escalating conflicts and tensions among education stakeholders which were referred to repeatedly in the course of this research. Three categories of conflict were identified from the available data; teachers vs. school boards, and non-traditional school parents vs. school boards, and lastly, traditional parents vs. the BCTF.

#### **Teachers vs. School Boards**

As mentioned earlier, warfare is the metaphor adopted by some TSM activists for the relationship between traditional school advocates and teachers’ associations. In two of three districts with traditional schools, and in Richmond, where the traditional school issue has been cast in racial terms, public debate was intense, highly publicized, and brought teachers’ associations and pro-traditional school parents into heated opposition.

In Vancouver, the Vancouver Elementary Teachers' Association has refused to participate in committee discussions regarding the feasibility of this program but instead has submitted its concerns and opposition to the proposal, in writing, to the Board.<sup>154</sup>

The precedent for conflict between school boards and teachers over TSM organizing was set in Langley in the late 1970s. There, conflict erupted with the election of the "Basics Bunch" to the school board in 1973, and its approval of the fundamental school in 1975. Teachers representatives were enraged by the distorted view of public education and public school teachers that entered the public discourse, and that was accepted as the central rationale for creating the fundamental schools. One Langley Teachers' Association past president recalled, "there was a huge amount of turmoil here – unbelievable." According to him, district staff were "forced out" because of their philosophical differences with the back-to-basics trustees, and that over 320 teachers left the district within three years. According to a former LTA official interviewed about his experience during that time, conflicts included attacks on individuals and individual schools, leading to public ridicule of, and a hostile climate within, the district.

In 1979, the BCTF called on an independent commission to examine "an apparent deterioration in the educational climate in the district."<sup>155</sup> The Commission consisted of a representative from the BC Home-School Federation (a predecessor to the BC Council for Parent Advisory Councils), a past president of the BC School Trustees' Association, and a past president of the BCTF. It conducted three public meetings and sat for seven days to listen to 200 people, and review 61 written submissions. In its report, the Commission found, "There can be little doubt that the establishment of the two fundamental schools has been at the root of much of the conflict and fear evident in the school district." The Commission put forward a number of recommendations, including that "the board refrain from public denunciation and vilification of members of its professional staff, the Langley Teachers' Association (LTA), the BC Teachers' Federation and the teaching profession in general."

---

<sup>154</sup> However, it must be noted that the traditional school proposal in Vancouver has been only one of many issues bringing Vancouver teachers into conflict with the Board. Where the history of conflicts in Surrey was directly tied to the "traditional" ideology being introduced into district policies, in Vancouver, the conflicts have been tied more to issues of fiscal management by the Board.

<sup>155</sup> *Report of the Langley Commission on Education*, Langley, BC, 1979. Commission Report authors were: Ona Mae Roy (Chair) President, BC Home School Federation, Frank Beinder, past president, BC School Trustees Association, and Adam Robertson, past president, BC Teachers Federation.

According to the LTA president at the time, the conflict had a long-term effect on the district: "It was chaotic for at least ten years," he said, "until the dust settled and a more moderate board was elected." This LTA representative felt that even years later, the national and international perception of the district was as "loony Langley."<sup>156</sup>

Similarly, Surrey school board has had numerous conflicts with the Surrey Teachers' Association (STA) over traditional schooling issues. The Board's decisions on secondary school condom machines, child abuse detection programs, changes to district ESL policy and lastly, its restrictive process for reviewing and approving community resources to be used for Career and Personal Planning courses – all have been deeply divisive to the district. With each of these decisions, parents ideologically supportive of the Board conflicted with parents who were not, and tensions between teachers and the Board were exacerbated because of the intense media coverage over these conflicts.

In the case of the traditional school, STA opposition was based on a number of concerns. One STA representative described their perception of a wider agenda behind the proposal.

*The proposal for the traditional school was really a proposal for a charter school: they wanted the ability for parents to run the school. They wanted parents to sign... an agreement that they would reinforce and teach what they called "traditional, Canadian family values"... They had some proposals over how they could get some private funding and partnerships with corporations and such, and business. They proposed that the children would wear uniforms, they would hire the staff, they would put together the curriculum, they would hire the principal. At the time, I didn't know anything about charter schools and it was only in reflection after everything had finished that I understood that what they wanted was a charter school.*

Approving "alternative" traditional schools premised on an "emphasis on basics" or "high academic standards" angered teachers on the grounds that they implied "basics" were not being taught in public schools, and on the grounds that traditional schools were simply a way to get a charter school without adopting charter legislation.

Among the STA's other concerns was the exclusion associated with "traditional family values." Pointing to one traditional school's initial requirement to have parents pledge to "traditional, Canadian family values," one representative expressed concern that "...there wouldn't be ESL kids in the school; there wouldn't be special needs kids in the school; if you happened to be a single mom, unmarried with children, that you wouldn't be able to take their children to that school because of the whole statement of traditional Canadian values."

---

<sup>156</sup> C. Kalaw, A. McLaren, N. Rehnby, *In the Name of Choice – A Study of Traditional Schools in BC* (Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1998), pg. 47.

Prior to the Board's approval of Surrey Traditional School, the STA filed a grievance with the District and the BCTF placed the school "in dispute," meaning that the district's bargaining unit requested members to refrain from applying for positions at the school. Any member who did so would be subject to disciplinary measures by the bargaining unit. The district narrowly avoided a protracted union conflict when senior management brokered a deal with the STA that removed contentious components of the traditional school proposal, including the requirement of signing a pledge as a condition of registration, and ensured that all collective bargaining provisions would be upheld. As a result, the BCTF removed its "in dispute" rating.

Ultimately, the expeditious approval of the traditional school in Surrey further divided education stakeholders. The school, proposed in April 1994, opened just five months later, despite outstanding concerns by the STA. One former Surrey trustee characterized the STA's opposition to the traditional school proposal as "unfortunate" and avoidable. The trustee believed that district processes, carefully built over the years to ensure democratic participation and public accountability, should not have been ignored:

*Had we followed due process and involved all the players in the discussion all the way along, we wouldn't have ended up that way. But it appeared – it may have not been the intent, but it appeared – it was one group bringing it forward, just ad hoc, their proposal, with enough people on the board supporting them, and don't consult anybody else, and it was done. And that, I'm sure, wasn't the intent of the parents when they initially began – that was the interpretation that a lot of other people in the district put on it and, of course, then we ended up in dispute.<sup>157</sup>*

As a result of the numerous, ideological conflicts with the Board, the STA representative summed up the Board-union relationship as "not collegial" stating, "We know what motivates this board, and it's not, many of us think, in the best interests of children, and it's not educationally sound."

Conflicts over traditional schooling initiatives have been costly in terms of eroding the collegiality among district stakeholders. It has also been costly in terms of district resources. In addition to the parent volunteer and staff time spent addressing the public relations frenzy associated with TSM initiatives, the District, as already noted, has also incurred legal expenses for its attempts to fend off challenges to the Board's decisions to ban books that recognized same sex families and Planned Parenthood as district resources.

---

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. pg. 48

In Abbotsford, conflict between the traditional school and the teachers' association was comparatively less volatile. The Abbotsford Teachers' Association raised concerns about the process by which the traditional school was approved (like Surrey, the proposal was approved within a matter of months), but, according to an ATA representative, the traditional school was ultimately seen as consistent with the desires of what he considered a "bible-belt" community.

In Richmond and Vancouver, teachers and other employee groups, expressed opposition to the traditional school proposal on the grounds that "traditional schooling", as a distinct pedagogical model was inadequately defined. Further, Richmond Teachers' association (RTA) repeatedly expressed its concerns that, at a time when neighbourhood schools are struggling to meet the basic classroom and school needs of their catchment areas, a traditional school was an inappropriate prioritization of district funding. RTA representatives, unlike their Vancouver elementary counterparts, made presentations to the Board expressing their opposition and participated in district processes after the proposal was approved in principle.

In Richmond, TSM activists have again been perceived by non-TSM parents and other education stakeholders as being given privileged status. The Traditional School Group initially presented their proposal in January 1998 for a school to open in September 1998. They followed up with numerous presentations to the Board between February and July 1998, during which one Richmond trustee recalled the TSM group made "ludicrous statements" about how neighbourhood schools operate.

Based on the board's decision to reject a traditional school proposal made one year prior, Richmond traditional school supporters entered into dialogue with the Superintendent about their concerns of neighbourhood schools. The process was interrupted in April 1998 when the Chair of the Board unilaterally introduced a motion to approve the traditional program in principle. Breaking from common practice, this motion was introduced without warning to the other trustees or to other stakeholders.<sup>158</sup>

In both Richmond and Vancouver, the process of lobbying for a traditional school involved parent activists attending multiple school board meetings from January 1998 to March 1999, producing signs, banners and stickers to hand out at school board meetings. In Richmond, it also meant organizing supporters to attend meetings, draft and reproduce press releases for distribution at the meeting, participating in committee

---

<sup>158</sup> McKittrick, A. Interview, Richmond, BC June 17, 1998.

meetings with district's senior management staff, executives from both teachers' unions, principals' and vice principals' associations and the district parents' groups, and responding to media inquiries.

In the Spring of 1998, with a vote of 4-3, the Board narrowly passed a motion to "approve in principle", the establishment of a traditional program in the district. Following the adoption of this motion, a traditional school committee, that included all district stakeholders, was struck to design a traditional school program to be voted on in March 1999.

In March 1999, after the Richmond's Traditional Program Planning Committee Final Report was disseminated to the public and community feedback (i.e. letters and written briefs to the district office and to trustees) was received, new recommendations were made to the Board. Specifically, the recommendations approved by the board were to 1) accept the Committees' final report, 2) to adopt the Committee's framework for the Traditional School Program as the basis for a "Foundations Program to be implemented in all elementary schools, on a phased in basis, beginning September 2000", and lastly, 3) that the Committee's proposed communications plan and a Foundations Program be adopted instead of the Traditional School Program.<sup>159</sup> The "Foundations Program" would be implemented in all elementary schools in the Richmond District.<sup>160</sup>

It is noteworthy that in Prince George and Williams Lake, where neighbourhood schools were changed to district-wide alternative programs but where the change was initiated and supported by staff and parent groups within the school, no similar conflicts with the teaching community were identified. Moral traditionalists in Prince George, however, have staged public rallies against proposals for anti-homophobia education.

Arguably, as more school boards in the province approve traditional programs, teacher protests are less likely to hinder the process. In Vancouver, for example, despite strong opposition, the Board has not rejected the proposal. Rather, it has tabled the decision awaiting a task force report on traditional schooling. It is anticipated that teacher resistance to the programs may decline either due to the acceptance of other traditional schools in the province or because teachers will be included in discussions to change existing neighbourhood schools into traditional schools. While this may result in less

---

<sup>159</sup> C. Kelly, Superintendent, Memorandum to the Board of School Trustees Re: Board Resolution 245/98: Recommendation, Richmond School District, Feb. 25, 1999.

<sup>160</sup> C. Kelly, Superintendent., Memo to School Board Trustees, Richmond School District Feb. 25, 1999, Re: Board Resolution 245/98: Recommendation

conflict between the TSM and education stakeholders, it would result in even less substantive critique of the pedagogical implications of "traditional schooling."

### **Parents vs. School Boards**

The establishment of the traditional schools created deep divides between traditional school parents, non-traditional school parents and school boards. The establishment of traditional schools was tainted with a public perception that due process was not followed and preferential treatment and funding was given to traditional school parents. This perception was exacerbated by the fact that, in all three districts, policies for alternative programs were not put in place until after the schools were established. Formulating policy on alternative programs after the approval of traditional schools simply rationalizes and entrenches the methods, strategies, and frameworks of successful parent movements into the public system. In Richmond and Vancouver, where alternative school/programs policy were in place prior to approving traditional school proposals, opposition to the proposal was based on the view that the program proposed was not sufficiently distinct from neighbourhood schools. Furthermore, many parents felt that all schools in the district shared the goals of the proposed traditional school and that the traditional school ought not be given "separate" status. This rationale and the funding shortage to most neighbourhood schools led many parents to oppose the redirection of funding and resources for traditional programs.

Again, historical precedent for conflicts between parents did happen in Langley. Expanding the traditional/fundamental program into existing neighbourhood schools created conflict between parent groups in the 1970s and early 1980s. The LTA president of the time recounts that despite the majority of the [Basics Bunch] board supporting a proposal to make Nickomekl Elementary School into a second fundamental program in 1977, parents and teachers were able to organize against the proposal.<sup>161</sup>

Conflicts surrounding the traditional programs continued until 1981 when the Basics Bunch majority on the school board – a group widely perceived as extreme in their conservatism – was removed. This also prevented further expansion of the fundamental program. In the mid-1990s however, an attempt to establish a fundamental secondary program rallied parents together again at Mountain Secondary School, and ultimately, the proposal was resisted.

---

<sup>161</sup>: Interview, T. Eastman, ex-president, Langley Teachers' association, Nov. 12, 1997.

The TSM in the district would, however, eventually prevail. In 1998, the TSM's four-year bid for a middle school succeeded after submission of two separate proposals, a feasibility study and a 114-page proposal developed by district staff, fundamental school administrators and parents. When the Langley Board of Trustees approved the proposal, one board trustee remarked, "I am always impressed when there is a vibrant, passionate group of parents involved in the education of their children. This is one of the most strident groups of parents in the District."<sup>162</sup>

Conflict between different parent groups and the school board was perhaps most explicit in Abbotsford, where non-traditional school parents said they felt caught off guard by the quick acceptance of the traditional school proposal. In Abbotsford, the proposal was submitted in November 1994 and accepted in principal in February 1995 for a September 1995 opening. One former Abbotsford DPAC president described a general climate of tension and frustration following the school's approval, including the general concern that district parents had not been given sufficient or accurate information. In February 1995, the DPAC made a presentation to the Board requesting information about the traditional school and articulating concerns about making full information available to all parents. To date, the Board has yet to adequately make public the costs of establishing the school, a question raised by parents in the community and the CCPA research team.

More questions and alarms were raised in November 1996 when King parents presented a proposal for a secondary program. Based on their experience with the elementary school, the DPAC distributed information about the traditional school proposal and surveyed school PACs in the district on whether they supported a traditional secondary program. In 1997, one parent from a non-traditional school initiated a grassroots petition for greater fiscal accountability and responsibility in funding alternative programs in response to the establishment of King and the proposal for a secondary program. Uppermost among the concerns of non-traditional school parents was how the program was to be funded. One parent explained the reaction,

*We came to find that...the money did not come out of capital planning money or the capital budget – it came out of operating funds. That's what I'm opposed to – the establishment of alternative programs or schools out of operating funds that are allocated by the ministry to serve all schools in this district...We didn't want to see it [the secondary expansion] happen.<sup>163</sup>*

---

<sup>162</sup> Bateman, J. "Middle School In", *Langley Advance*, Fri, Feb. 20, 1998, pg. 4.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with D. Boulis Abbotsford Parent, June 16, 1997.

Tensions increased in 1997 when traditional school parents proposed that a new school that was about to open, Roberta Bondar Elementary, be designated a traditional school. An Abbotsford DPAC executive member recalls parents' anger. "This was a school that parents have been waiting for, they'd been in a very crowded situation with umpteen portables for six years...all these different times, they have been delayed." While the board did consider the proposal, it was eventually rejected. A representative of the Abbotsford Teachers' Association speaks of the impact traditional school politics has had on parent relations in his district:

*...The impact it's had? I think it had the impact of dividing the community which is exactly what I thought it would do. ...there's a push on to the new school for this September, and in the spring, there was a push to make it into a second traditional school...[Non-traditional school] parents were at the board meeting screaming murder that that might happen. And they felt that [given] the way in which the first traditional school went through, those parents who wanted to maintain the traditional neighbourhood school had better get together fast and let the board know they don't want it [the traditional school]...Part of the problem was that [new Bondar] school was built to alleviate a problem of overcrowding in another school and the proposal for building it was for that, it wasn't to make it into a traditional school. [With] the traditional secondary school, the problem is facility. They don't have any secondary spaces. They talked about making it a sort of French immersion program...but they didn't like that because of course, they would still be milling around the "unwashed" rest of the people. Right?*

Friction between education stakeholders in Abbotsford continued long after the establishment of the traditional elementary school. In 1997, when the proposal for a traditional secondary program was brought forward, more conflict ensued. Parents and teachers serving on the traditional secondary program feasibility committee reported that traditional school advocates themselves rejected the proposal to establish a traditional program within an existing comprehensive secondary school. One parent from Abbotsford Jr. Secondary summed up some of the concerns over the desire for a separate traditional school:

*Is the issue having this more structured education or is the issue separation from other students... When you insist on having a separate school, that to me, makes me wonder what is your issue. When this committee [traditional secondary committee] met at Abbey Junior, it became apparent quite quickly that there were teachers, for instance, who were already teaching that way...it would have been very easy...the staff was already in place to run this sort of thing like an honours program sort of. ...but the issue then came to in the discussion, 'what happens at lunchtime', 'how would we keep the kids apart at lunchtime'. Well we could have different lunch hours...so that would be okay, but what about when they change classes? So the issue was separation. Keeping kids separate from other kids and that to me is a dangerous area to get into.*

Lasting tensions between traditional school parents and other district parents, while difficult to document, were clearly present. In Abbotsford, the politics of traditional

schools were linked to local school board election politics when DPAC executives, who were accused of attacking the traditional school, also ran against one of the founders of the traditional school in the school board elections and lost. At a meeting attended by members of the research team in April 1997 where the rationale for traditional schools was being discussed, parents on both sides of the issue were visibly upset and argued vigorously.

The Surrey Traditional School PAC experienced the same criticisms about funding and process from other parent groups in their district. Again, non-traditional school parents, as in the DPAC, perceived the traditional school as having received a disproportionate amount of funds that were to be shared among all schools in Surrey. According to one DPAC rep, the cost of starting an alternate program at a time of budget constraint was the main issue. "We've heard all kinds of numbers bandied about on whether it cost \$80,000 or \$380,000 to establish the school, to renovate, to put desks in and so on." She also noted:

*I think it offended some parents that trustees and the system in general was reacting to [them], that the squeaky wheel was in fact getting a response, where it might not have been the best [decision for the district]. It might have been anyway, that seemed to be irrelevant. It was too much in your face, you know? They [non-traditional school parents] were saying, 'My school would like an expansion. We want to have an art room .... We're making do with no paint for 12 years or whatever...' This group [traditional school] gets all this attention and probably money. It's gonna cost us money on top of [start up costs for operation expenses]. So that was something they could latch onto – the money issue. Then when numbers started coming out that it was half a million or 300,000, people were just abhorred because they could look at their own school struggling as parents were selling cupcakes to pay for stickers and all of a sudden \$300,000 was being spent on an all new program.*

The resourcefulness of TSM parents in fundraising has been a notable source of tension. Another incident cited involved a letter written by the Surrey Traditional PAC to all other Surrey school PACs, asking for a "goodwill cash donation to the new school, to help us with our most immediate needs." Addressed to each district PAC chairperson, the implied reason for the request was the fact that Surrey Traditional's first crop of students came from 54 other schools in the district and as such, they were entitled to a share of the funds raised by parents who had since chosen Surrey Traditional. According to the DPAC representative:

*...the PACs were very taken aback. The vast majority that I communicated with, they couldn't believe they [the Traditional School PAC] had the audacity to do that....but it's created this, 'here's the traditional school and here's the other PACs' ....but the idea that that group of parents thought they had the right to do that and felt it would be positively received, continues.*

The re-directing of district funds to establish traditional schools has been a recurring, contentious issue in a number of districts. Recent reports from Richmond School District's Traditional Program Planning Committee and district senior management have provided the most comprehensive information available on the costs of establishing traditional programs thus far.<sup>164</sup> They provide the estimated costs for establishing a traditional program as either a dual track program (a program within an existing neighbourhood school) or as a separate school, and the one-time start-up costs (facility, equipment and learning resources) and operational expenses. The Committee also considered how traditional program expenses may be offset by students leaving other schools in the district.<sup>165</sup> In Richmond, this information was critical to the public debate and decision-making over the traditional program proposal. Two weeks of public consultation ensued following the release of the *Traditional Program Committee's Final Report* and the "Estimation of Costs of a Traditional Program" Memo.

Because of the lack of financial data on the costs of traditional schools in other districts, and as one illustration of a district's budgeting and decision-making process over the traditional programs, some of this information is provided on Table 2.

---

<sup>164</sup> B. Bearisto, Associate Superintendent, Memo to School Board Trustees, Richmond School District Feb. 1, 1999, Re: Estimation of the Costs of the Traditional Program.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. pg. 7

**Table 2 - Summary of Costs for Establishing A District-Wide Traditional Program in Richmond<sup>166</sup>**

<b>Program Description</b>	<b>Dual Track Option</b>	<b>Separate School Option</b>
K-1 (2 classes)	\$4,250 start up + \$45,000 annual operational	Not considered
K-3 (4 classes)	47,750 start up + \$83,000 annually operational	Not considered
K-7 (8 classes)	\$25,250 start up + \$153,000 annual operational	\$200,000 start up + \$270,000 annual operational

Note:

According to Richmond district staff, these estimates do not include the costs of facility renovations and only apply to the approximate start-up and operational expenses of the various options.

"start-up" costs – refers to "incremental one-time startup costs for equipment and learning resources.

"annual operational" – refers to classroom staffing, learning assistance and teacher/librarian time, noon-hour supervision, administrative officer and secretarial staffing.

Given the lack of empty schools in Richmond and Vancouver, accommodating TSM demands in both districts would require consideration of building new facilities. The potential costs of creating a new school in light of financial shortfalls for other services and programs in both districts exacerbated traditional school politics. Critics of the TSM perceived traditional school advocates as pursuing an "elite" school without regard for its impact on district coffers and the concurrent demand for funds from other schools. This perception was fuelled by the fact that, to traditional school activists, a dual track program was not acceptable. As Christopher wrote in a Feb. 24, 1999 memo opposing the dual track option,

---

<sup>166</sup>Ibid. pg. 7

*We believe in the existing model running successfully in Surrey. It is the Surrey Traditional School. Hence a **separate** school [emphasis added] is the aim of a few thousand supporters of the Public Traditional Elementary School.*

In districts without empty school facilities, school boards have come up with alternative options for creating traditional schools. Those options include proposals to designate an existing neighbourhood school or a newly-built school as a traditional school. This approach would, however, do little to alleviate inter-parent conflicts because it would displace "non-traditionalist" parents living in the catchment areas. In one public meeting, traditional school proponents were already publicly inquiring about the possibility of a "second" traditional school to accommodate the anticipated overflow of registrants.<sup>167</sup> Vancouver TSM activists also made these suggestions to the VSB Education and Curriculum Committee in their final presentation, feeding the perception that TSM activists were lobbying for and likely to receive resources at the expense of neighbourhood schools.

Race and ethnicity added a new dimension to the TSM in Richmond. Coverage of traditional school politics in the district honed in on the possibility that the traditional school may be, from the onset, an "Asians only" school.<sup>168</sup> The controversy over the proposal generated commentary and letters to local and daily print media, a number of them reflecting an anti-immigrant backlash that formed part of the opposition to the traditional school. The following letter to the editor in a Richmond newspaper illustrates how the demands for a traditional school were interpreted:

*...As the number of Orientals grew [in the Lower Mainland], their presence changed the fabric of our society. Despite their strong efforts to rely only on each other, they had no choice but to sometimes also deal with the rest of us, whether we were 'bananas' [yellow on the outside and white on the inside] or just plain white. The criteria for accepting them here is mostly for their money, and this is probably our first mistake. But we did not invite them, they chose to leave their ancestral heritage and Canada was at the top of their list. ...Let's reflect on this issue. They chose Canada because they knew that Canada is still the best country in the world even if in most cases, they would not be able to make as much money as where they were...Now I am asking them to preserve what they sought. I am not asking them to feel that they are just a guest. I am asking them to honor the people who opened their doors to them. ...New immigrants should make it easier on their children and themselves and avoid friction due to cultural differences....<sup>169</sup>*

---

<sup>167</sup> Fieldnotes, Public Meeting Re: Traditional School Proposal, Jan. 14, 1999, Hugh Boyd Sec School.

<sup>168</sup> C. Porter, "Asian-only classes possible, critic warns: A school could become a racial enclave, former principal says" *Vancouver Sun*, January 25, 1999, Final Edition, p.A1.

<sup>169</sup> "Choice Words - Immigrants should avoid 'friction' in their new country." Letter to the Editor, *Richmond News*, March 2, 1999.

## Parents vs. BCTF

In my earlier discussion of the politics of funded research, I described the history of conflict that existed between some members of the TSM and the BCTF even prior to the creation of Surrey Traditional school. TSM groups have publicly blamed the union for "putting workers interests first" at the expense of students. In particular, they believed collective agreements created inflexibility and unresponsiveness within the education system. For others within the movement, this belief may also have come from personal experience. Marie expressed her frustration with the discrepancy in power in parent-teacher relations, something she attributes to the teachers union;

*There's just a complete frustration that every time you as a parent have a problem, a door is slammed... Teachers are so protected by their big union people that... unless they sexually abuse, and even then they're still protected, you can't get them fired... [They're] never...evaluated and evaluated fairly. And I resent that. If they have a problem with our children, boy are we called in there lickety split and we're to resolve all issues. But if we have an issue to resolve, it's our child [who is at fault].*

TSM groups like Parents for Healthy Children and the Parent Network have portrayed the BCTF's role as bargaining unit for teachers and its support for various social justice causes as coming at the expense of student welfare or an infringement on "parents' rights."

The second reason for the conflict between traditional school advocates and the BCTF is the entrenched positions both have taken on "choice". Both TSM groups and the BCTF state that their interests are in the protection of public education. The TSM's promotion of charter schemes, voucher schemes and decentralization of school administration as a way of reforming Canadian schools has been adamantly rejected by the BCTF. In 1996, it released its own publications on school choice, unequivocally stating it "opposes vouchers, charter schools and similar initiatives that privatize public schools and undermine the democratic principles upon which public schools are founded."<sup>170</sup>

Since the creation of the first traditional school in Langley, the Federation has taken issue with the ideological underpinnings of the traditional schools movement and not traditional models of schooling per se. Along with the *School Choice* brochure, the BCTF also released *Inventing Crisis - The Erosion of Confidence in Canadian Public Education*, an analysis of the ways public education is undermined through continued

---

<sup>170</sup>BC Teachers Federation, "School Choice": Issues in Education Series (Vancouver: BCTF, 1996)

government underfunding and distorted, out-of-context media reporting on education issues.

To BCTF officials, traditional schools are only one expression of a conservative attack on social programs and a vibrant public service in Canada. The justification and impetus for traditional schooling is part of a larger process of eroding confidence in public schools. Only then can privatization of schools be rationalized. According to the BCTF, the rhetoric of "failing public schools" is based on a number of unfounded myths: that Canadians have lost faith in public education; that kids aren't learning as much as they used to; that Canadian students can't compete successfully with other countries; that illiteracy is on the rise despite a universal education system; that there is an increasing number of dropouts in the Canadian system, that Canadian public schools are not safe; that reforms to the school system are ineffective for the 1990s; that Canadian public education is too costly; and lastly, that Canadian public schools do not adequately prepare students for the workforce.<sup>171</sup>

BCTF and district officials critical of the traditional schools proposals have framed their critiques on the basis of its attack on teachers and the public system. Yet, in its vigorous defense of the public system, it has failed to acknowledge publicly the problematic realities within schools, i.e. limits on school powers to prevent school violence, barriers and power inequities facing parents within the education bureaucracy, and stratification that does occur in public schools even without traditional programs. What has been missing from the critique of traditional schooling movement is a critical analysis of what criteria ought to shape our commitment to alternative programs, and who ought to be part of the decision making over such policies. Are districts obligated to provide programs simply based on the number of parents who demand it? How are resourcing decisions for alternative programs made during times of financial restraint? How do education institutions craft public policies and mechanisms that compel teachers, parents and students to be innovative and challenge the normative approaches to public schooling, yet at the same time compensate for substantial inequalities between groups and individuals engaged with and served by the system. Without articulating a position on these questions, and given the selective practices of other academic/enrichment alternative programs, the BCTF is vulnerable to criticisms of inconsistency regarding its opposition to traditional schools.

---

<sup>171</sup> N. Rehnby, *Inventing Crisis*. (Vancouver: BC Teachers Federation, 1996)

The long-term implications of the conflict between traditional school parents and the BCTF on the issue of traditional schools are two-fold: first, this debate has polarized and narrowed the discourse on public education policy by pitting parents against teachers. The TSM's use of politically neutralized "code" (i.e. parents' rights, family values, excellence in education) can be persuasive and hard-to-dispute when presented without a political context. Groups like the SAEE, Surrey School Board, Parents for Healthy Children, Parent Network have used this terminology to situate themselves as representing all parents, despite the diversity of parental views on curricula and on the issue of school choice. In essence, where a conflict-driven media is concerned, TSM groups have the potential to displace elected parent bodies as the "voice" of parents, regardless of the minority interests they serve. Their confrontational positions are newsworthy and are perceived to counter-balance the positions of professional educators, not only on the "wedge" issues of sex education, school choice, etc. but also on broader policy issues.

Polarization between TSM activists and teachers has contributed to reactionary, politicized responses from both sides and detracts attention from legitimate issues concerning how parents can meaningfully support public schooling and how program differentiation and specialization can be balanced with social goals. TSM parents and DPAC parents interviewed for this thesis raised legitimate concerns about the rights of parents to receive sufficient and meaningful information about the curriculum, their child's progress and school environment, access to dispute resolution mechanisms when home-school conflicts occur, and the desire to have parental views included in the process of policy development and implementation. However, the legitimacy of such concerns is obscured when polarization and reductive and under-specified discourses become the vehicle for educational debate.

TSM controversies have whetted the public appetite for school differentiation and comparing school outcomes, focussing public attention on school innovation at the expense of recognizing systemic inequalities among parents and re-committing to eliminating those inequalities for the benefit of the district as a whole. While the union has a role to play in conveying the successes of the public system, effective defense of the system's relevance, effectiveness and vibrancy depends on diverse groups of parents and teachers articulating those successes within a context of larger social goals such as the elimination of poverty, racism, sexism, homophobia and ableism as well as promoting individual excellence.

## **Responding to the TSM**

Throughout this research, I found parents and teachers responding to traditional schooling specifically, and the whole issue of "choice" generally. Responses varied, from individual teachers developing new practices for improving communications with parents about the curriculum and their instructional methods, to new groups conducting their own research, publications and policies to counter the TSM campaigns for "choice" and traditional education. Non-TSM citizens have become engaged in political intervention measures as well as proactive public relations in support of comprehensive education. District parents are monitoring traditional schools and the decision-making processes surrounding them. Human rights groups are also beginning to involve themselves in education politics.

### **Educators' Responses**

Historically, teachers have been slow to respond to the cyclical appearance of "back to basics" movements. Berube (1988) describes the lack of union response to the whole notion of school reform and the excellence movement in the US:<sup>172</sup>

*The teachers unions were upstaged by the excellence movement. The two unions had stressed essentially blue-collar labour issues since the teacher revolution in the 1960s. Their concerns were primarily teacher salaries, working conditions and teacher rights. Scant attention was paid to educational issues and reform....Whatever went beyond bread and butter goals was relegated to a lower priority. Consequently, school reform emerged from the strangest of quarters – the Reagan White House. The excellence movement's emphasis on the caliber of teaching, stiff academic standards and revamped curriculums caught the teacher unions off guard.*

However, the situation changed during the 1980s when highly organized groups like the NACE/CEE, Christian Coalition, Family Research Council, Traditional Values Coalition and other Christian Right organizations, attempted not only to establish alternative programs but to win school board elections and create state-wide free-market and traditionalist public education policies. Their political mobilization on a national scale has fuelled political battles that now involve both the Republican and Democratic parties at the state and federal levels.<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> M. Berube, "Teachers Politics: The Influence of Unions", *Contributions to the Study of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, no. 26, 1988), pg. 141.

<sup>173</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the Christian Right's agenda for education, People for the American Way has documented the political agenda of the Religious Right in education in the following publications: "Parental Rights: The Trojan Horse of the Religious Right on Public Education," "A Right Wing and a Prayer: The Religious Right and Your Public Schools" (downloadable from <http://www.pfaw.org/wing/>)

As a result, teachers' unions have responded in kind, with attempts to reclaim the public debate on education reform. They have begun to conduct their own research and publish their own resources to expose the ideological roots of the "choice" movement. One example, the National Education Association (NEA) and the Washington Education Association's publication, *No Right Turn – Assuring the Forward Progress of Public Education* (1994), combines analyses on pedagogical methods and curricula along with research on "Religious Right" movements in education. The NEA has also initiated "Extremism Watch" newsletters to members and affiliates as a way of sharing information across every region of the nation.

The Wisconsin-based **Rethinking Schools Ltd.**, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization formed to help organize a progressive movement to reform public schools in Milwaukee, now deals with national education issues. They produce and disseminate education journals, teaching resources and consistently present alternative analyses on issues such as whole language, multicultural education, choice programs, education funding, testing and stratification in the classroom for practitioners and other education stakeholders.

Recognizing education politics as part of larger political movements has led to coalition building between educators and other groups in the US. Teachers' unions have found common ground with the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization for Women and the National Association for the Separation of Church and State, who are all concerned about the political impact of the "Religious Right" on public life in the US.

Lastly, as different states accept "choice" programs such as voucher systems, charter systems, magnet schools and alternative schools, American teachers' unions have developed policies setting criteria to be met by all choice models. The NEA has developed position papers on various "choice" models including voucher systems, charter schools and privatized school administration schemes.

In BC, teachers have been somewhat ambivalent in their response to the TSM. Individual teachers interviewed in the CCPA study differed on their analyses of what the TSM represents. Some simply classified traditional school advocates as misguided and nostalgic. Others labelled moral traditionalists of the movement as extremists in their education and political perspectives. Specifically, the teaching community has politically challenged the TSM in two ways: first, by proactively defending the public system's record of producing high performing students and the availability of choices via

alternative programs existing within the system and, second, by pressuring TSM advocates to provide a pedagogically adequate definition of traditional programs and ensuring that TSM initiatives are subjected to broad consultation and full debate involving all other education stakeholders.

There are various examples of teachers' strategies for mediating the demands of the TSM. One example cited already is the case of the STA's initial grievance against the first traditional school. In Vancouver, opposition from district stakeholder groups has been cited by the VSB committee as a reason for not approving the traditional program in February 1999.<sup>174</sup> VESTA (Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association) in fact has refused to participate in consultative committees formed to discuss alternative programs, but has communicated their position in writing.<sup>175</sup> As a result, the Board postponed voting on the traditional schools proposal, pending provincial accreditation reports from Surrey Traditional and King Traditional schools. Also identifying the need for better communication with parents as a response to the TSM, senior management agreed to implement a communications strategy to better inform parents of neighbourhood school practices.

As described earlier, Richmond School Board's new model for addressing the concerns raised by the TSM allowed the Board to publicly validate TSM concerns without necessarily accommodating traditionalists demands for separate schools. By adopting the Superintendent's recommendations for a Foundations Program, Richmond teachers, trustees and district administrators saw the initiative as a way to systemically address the needs of a significant number of parents for improved home-school communications and a higher degree of consistency in school and classroom practices in the district.

These recommendations stemmed from the work done by the Traditional Program Planning Committee, which was struck in July 1998 following the Board's approval in principle to establish a traditional program. The Committee, whose role was

---

<sup>174</sup> Memo to VSB Committee III by the Senior Management Team, Vancouver School Board, Jan. 20, 1999. This memo reported on proposals for three alternative programs, including a traditional elementary school. This report included the positions of VSB stakeholders including Vancouver Elementary Principals and Vice Principals Association, Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' association, Vancouver Secondary Teachers' association, District Parents Advisory Council and the Area Learning Services. The proposal for a Traditional elementary school did not receive endorsement or support from three of the five associations including the DPAC; the other two parties did not believe any new program should be considered until the process for a District Program Review was completed.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. pg. 2-3

to design a "traditional program", involved all of the district's stakeholders into the process. Committee meetings served as a forum for discussion, clarification and debate over the motivations and rationale that prompted calls for separate traditional school.

The adoption of the "Foundations Program" as a solution to TSM demands in Richmond raises questions about the significance of the Richmond TSM's ethnic makeup in shaping institutional responses to their demands. It is interesting that despite an existing district policy for alternative programs, and the Board's prior approval in principle for a traditional program, and the significant economic and social clout of Asian residents in the community, the TSM in Richmond failed to achieve what had been done in comparatively shorter timeframes in Abbotsford, Surrey, Langley and other districts. Arguably, the discourse of state-sanctioned multiculturalism, which unequivocally promotes institutional change to accommodate racial and cultural diversity rather than setting up "parallel systems", was a factor in how the demands of racial and cultural minority members of the TSM were interpreted and responded to.

The prospect of approving a separate, potentially "all-Asian" school in a district with no available facilities was perceived by the public as potentially divisive and an administrative challenge according to committee chair, Reuben Chan. According to him, the Board's adoption of the superintendent's recommendations may have left some TSM activists unsatisfied, but it did legitimize the concerns raised by the TSM parents. Perhaps even more importantly, it brought consensus among stakeholder groups and even a board previously divided along party lines. Chan observes:

*Up to the last minute, we didn't know which way it was going to go because we were working on it from the educational point of view, but there's also the political agenda out there too. But that says a lot about our trustees. They ran [for office] because they wanted to do good for their community, they have a commitment to the community. When they realized the problem was those two [issues of communication and consistency], they threw away their political colours and what not...we're here for kids. These are the things we all agree, regardless of our political stripes and our political background. those are the things we are all committed to. And we agree that's the way we should go. And I think we have unanimity among the trustees, we send a very powerful message...if we only had 4-3, then we're on very shaky ground. But if we have all 7 trustees, all committed, all dedicated on working it...that's a very loud and clear message. We also have the teachers' association, the principals, all the different parents groups, the RDPA they're very supportive [now]. everybody's really happy about the outcome. Now they say let's move on now. It's just the beginning.*

The appointment of newly retired elementary school principal and TPPC Chair Reuben Chan was critical to the success of the committee. He described the committee's work as very difficult, more "risky" than he had anticipated when he

accepted the appointment to chair this group. Both a Chinese Canadian immigrant and a long-time educator with fourteen years experience heading the Richmond school district's special programs and seven years as an elementary school principal in the district, Mr. Chan was uniquely qualified and accepted by all parties in this polarized dispute. Over nine months of meetings with TSM representatives and district stakeholder groups, Chairman Chan facilitated various committee discussions regarding the Richmond traditional program to clarify and identify the concerns at the root of the TSM parents desire for a separate school.

The committee's final report concluded that communication barriers with immigrant parents and lack of consistency within the system represented legitimate concerns that had to be addressed not only for TSM parents, but an increasing number of Richmond parents. Mr. Chan notes:

*If you follow the past 10 years...in 1988, we only had a couple of hundred of ESL students. Now we have 45% of our population has English as Second Language and of that 45%. 80% are from Hong Kong and Taiwan, predominantly from one ethnic race. For those immigrants, they came to Canada for 2 reasons - 1) political instability, they want to avoid that, and number 2, for a better education opportunity for their kids. When they're in their homeland, the education system is just so rigid. So pressured, lot of homework, long hours...there's no life. So they want a better education...but when they came here, they found the education system is just the opposite...they describe it as laissez faire, there's no control, they ask what they [their children] learn at school. usually they [elementary students] say 'nothing' right? Go home, they ask "what you do at school". [kids say] "we play all day." So many of them think that the school system is too lax, not challenging enough.*

*Also the whole orientation is different. When you're from Hong Kong, Taiwan, maybe even in the Philippines...education is ...its not for everybody. There's a pyramid system. You have to screen, you have to be good to get to the top. Not everyone gets an opportunity to go to university and so you have a pyramid system. But here, the country is so affluent, so rich for so long and I remember when I started teaching here in Manitoba, kids would quit at 16 to go and work in forestry and mining and got big money. So if you're strong, and healthy...physical labour can get you lots of money. And now the economy's very poor and technology's improved now and so working, getting a job is not that easy and I think that people get used to the view that "if I don't get a job, the government will look after me". So it's a totally different philosophy. With new immigrants, while they're happy to leave the pressurized situation, they are afraid that their kids, because they are so lax now, there's not enough homework...They're afraid they won't have the same opportunity, they won't be able to survive in the western world when they grow up. You know education is very important to many of families, and some of them would even go to re-mortgaging their homes to send their kids to well known universities.*

The district's response to the TSM in Richmond, as a collective response from professional administrators and educators, marks a significant departure from other responses to the TSM in that they explicitly validated some aspects of the TSM's complaints about the public school system, particularly with regards to wide variations in

teaching approaches from classroom to classroom, even within the same school. What prompted this concession, however, was not so much an agreement with the TSM, but recognition of the district's inability to inform and involve new immigrant parents in a meaningful way into school life and the difficulties of balancing teacher autonomy with system consistency. In finding an alternative to creating a traditional school, the school board moved into uncharted territory in terms of responding to the politics of parental choice. According to Committee chair Chan,

*We [the district] don't have any money, we don't have any space. And you're asking for 2.5 million dollars to renovate. That's money we don't have. So vote it down...that's the easy way out. But the board did not choose to go that way. [They said] Let's look at this. The last time around, we identified the same two problems...And we were beginning to do something and we recognized...there's not only communication [issues]. But we were not successful in reaching out to the Chinese parents for example, and we have not been able to get them involved. And yes, we agreed there's inconsistency between schools and within schools. And this problem is not going to go away because education is very important to all parents not just Asian parents. And unless we deal with the root of the problem, our system is not going to move on. So I think the board looked at it that way, looked at the practical impossibility of having a separate school, look at the philosophical - they all agree we subscribe to the principle of inclusion,... the board had the courage to say yes. what this group brought to our attention are valid concerns and we need to work on it.*

Chan is quick to point out that despite the significant consensus among trustees and representatives of teachers, district parents groups, principals and vice principals associations, the outcomes of this foundations program has yet to be determined, and is still vulnerable to "sabotage" within the district. He also observes that, this response to the TSM in Richmond, may not be replicable in other districts. The high level of collaboration and collegiality and the size and makeup of Chinese-Canadian immigrants in Richmond were all-important factors leading to this response.

Strategies employed by professional educators in response to the TSM have been effective primarily at limiting the differentiation between public schools and defending the public system. BCTF attempts at a public relations campaign to restore confidence in BC's public system include their own 1996 publications *Inventing Crisis – Erosion of Confidence and Public Schools, Public Choice*, along with various posters, brochures, and public service ads on television, while valid, have not been effective in shifting public attention and support from the TSM. Circulated primarily to their own membership and other education stakeholders rather than to parents, media outlets and public opinion makers, their analysis of the political and fiscal challenges to a healthy public school system have not penetrated mainstream discourses on education.

Historically, there are examples of broad-based attempts to expose and marginalize the TSM. In 1979, the BCTF responded to highly publicized conflicts in Langley by establishing the Langley Commission on Education. This Commission, which had respected representatives from parents, the school trustees association and the teachers' federation, facilitated public debate on the conflicts in their district despite the refusal of Basics Bunch trustees. The findings of the Commission (described in Kalaw et al.) contributed to the electoral defeat of the Basics Bunch in the 1981 elections.

### **Parents' Responses**

The response of non-traditional school parents to the TSM, particularly in Abbotsford, Surrey, and Richmond, illustrates the divide within a movement that professes to be a "parents' rights" movement. Parents from neighbourhood schools and DPACS in these districts have attended school board meetings, engaged in public debates, and participated in district committees studying the feasibility and implementation of the proposals. DPACS have played a high profile role in the TSM controversies mediating, to varying degrees, between the particular interests of TSM parents and the district at large, while supporting greater parental involvement in district processes. DPACS have played a key role in compiling and disseminating to the public information that is relevant to the community debate on TSM initiatives. For example, the Abbotsford DPAC conducted a survey on the question of a traditional school expansion. Another example is one Abbotsford parent's petition regarding the financing of alternative programs. Sometimes, it is what DPACS haven't done – i.e. refusal to support the School Board's book ban – which has impacted the TSM. DPACS and the BC Council of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC), the umbrella body for all PACs and official "voice" of parents in the province, has been a site of struggle for the TSM.

### **Community Responses**

In Canada, groups outside the education system have played a minimal role in the debate about the implementation of traditional schooling in BC public schools. BC Civil Liberties Association, one notable exception, has long advocated against the importing of religion into public education. In the late 1980s, BCCLA successfully challenged the requirement that schools recite the Lord's prayer or a Scripture reading and lobbied against the attempt to teach creationism in science courses. In the 1990s, BCCLA intervened on behalf of the Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC in their legal challenge of the Surrey School Board's decision to ban children's books depicting same

sex families. It has also lobbied, albeit unsuccessfully, against the ban of Planned Parenthood material from sex education courses in some school districts.<sup>176</sup> While effectively participating in legal challenges, BCCLA has taken a careful, case-by-case approach to responding to the traditional schooling movement. An irony of this situation is that BCCLA defended the Citizens Research Institute (see page 60) in a human rights complaint filed by Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC that their petition, the *Declaration of Family Rights*, discriminates against gays and lesbians.

In contrast, civil rights groups in the US have become increasingly vocal participants in the education debates and the large-scale political campaigns waged by US conservative movements. People for the American Way (PFAW), for example, the non-profit, non-partisan organization founded in 1980 to monitor and counter the divisive agenda of the Religious Right, engages in grassroots organizing, research, public education, lobbying at all levels of government and legal advocacy to engage citizens in civic and political action, to defend individual and religious liberties and public institutions such as education and public broadcasting. Their numerous publications, *Buying a Movement: Right-Wing Foundations and American Politics*, *Parents Rights: The Trojan Horse of the Religious Right's Attack on Public Education*, and *A Right Wing and a Prayer: The Religious Right and Your Public Schools*, have extended the debate on choice and education reform beyond the education community.

Deanna Duby, education policy director for PFAW, comments on the cumulative effect of the controversy initiated by Religious Right politics in American education: "By stirring up controversy in the public schools, the Right hopes to poison Americans on the very notion of public education. By standing in the way of meaningful school reform, the Right hopes to delay improving school performance long enough to sustain the anxiety that drives many Americans to embrace vouchers."<sup>177</sup>

This chapter has described some of the individuals and groups that have actively and effectively pursued traditional schooling in BC. In this section, I have attempted to document the extent of TSM activism in BC and the outcomes of that activism, the motivations and strategies of moral traditionalists and school choice activists organizing to impose Christian morality on public school curriculum and promote separate

---

<sup>176</sup> BC Civil Liberties Association, "Press Releases" (On-line: [http://www.bccla.org/press\\_releases/98bigots.html](http://www.bccla.org/press_releases/98bigots.html) March 16, 1999).

<sup>177</sup> People for the American Way, Press Release "A Right Wing and a Prayer: Report Reveals Religious Right's Attack on Schools" (Online: <http://www.pfaw.org> )

traditional programs. Finally, I have addressed the movement's impact on districts and BC's education community and the ways that educators, parents and citizen groups have contested the TSM.

In sum, the TSM's relatively rapid growth from one school in one district, to seven schools in five districts over the span of five years and a "foundations program" aimed at all Richmond elementary schools in the district by the year 2000, can be attributed in large part to effective lobbying by highly motivated parents with significant organizational and political support. The ideological and financial resources poured into the TSM and choice movements in BC make it difficult to see this movement as a spontaneous, grassroots movement. While they currently represent a minority of parents, their efforts have had a strong impact on the public system. Adoption of TSM policies in BC's largest school districts - whether pertaining to traditional schools or to curricula - lends itself to legitimizing these policies provincially and nationally. Traditional programs and/or other self-selecting "choice" programs may be seen as a way of attracting parents to undersubscribed neighbourhood schools, fostering a climate for greater differentiation between schools. In the final chapter, I will analyze the implications of the TSM for reproducing social stratification and for re-trenching conservative interpretations of gender roles, and racial and cultural differences in school knowledge.

#### **IV. Parental Activism - The "Capital" of the TSM**

*The new middle class will undergo major expansion in post-industrial societies....This new middle class will be better prepared to deal with the flexibility demands of postindustrial labour markets. locking the working class into dead ends and promoting interunion rivalries...the new middle class represents the most volatile actor in the postindustrial world, poised to go in a multitude of political directions or enter into a variety of class alliances".<sup>178</sup>*

The promise of "traditional" schooling that mirrors private school culture has resonated with BC's badly shaken middle-class, and in the economic climate of the 1990s, members of the TSM are certainly not the only ones concerned about whether the education their children are receiving will adequately prepare them for the future. They are, however, a group uniquely organized and committed to ensuring their children's success. Their substantial social and cultural resources have raised the standards and expectations of parent leadership and involvement in schools.

How has the TSM manifested its significant cultural capital? In this thesis, cultural and social capital were studied, not through intense scrutiny of individual families, but rather, at the ways that the collective skills, knowledge, networks, and work ethic of TSM members have materialized into political influence for the movement and material and symbolic gains for middle-class families. The TSM in BC has exhibited considerable political acumen in creating new opportunities for accessing self-selecting, academically oriented programs that are more reliant on parents' ideological views and abilities to "invest" in their children's schooling, than on students' scholastic achievements.

The TSM's significance is two-fold: its relentless promotion of "choice", and traditional programs in particular, has further mobilized hundreds of BC parents to seek out self-selecting academic alternatives within the public system and created conditions conducive for intensified competition among public schools. Secondly, moral traditionalists of the TSM have capitalized on the divisiveness of 'hot button' issues of sex education and anti-homophobia education to deter educational attempts to deal with substantive issues of gender, race, sexual orientation and discrimination and to mobilize support for the "traditional values" agenda.

TSM activism has impacted "traditionalists" and non-traditionalists alike, enflaming community debates over "choice" and moral values in a way that has siphoned valuable resources – human and financial – away from improvements at the

---

<sup>178</sup> Myles and Clement, pg. 242-243

school level. Arguably, it also conveys to the tax-paying public a system paralyzed by conflict and plagued by funding crises rather than a system engaged in creating stable learning environments for students.

The TSM poses dilemmas for existing educational frameworks addressing social diversity, i.e. the recognition of cultural and ethnic differences but not inequalities stemming from "difference." Without new analytical frameworks for dealing with the differences in power among parents from diverse class, racial, cultural, or gender identities, privileged parent groups like the TSM can undermine education policies and frameworks designed to ensure equity for historically marginalized students.

### ***Raising the Bar for Parent Involvement***

Data on BC's traditional schooling movement presented in this thesis offers insight into how cultural capital both enhances, and is enhanced by, social movements. Bourdieu's discussion of cultural capital as "embodied knowledge" that, with invested time and effort materializes into economic capital and social advantage, offers insight into the TSM's gains in the 1990s. This thesis has described members of the TSM as groups of highly knowledgeable and skilled individuals who have dedicated hundreds of hours to lobbying and grassroots organizing to construct and legitimize a movement that allows the most motivated and most privileged families in the public system to exert greater control over their children's educational environment and maximize the "value" of their educational investment.

The TSM's cultural capital was most apparent in their skills at political organizing. Their access to the media, their knowledge and implementation of strategies to mobilize and convey wide-spread support from hundreds of BC families (e.g. through petitions, surveys), and from influential political and business groups such as the Fraser Institute and the National Citizens Coalition distinguishes the TSM from virtually any other educational movement in BC. The TSM of the 1990s exhibited a public relations savvy unmatched by other parent groups. Effective communications networks and the readiness of TSM "spokespersons" to be interviewed and make written submissions to the media has enabled the TSM to develop a "newsworthy" identity recognized by media institutions. This has served to maintain a high profile on their issues. In Surrey, one district parent representative observed that,

*When the traditional school in Surrey started to make their presentations, they were very, very good at presentations. They were almost professional level. Many people really felt that they were adept at using the media to promote their cause...Parents generally tend not to do that, at least*

*they haven't in the past. Parents were very quiet about the things they did. Individual parents may stand up but as a group, they worked within the schools to improve things...Then when they saw this traditional group come out, and it was in all the papers constantly, it was on the news, they were being interviewed everywhere, they were at the board, everywhere you turned, they were promoting their cause.*

TSM's access to Chinese radio and print media to promote traditional schools was a large reason for its success in Richmond and Vancouver. Hanson Lau, known as "one of the most influential Chinese media commentators [in BC]" and a minority shareholder of CHMB/AM 1320 radio station, became a TSM activist following a guest spot on his program by John Pippus. Lau allowed his program, "The Voice of Overseas Chinese", to be a platform for Richmond traditional school activists, even granting them use of the station as a meeting place.<sup>179</sup>

The TSM leadership has conveyed an understanding of power and discourse that has contributed to its success as a social movement. By using the rhetoric of "parents' rights", "tradition" and "choice", the TSM has been able to attract significant political support, while at the same time, obscuring the Eurocentric, middle-class bias of its agenda. In a province where there are diverse and often conflicting interests between BC parents who have unequal access to education institutions because of race, class and gender identities, the TSM has popularized a decontextualized image of "angry parents" and legitimized the "right" of such parents to force educational institutions to be more responsive to their demands, regardless of the cost to equity-seeking groups (e.g. at-risk, special needs and ESL students and their families). Furthermore, the influence exerted by TSM members on trustees and district officials (particularly in Surrey, Langley and Abbotsford) has even allowed them to limit external scrutiny and critical assessment of traditional schools.

The TSM's ability to pressure school boards for resources and concessions has "raised the bar" for parental involvement in public education. If this type of activism becomes the standard for affecting changes within in public schools, the TSM will have fuelled a dynamic whereby public schools will feel increasing pressure to rely on parents efforts to lobby on their behalf. This, it would appear, is the Canadian manifestation of "privatization by stealth." Given continued deficit-fighting strategies by the federal government and provincial ministries of education, school districts can easily allow class differences and private efforts to compensate for cuts in services and eroding the quality

---

<sup>179</sup> Yiu, Gabriel. "'Boardroom war' knocked out Lau." *Vancouver Sun*, July 16, 1998, Final Edition, p.A13

of neighbourhood schools, thereby alleviating the need for more radical privatization measures. For both levels of government, this situation is politically expedient; they can continue to underfund public education, be an advocate of parental involvement and "choice", without suffering the political fall-out of implementing charter or voucher systems.

In terms of social capital, the organizational networks of the TSM outlined in this thesis present a powerful, enduring structure through which middle class families can continue (pro-traditionalists or not) to reap differential benefits from the public system. The concerted efforts of individuals such as John Pippus, Helen Raham and Joseph Freedman, all representing well-funded groups, have been lifelines to TSM parents in Surrey, Abbotsford, Richmond, Vancouver and other BC Districts. By playing behind-the-scenes roles in lobbying for traditional programs, (i.e. sharing research materials and model policy documents that have been adopted in other districts, assisting with event coordination and media exposure), these groups have given the TSM the illusion of a non-partisan, "grassroots", movement. In so far as this network has been particularly beneficial for immigrant parents who have limited expertise in dealing with the public education system, membership in the TSM has compensated for their lack of status, specific skills and knowledge. With the grassroots activism of groups like the Citizens Research Institute, Parent Network and the Surrey School Board, combined with the "professional" appeal of SAEE and its new Canadian Charter Schools Research and Professional Development Centre, and the seemingly endless source of funding from the Donner Foundation, the TSM is in a good position to continue waging "parents' rights" campaigns aimed at compelling middle-class Canadians to support radical changes in the structures of public schooling.

This thesis has attempted to analyze how differences in cultural and social capital of parents are directly related to inequalities between schools. More research is needed to generate empirical evidence of such inequalities in the context of BC schools. Differences in parents' fund-raising skills and personal networks, for example, appear to be increasingly responsible for perpetuating differentiation and inequalities among public schools and their students. A 1998 survey of parent advisory councils in BC public schools found that, not only do 92% of school PACs engage in fundraising, they also found significant differences in the funds raised by PACs for their schools, varying from

\$200 to \$90,000 in 1997/98.<sup>180</sup> It is particularly important to note that funds raised by PACs are increasingly spent on basic materials and essential school equipment such as books, computers, sports and playground equipment. This suggests that the ability of schools to meet the objectives of the provincial curriculum is increasingly dependent on the characteristics of its parent-body.

## **Markets in BC Education**

The degree to which public education systems assume market values, according to Gewirtz et al., is reflected in the emergence of a marketing discourse of "choice" that links "excellence" to differentiated programs, in the creation of competition-driven mechanisms for assessing school performance designed for public consumption and lastly, in the implementation of policies which link school funding solely to student enrollment.<sup>181</sup> They rightly point out that differentiation, competition, hierarchy, selection and over-subscription were all present in the British public system before the Conservatives passed the *1988 Education Reform Act* that promoted greater parental choice of schools and the creation of grant maintained schools. The Act simply entrenched those inequities and politically legitimized them.

Such is also the case in BC, albeit to a significantly lesser degree. Competition and differentiation in the public education system particularly for scarce spaces in academically oriented alternative programs was present in BC prior to TSM activism. Demographic changes and economic recession throughout the 1990s in BC, however, have intensified competition for post-secondary and employment opportunities for BC youth. Between 1990 and 2000, the provincial population increased by 819, 500 people, marking a 24% increase in population and a 5% increase in the rate of population growth in BC as compared to the previous decade. During this decade, the provincial economy has been plagued by unemployment rates of between 9 and 12 percent and a dramatic increase in competition for post-secondary opportunities. Public school enrollments for grade 12 have jumped from just over 40,000 in 1993 to over 48,000 for the year 2000.<sup>182</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Culbert, Lori "Parents estimate they raise \$30 million for BC schools" *Vancouver Sun*, Jan. 15, 1999, pg. A3. In this article, BCCPAC survey results showed the average amount raised by PACS was approximately \$20,000.

<sup>181</sup> Gewirtz et al, pg.

<sup>182</sup> Office of Analytical Studies Factbook (On-line: Graph C-3a BC September Grade 12 Enrollment Projections, <http://www.sfu.ca/analytical-studies/FactBook/c-mat&prov/cg03a.html> Downloaded March 4, 1999).

Rapid population growth, constriction of employment opportunities particularly for those living in resource-industry areas has created all-time high demands for advanced education opportunities. Yet, by 1997/98, only 22.82% of British Columbians between the ages of 18 and 24 were registered (full-time) in post secondary education, the lowest of all Canadian provinces. The stiff competition for post-secondary opportunities during the 1990s is reflected in the inflation of minimum grade point average (GPA) accepted for admission into BC's three largest universities. Between 1987 and 1997, minimum admission for undergraduate students entering the **sciences** at University of British Columbia were raised from 2.5 (roughly equivalent to 66% or C+ average in required courses) to 3.7 (roughly equivalent to 82% or B+). For students seeking admission in the **Arts**, rising grade requirements has been less marked, jumping from 2.5 in 1987 to 3.0 (73% or B) in 1997.<sup>183</sup> Simon Fraser University and University of Victoria also experienced similar trends in minimum admission requirements. Screening access to universities through rising GPAs and increasing costs of a post-secondary education have become the dominant ways for universities to manage their enrollment, both of which heavily favour middle-class families. It is in this climate that the TSM has evolved and emerged.

Economic recession in Canada has fuelled public debate on education reforms and the desirability of choice plans such as charter schools and vouchers. Yet, transforming public education as a social institution into a public market is an evolutionary process. Government policies alone cannot immediately change the public's relationship to schools. The TSM in BC has ushered in a period conducive to creating greater competition between public schools via increasing differentiation between schools as "products". Incrementally, this may stimulate demand for certain schools over others and rationalize a need for different "suppliers" for education.

In BC, recent TSM and neo-conservative initiatives to compare and publicize assessments of schools are beginning this process of "product differentiation". Surrey's *District Report and School Profiles* (1995-1998) and the Fraser Institute's (FI) *Annual Report Card for Secondary Schools* (1998 and 1999) compare schools using a number of indicators, but primarily student results on provincial standardized assessments. The

---

<sup>183</sup> Information on UBC Admission requirements was available on [http://www.budgetandplanning.ubc.ca/factbook/factbk98/min\\_gpa.htm](http://www.budgetandplanning.ubc.ca/factbook/factbk98/min_gpa.htm). (March/12/99). For SFU data on admission GPA, Office of Analytical Studies (J. Heslop) provided me with this information by email. These were not used in the text other than to see if similar trends were apparent, primarily because after 1992, SFU admissions for science were turned over to the departments.

Fraser Institute is Canada's most renowned conservative research organization whose objective is "the redirection of public attention to the role of competitive markets in providing for the well-being of Canadians."<sup>184</sup> Their explicit purpose is to assist "parents interested in selecting the education provider best suited to their children's needs."<sup>185</sup> Vancouver daily media have given front-page coverage to the Fraser Institute's report card in 1998 and 1999.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to conduct a detailed analysis of either the Surrey Report or the FI's Report Card. However, as I refer to them as significant developments in the evolution of a public education market in BC, a limited discussion and critique is included here to illustrate the ways that class differences between families are codified and concealed.

In its second "report card" on the public education system, Fraser Institute researchers used Ministry of Education and Statistics Canada data to rank all BC secondary schools, public and private. Using average provincial examination marks, percentages of provincial examinations failed, differences between examination mark and school mark, graduation rates and numbers of provincial examinable courses taken per student for the years 1993 to 1998, and the numbers of grade 12 students enrolled, researchers arrived at values for each of the indicators for each school. A school's overall rating was derived from averaging the five scores and schools were ranked from 1 to 262 and published in one of Vancouver's daily newspapers.

These rankings purport to reflect the quality of school counselling and the effectiveness of the teaching conducted in both private and public secondary BC schools. To address criticisms that their 1998 study failed to take into account the home life of students, the study also used census data and reported the average number of years of education of female parents or lone parents in single-parent families for each school.

In measuring the "outputs" of each school, the Fraser Institute study made no attempt to factor in school drop-out rates, students with diverse needs (ESL, special needs) or differences in resourcing between public and private schools, all of which determine the goals, nature and quality of services being provided to a school's population. This report provided no discussion of the ways that schools access different

---

<sup>184</sup> P. Cowley, S. Easton and M. Walker. *1999 Report Card on BC's Secondary Schools*. (Vancouver: Fraser Institute). Inside front cover.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. pg. 3.

types of funding, or the means by which schools can/cannot screen their students, or the additional funds brought in through parental activism and how those affect the material resources available to the school.

The Fraser Institute's *Annual Report Card* is one example of how the efforts of TSM's choice activists have bred public and institutional receptivity to market values in the BC public school system. Marketing of choice through "traditional" and other enrichment/academic track programs within the framework of alternative programs and a shift towards comparative assessments of school performance are strong indicators of a 'consumer choice' discourse in BC.

In Canada, where education is a provincial and local jurisdiction and where there is still broad public support for maintaining universal social programs such as health care and public education, advancing more radical market-style reforms for school choice is more likely to be achieved if done on a piece meal approach.<sup>186</sup> TSM organizing presents a case of just how this can be achieved. Given the absence of critical debate over differences between, and priorities for, alternative programs, this thesis illustrates one example of how efforts to re-distribute and equalize resources and opportunities to disadvantaged groups can be utilized by families who already have the skills and resources (cultural and material) to maximize their children's chances for academic and social success. This trend, if not carefully monitored and limited, can potentially displace intervention programs for those students in the greatest need of choices.

School boards have a role to play in monitoring school differentiation and its effects, with a view to minimizing stratification between schools and/or programs. Thoughtful review and consideration of differential cultural capital among families is required for designing policies that will set out criteria and funding guidelines for alternative programs that are as equitable, relevant and accessible to poor and special needs students as they are to high-achieving and gifted students. Similar attention is required to develop policies for parent education on district and school services that do not simply serve educated, financially stable, and socially integrated families. As elaborated in Kalaw et al. (1998), in the case of the traditional schools, the process of registering and the costs of transporting students to alternative schools were program

---

<sup>186</sup> R. Bibby, *The Bibby Report*. (Toronto: Stoddart, 1995) pg. 111. Bibby's study of Canadian society through national surveys conducted in 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995 found that although Canadian confidence in civic leaders (i.e. policing, schools, financial institutions, business, religious groups etc) was declining, 74% of Canadians still indicated that "overall, public school teachers are very competent."

features that screened out all but the most committed families. It is in designing policies that maintain a commitment to alternative programs and services for all students, regardless of their family resources that the promise of educational choice can be realized.

## ***Eroding Public Confidence through Culture Wars***

"Culture wars", in this context, refers to clashes between different political, ethnocultural and socio-economic values. The TSM's "parents' rights" rhetoric is the banner raised by parents who want their children to be "competitive" in the modern economy, but who are unwilling to expose their children to competing sets of values and world views. Brown (1997) makes an interesting point about the overlap between choice activists and moral traditionalists of the movement on issues of "culture" and values. He argues that the conservative preoccupation with "standards", despite the lack of any credible evidence that they are in decline, comes from the belief that, not only has "comprehensivization" failed to remedy social inequalities, it has also undermined notions of "merit" and "standards of excellence" in the process:<sup>187</sup>

*...standards' are as much a moral as an educational issue. The main concern of the authoritarian Right is to regain traditional authority, leadership and the reproduction of elite culture, in which the educational system is seen to have a key role to play. For them, it is the very idea of comprehensive education which violates their notion of standards, not only its imputed consequences. It is the shift from elite to mass culture and the erosion of respect for authority which they oppose.*

In using the term 'parents' rights', however, three things are generally obfuscated: first, precisely which parents' interests are served by the movement, the differential capital of parents, and lastly, the degree to which parents' rights compromise children's rights and the development of a child's sense of autonomy.

While less legitimized than their "choice" activist counterparts, religious traditionalists have played a potent political role in the TSM. Their battles over morality in the curriculum have exacted a high price from the education system. In my earlier discussion of intradistrict tensions over challenges to curricula dealing with sexual health and gay and lesbian issues, I highlighted the monetary and human resource costs to the district for the TSM's war over parental control and "family values." TSM activism has forced redirection of resources into the political realm and away from pedagogical or

---

<sup>187</sup> Brown, pg. 398

professional development initiatives. When these types of debates occupy centre stage in educational discussions, communities run the risk of alienating many parents and teachers whose interests are in contributing to the improvement of their children's learning environment and not in wading into highly charged political battles.

Integration of racial minorities into the TSM has added another aspect of "cultural conflict" to the TSM. Attacks on the public education system, a feature of TSM rhetoric, resonated strongly in Richmond, where a large, predominantly entrepreneurial Chinese-Canadian community was gradually becoming politically engaged. In a district where parental anxieties over the Asian economic crises and BC's own economic recession are compounded by language and cultural barriers involved in interacting with their child's school, conditions were right for TSM mobilization. Reuben Chan describes the particular vulnerability of these parents:

*A lot of immigrants cannot...communicate fluently in English. They can manage with the day to day, but many of them are lacking in the higher level, abstract understanding – when you talk about continuous progress, when you talk about cooperative learning, those are things that are totally foreign to them and when the language skills are not there, it's very difficult. The other barrier [we faced is], there is no direct translation for a lot of the concepts and terms that we have here [in Canada]. That's another barrier. A third barrier..is the practice...back there, its all examination system, lock-step, homework, recitation, memorization and here we use quite a different approach. We help students to think, to be critical, we don't focus that much on facts. So that's a major area.*

*.. And then we teach them how to think, they question their parents, they ask "why" and their parents turn against the school because they think we're teaching them to be rebellious and not obedient.. There's lot of cultural, child-rearing, parenting issues...on top of that, a lot of them have a lot of difficulty adjusting. Back home [in Hong Kong] they have the support group, they have good job, good income, and here, many of them can't find equivalent jobs and some fathers have to go back to Hong Kong to work; those who stay can't get equivalent jobs, they feel less valued, less useful, and they regret making the move and they can't go back. So there's a lot of other psychological, sociological pressures separate from the school at all. This is what I mean about them being very vulnerable emotionally. So that's why you have this emotional outpour in response to someone who plays on their guilt, on their fear, that's the only thing they have now. They left their country, they came, and the only hope is the education for their kids, and when that hope is questioned by people who have been here longer, who are like 'experts' now, you get them to follow blindly.*

Strong consensus within the Chinese Canadian community in favour of more authoritarian and competitive forms of schooling has recast TSM demands for traditional schools as an issue of "cultural" accommodation rather than New Right politics. In a television interview regarding the traditional schooling movement, for example, one traditional school activist in Vancouver explained the demand for traditional schools by

saying, "Culturally Asians have very high expectations of their children", implying those expectations cannot be met in neighbourhood schools.<sup>188</sup>

There is an interesting dilemma for Asian Canadians in the TSM. On the one hand, culturally-based expectations for schooling have clearly motivated their appeals for a traditional school. Yet, to quell any criticisms of being racially or culturally exclusive, they must consistently deny that their desire for more traditional schooling is a reflection of racial or cultural identity in order to get broad public support for their proposal.

There are outstanding, legitimate issues being raised by parents (both TSM and non-TSM) over their role in the education system. The reluctance of government and professional education stakeholders to involve parents more fully in matters of curriculum development and school evaluations, the inconsistency of parent access to meaningful information about curriculum and school practices (particularly for those facing cultural and language barriers), and the lack of mechanisms available for those parents experiencing conflict and seeking recourse within the system are concerns that require resolution. These issues, however, are not synonymous with the parents' rights agenda of the TSM. Resolving these issues will require changing attitudes and strategies on the part of governments and union. As Apple (1998) noted, when teachers and education officials develop knee-jerk responses to parental complaints about the public system, they risk pushing parents to the Right. Responding in this way may only benefit the New Right in Canada, which already has advantages over its American counterpart. Learning from the experiences of American Christian Right movements, New Right activists in Canada are sensitive to the Canadian distaste for the Religious Right debates in the US and have moderated or extracted the explicitly religious elements of their agenda for public education. Educators and social critics need to develop a critique that addresses the differences as well as the links between the US and Canadian movements.

In the previous chapter, the discussion of parental opposition to the TSM within representative parent bodies (DPACS and BC Council of Parent Advisory Council) illustrates that these groups are themselves sites of ideological struggle. Teachers groups, trustees and administrators would do well to find new ways to dialogue, collaborate and problem solve with parents as a way of affecting the direction of the parents' rights movements in BC. Certainly, this is no easy task. Still, during the course

---

<sup>188</sup> The National, CBC-TV, Feb. 16, 1999. Broadcast transcript., CDNNewsDisc 6/98-4/99.

of my research, it was apparent that parents are interested in educational research (see Appendix 1 discussion on research and reciprocity) and share concerns about school inequities and stratification. If professional educators and district administrators fail to provide parents with the analytical tools to frame education as a "public good", then they are leaving the TSM more than enough space to define the role of parents in education as solely the pursuit of private gains for their own children.

Consensus between these parent bodies and the TSM on the issue of "parental involvement and choice" (notwithstanding whether traditional schools constitute a real alternative) suggests that education professionals' inability to negotiate more meaningful roles for parents in education will pave the way for TSM growth and continuing conflicts over "healthy" influence of parents in public schools.

### ***Mediating Influences on the TSM***

Despite their growth and success, it is not the purpose of this thesis to portray the TSM as all-powerful or inevitable. TSM initiatives have been significantly mediated by the relatively secular demographics of BC, by resistance and organizing by teachers and district parent groups, by senior district administrators, and by a well-entrenched policy climate and support for integrated education through neighbourhood schools.

Fundamentalist elements within the TSM face inherent difficulties in achieving mass mobilization. Canadian evangelicals themselves have noted the barriers to a Canadian Christian Right political movement. Brian Stiller, previous president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada gave the following reasons why the Religious Right won't rise in Canada as it has in the US:<sup>189</sup>

1. *Canadians don't support the same "ideology of liberty" that drives American politics that lends itself to anti-government sentiment;*
2. *Canadian evangelicals are less conservative and less homogeneous in their politics than are Americans;*
3. *Conservative Protestants, the backbone of the American Christian Right, represent a larger proportion of the population in the US than in Canada (2.7 million evangelical Protestants compared to nearly 80 million in the US)*

---

<sup>189</sup> B. Stiller, "Will a Religious Right rise in Canada" *Faith Today*. (Toronto: Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 1996) pg. 70.

4. *There are proportionately more Mennonites in Canada than the US, who as a group, have had a moderating influence on political involvement by Canadian Christians;*
5. *In Canada, there is no lingering belief, as exists in the US, that Canada is a country destined by God to be the place in which his will and ways would be manifested.*
6. *The development of independent media forums in the US, especially radio and television has allowed the viewpoints of religious communities to be expressed among the public, whereas CRTC has suppressed such forums here until recently.*

As noted in the previous chapter, teachers unions have mediated the demands of the TSM by involving community members and the public into the debate over approving traditional schools and by defending and highlighting the successes of the public education system. Specifically, teachers unions have fought the market dynamic by opposing practices that would allow for school differentiation: they have opposed the publication of the Fraser Institute's *Secondary Schools Report Card* and have consistently demanded that traditional schools approval be conditional on compliance with the BC curriculum and existing collective agreements.

In mediating the demands of the TSM and other parents' rights movements, however, teachers groups cannot afford to dismiss the message in the TSM's successes. In future, the BCTF and its members may need to negotiate its positions on teacher and school evaluations, and engage in discussions with parents about curriculum innovation and the effects of collective agreement provisions on students as a way of preventing polarization between teachers and parents.

DPACS, as local bodies representing all parents within a particular district, are of primary importance in mediating the successes of the TSM. Thus far, common concerns over ensuring the highest quality for all public schools (not simply those with the most active parents) have united DPACS with professional educators and administrators in questioning the approval of traditional schools and curriculum challenges. Further, their role as an information resource for all parents mitigates some of the discrepancies in information access and "know how" between families.

This coalition, however, may not be taken for granted. Despite the increased legal and practical status of parent groups through BCCPAC, DPACS and PACs, this

structure of parent involvement has yet to involve in a substantial way poor, working class, and non-English speaking parents. This research suggests that to a significant extent, parent opposition to the TSM has been based on competing interests of other highly involved parents rather than a cry for addressing the needs of marginalized families in the system.

Representative parent bodies such as BCCPAC and DPACS are themselves vulnerable to TSM activism. A case in point is the BCCPAC's passing of two resolutions in April 1997 dealing with the issue of homophobia in schools. When two school PACs from Surrey introduced motions to oppose the use of classroom curricula for dealing with anti-gay discrimination and "to oppose curriculum that deals with same-sex couples as well as any educational materials prepared by 'homosexual lifestyle advocacy groups'", both were passed by the BCCPAC membership.<sup>190</sup>

According to then-president of BCCPAC, the issue of anti-homophobia education was difficult for the group, which represents 843 different school PACs in BC. The latter resolution was passed by such a narrow margin, a recount was necessary.<sup>191</sup> The victory of traditionalists to gain organizational support for these positions, however, does not convey the ideological differences between BCCPAC parents over the resolution or that "the resolution was changed on the floor to prevent the development of a separate curriculum to teach "about" homosexuality."<sup>192</sup> Arguably, effective responses to the TSM in the future will rely on the direction parent groups like BCCPAC take, for it is in these parent bodies that many of the political battles are won or lost.

### **Conclusion:**

By studying the TSM, one gains insight into how cultural capital manifests itself in the domain of education. I hope this discussion injects issues of power and privilege into policy making and public discourse over choice and parents' rights. I have argued in this thesis that, although slower to develop than in the US or the UK, what Brown calls, "social selection by stealth through market solutions," is making headway in Canada.<sup>193</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> S. Bell, "Ban Urged on Teaching About Homosexuality; Parent Advisory Councils say anti-harassment policies should be used to protect gay students". *Vancouver Sun*, April 28, 1997, Final Edition, p. B1

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Dyck, Silvia. "Can a little knowledge be a dangerous thing", *Vancouver Sun*, May 5, 1997, Final Edition, pg. A11.

<sup>193</sup> Brown, pg. 400

Throughout my research on the traditional schooling movement, I have witnessed individuals and organizations uniquely determined and capable of building a groundswell of support for school "choice", and in particular, traditional schooling. The work of the TSM represents the combined efforts of intellectuals, politicians, parents and activists whose social and economic interests have dovetailed into a remarkably effective campaign to alter the views Canadians hold about the role, goals and achievements of public schools. The gains won by the movement in local battles to create separate, self-selecting, academically-oriented schools and in challenges to curriculum and district policies are only partial successes for groups such as Society for Advancing Excellence in Education, Parent Network, Society for Advancing Educational Research and the Donner Canadian Foundation.

This thesis raises issues about the relationship between New Right political movements and education. While useful for explaining the complex ideological overlap between neo-liberals and traditional conservatives within the TSM, the notion of fusionism among neo-liberals and religious conservatives, as introduced by Diamond (1995), may need qualification and modification for the Canadian context. In Chapter three, I discussed the potential internal rifts within the TSM. Case profiles of TSM activists and TSM groups illustrate tensions in the alliance between moral traditionalists and school choice activists. Whether stemming from ambivalence or political pragmatism, the centrality of moral fundamentalism in the traditional school paradigm is questioned, even within the highest "ranks" of the TSM. Brown's (1997) characterization of this tension is also apt for BC:

*"The uneasy alliance between the authoritarian Conservatives and the 'market' men and women has been possible due to their mutual disdain of 'collective social reform'....The potential conflict among the Right has so far been limited because despite their ideological differences, both groups serve the political and material interests of the powerful and the privileged."<sup>194</sup>*

In BC, the TSM has achieved "choice" programs through significant compromises. Program approval has been obtained only by conforming to the same provincial curriculum and governance structures prescribed for all other public schools. Paradoxically, these concessions, over time, may limit the TSM's growth as they struggle to differentiate themselves from other schools.

---

<sup>194</sup> Ibid. pg. 398-399.

While Stiller's analysis of cultural differences between Canada and the US are persuasive, I believe it is premature to conclude that the Religious Right will remain marginal figures. As I have shown in this thesis, even if the group remains 'marginal' the effects of its work may yet shape, in significant ways, the educational mainstream. Already, alliances between moral traditionalists and school choice activists around a populist rhetoric of individual choice, parental rights and academic excellence has empowered the TSM in a number of ways. First, it has raised the profile and appeal of authoritarian, competitive, and normative pedagogical approaches. Its challenges to the curriculum have destabilized district commitment to engage students in discussions about equity issues in public schools. Most importantly, the TSM has, more than any other educational movement in BC, redefined public perception and policy frameworks for alternative programs, which were historically grounded in a commitment to provide equality of opportunities to poor and working class students unlikely to succeed in mainstream programs, and recast them as the best way for developing more university-track programs, injecting school differentiation and market-like dynamics into the public education system.

This thesis has also noted that the political project of the TSM is far from complete. Local demographics, political culture and the culture of education communities have impacted the growth of the TSM. In districts characterized by cooperative relationships between trustees, management, teachers' representatives and district parent groups, there is a significant buffer against TSM rhetoric. This is one of the ironies of the TSM – that its elitist policy agenda has had democratizing effects on public education. TSM initiatives have mobilized hundreds of parents – both those opposed and those in favour of traditional schooling – to attend school board meetings in numerous school districts in the province.<sup>195</sup> They have participated in various ways, through letters to school boards, letters to community papers and in Vancouver's dailies, becoming active in organizations that critique public education and lobby for particular programs for their children. Some have run for positions in their PACs, in their DPACS

---

<sup>195</sup> Meetings concerning traditional school/program proposals in Richmond have resulted in school board offices packed with parents whose first language is not English, and who have never attended school board meetings before. On January 14, 1998, approximately 200 parents, primarily Asian-Canadian, attended a Richmond school district meeting organized by the Traditional Program Committee to discuss the features of the traditional program in Richmond. While parent interest in Richmond may have been exceptional case, even among traditional schools, the movement as a whole has brought an unprecedented number of parents, particularly those with no prior involvement in district discussions, into public discussions about education.

and some have even run for school board following their involvement in traditional schooling politics.<sup>196</sup>

BC teachers have also been active players in proactively defending the public system, exposing the ideology of the TSM and in limiting its growth in BC. There is, however, a dilemma for critical educators and theorists. While teachers unions have been effective in shaping traditional schools in a manner consistent with other schools, opposition to the TSM has largely involved teachers and other highly involved parents, particularly those involved with District PACs. The absence of poor and working class parents in these discussions about choice and the allocation of educational resources to self-selecting programs have limited the critique of the TSM and choice movements and have, thus far, failed to address the processes of stratification that do exist within the existing system and the need to articulate and reaffirm the principle of equity as a counterbalance to diversity, choice and individual excellence. Furthermore, the polarization that has resulted over TSM issues, even in districts that have rejected traditional schools, has created volatility and as a result, runs the risk of raising public anxiety over the state of public education.

Legitimate issues raised by TSM parents, particularly in Richmond, suggest that the TSM represents a significant challenge to the liberal consensus that public schools can serve a de-contextualized "common good." Educators seeking to counter the TSM's exclusive vision of public education need to articulate an alternative vision and strategies for democratizing schools that can address the real power discrepancies between educators and the families they serve. In Canada, this is particularly important, in light of Canadian public education policy's historical recognition of parental rights to maintain their cultural and religious beliefs and to access education for their children that would be consistent with those beliefs. If the TSM maintains its activism and momentum of the 1990s without challenge from progressive educators and parents, education policymakers may face new challenges in developing policy and legal frameworks to mitigate against middle class mobilization and "flight" from neighbourhood schools.

In studying the TSM as one case of "parents' rights" movements, more questions arise about the impact parents are having on public education and how public education systems can respond to differential capital among parents in BC schools. Empirical research is needed to study the relationship between BC's alternative programs and

---

<sup>196</sup> In at least two cases, Richmond and Abbotsford, TSM activists ran for school board elections in 1996 as

access to post-secondary institutions, comparative analyses of parent-school involvement in alternative programs within the public system, and investigations on the meaning parents place on differentiated programs in relation to neighbourhood schools. Only with this type of contextualized information about how existing choice programs work, can we move from a debate that "is taking place at a level of abstract political principles"

---

an extension of their involvement in traditional school politics.

## **Appendix 1:**

### ***Denial of Access and Its Implications For Research Design***

It is necessary to describe and analyze my attempts to gain entry into traditional school communities because those attempts coloured my research process even after the CCPA project ended. We noted in the report that traditional school PACS (parent advisory councils) played an influential role in negotiating entry, with the parent council at the Surrey school playing a particularly strong part. Efforts to deal with each school separately were complicated by contacts across the districts among traditional school PACs and district administrators. Traditional school PACs from the three districts consulted each other and John Pippus (then-Parent Network coordinator and traditional school activist). District staff from Surrey and Abbotsford also consulted each other.

From the beginning of the CCPA study, we noted significant differences in each district's response to our research request. District approval for the study was obtained from Surrey, but not from Abbotsford or Langley.

We attempted to begin data collection in Surrey, but at the school level, our study became the subject of political conflicts. While Surrey Traditional's principal of the school expressed interest in and support of our proposal, the prospect of our study was resisted by some of the school's staff and parents. The PAC's executive was particularly concerned with the reasons for the study and asked to see previous publications of the researchers. The principal suggested that the researchers present the project at a PAC meeting on June 3, 1997. At the meeting, after the principal had introduced the research team and Dr. McLaren had outlined the study to the parents, the co-chair elect of the Surrey Traditional PAC submitted a written analysis he had prepared before hand and circulated in advance to the other two school PACs in response to the research request which stated:

- Because the project was funded by the BCTF, there "exists a too-high probability that a BCTF perspective will find its way into this study";
- that the CCPA has a "well-established record of hostility to unfettered parental choice in education," calling an earlier CCPA paper on charter schools a "shrill Marxist-Leninist diatribe";

- that one of the researchers (Nadene Rehnby) had formerly worked on a BCTF publication on choice in the public school system, which did not examine traditional schools;
- that the same researcher “appears to approach her work from a leftist perspective,” referring to her published work on youth unemployment as “Marxist fantasies”; and
- that “the risk of having a study slanted along similar lines, that is, finding out that we parents are mere dupes in a monstrous corporate conspiracy is too great” and that if so, “you can be sure the BCTF will use it for their own propaganda advantage.”

This parent presented his analysis at the PAC meeting before the CCPA research team, the entire PAC and invited members of the King Traditional PAC. A written copy of this presentation was also sent to the Langley Fundamental PAC. At the end of the meeting, the principal reported to the CCPA team that a vote was to be taken by the PAC at a later date. After several months of delays, the Surrey Traditional Parent Advisory Council declined to participate in the study, as did the teachers of the school. Neither group provided reasons. The principal of the school, advised by the Surrey school district administration to respect the wishes of the school community, declined on behalf of the school. A Surrey school district official agreed to be interviewed regarding the district’s experiences, after reassurances that the interview would focus on the district, and would not be used as a method for circumventing the school’s refusal to participate.

In Abbotsford, the school district declined to participate in the study from the outset citing concerns that the school’s upcoming accreditation process would be onerous enough on the school community. Nevertheless, parents of this school showed an interest in the study when researchers Kalaw and Rehnby attended a public meeting of the Abbotsford school district (held at King Traditional) on May 26, 1997. The researchers informed the parents about the study, told them that the district had declined on behalf of the school, and asked the parents if they were interested in participating in the study separately from the school. The parents were helpful and agreed to consider a request for parent interviews. One teacher participated in the discussion and also indicated an interest in the study.

The PAC chair made arrangements for the two researchers to attend a regularly-scheduled public tour of the school the following week, and address the school PAC that

evening. Following a discussion between an Abbotsford school district official and the PAC chair, however, the researchers were subsequently denied access to the public tour, and the PAC chair cancelled the presentation to the PAC.

In subsequent correspondence, the Abbotsford school district official refused our request for district and the school participation in the study stating that King Traditional school was already engaged in its accreditation process and as participating in another study, thereby leaving no time to participate in the CCPA study. Further, he stated that the district was not satisfied with the "problem, hypothesis, design," of the study; and that the study was "of limited benefit to the research community in general and for Abbotsford in particular" without comparison to other alternative programs. The official then stated that "contacts with the school and the school community should not be made," and "nor should there be any mention of King Traditional being involved in a study without my written approval." The King Traditional PAC subsequently advised it would not participate in the study, and the school informed the research team that it deferred its decision to the district.

The Langley school district also declined participation from the outset, citing staff cutbacks and the elimination of the district research officer as the rationale for curtailing research activity that "did not show clear benefits for the district." The school and PAC also subsequently declined to participate, but did not raise particular concerns or cite their rationale for declining. In follow-up telephone calls the principal at Langley said the parties had declined participation because they were entering into accreditation and intended to participate in another study. (See Donner Foundation/Brown study in chapter three.)

In September 1997, the research team again wrote to the districts, schools and parent advisory councils in all three districts, providing additional information on the goals of the project, offering additional time to respond, and limiting time spent at the school to three or four days. The correspondence set out that we believe the research is of benefit to the research community and the wider public and that, regardless of whether we would have the benefit of on-site access, the study would proceed using publicly available sources. In follow-up telephone calls, each level of the traditional school community again declined to participate in the study.

In April 1998 the research team wrote to each of the districts and schools to obtain general, publicly available information under BC's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. While Langley and Surrey fulfilled the request within the

timeframe set out by the Act, King Traditional and the Abbotsford school district did not respond.

In the CCPA study, my colleagues and I were confronted with questions regarding who has authority to decide on the nature of research conducted in BC's public schools. In an interview of an official from the Ministry of Education's Evaluation and Accountability Branch, we were told that access is a district decision. Yet, as documented in the CCPA study, districts' responses were mixed, with Abbotsford and Langley denying access at the district level, and Surrey reversing their decision and ultimately abiding by the decision of the school PAC. The question of who determines research access and by what process, is clearly not a straightforward one. While the Surrey principal had expressed support for the study, she was instructed by district staff to abide by the decision of school staff and the PAC.

No body of research exists that systematically looks at the issue of research access to public schools in BC. Nadene Rehnby, who worked previously on a BCTF document, *Public Schools, Public Choice: A walk through BC's alternative programs*, conducted interviews and on-site observations by simply getting consent directly from each of 17 alternative schools across the province. Decisions were made at the school level with little or no district or parent consultation. My experience with the CCPA study raises a number of questions regarding the relationship of education researchers to "the field":

- Is research access governed largely by political decisions?
- Does the criterion of "benefit to the district" adequately balance the various interests of the school, the district and the public at large with regards to research?
- How do districts currently deal with access requests for similarly designed, but ideologically opposed research in the same school/s?
- Do school districts have adequate mechanisms for facilitating meaningful participation, support, critique or transference of research that occurs in their district with all district stakeholders?
- How do administrators understand the use and impact of research on the schools and families within their districts?

### ***Research as Propaganda***

In Kalaw et al. (1998), we noted,

*If school bodies choose research on the basis of its funding sources, this will result in an unfortunate politicization of research and lack of public accountability. Public debate will be hampered. For a broad and impartial understanding of public schools, it is necessary that research be undertaken from a variety of perspectives and funding sources.*<sup>197</sup>

Parallel studies between the CCPA and the Society for Advancing Excellence in Education of the traditional schools raised another dilemma regarding funded research – how does politicization affect the results of research? Research methodologists are turning their attention to how funding politics impact research design and its uses.

M. Hammersley's "The Politics of Social Research" calls into question the merits and quality of critical social research, on the grounds that "research cannot play the commanding role that is required of it in such [political] struggles, and the attempt to do so will undermine its capacity to fulfil the task of producing knowledge." While he concedes that there are multiple ways in which research necessarily involves values, and is therefore political, he believes that research should not be political, in the sense of addressing specific public policies.<sup>198</sup>

In my view, Hammersley's main arguments – largely directed at critical theorists – are unsatisfying. In insisting that the primary goal of research should be "the production of knowledge" and "should not be directed at the realization of any ultimate value other than truth", Hammersley assumes there are absolutes for both "knowledge" and "truth". He fails to acknowledge that there are some forms of knowledge and versions of truth that are privileged over others within a given historical, political and material context. It is the recognition of this that has motivated critical theorists – particularly feminist and anti-racist theorists - explicitly to promote a redefining of research practices that recognize power inequalities and direct their efforts to revealing and legitimating the forms of "knowledge" and "truth", as experienced by those least empowered in society.

The questions for the academic community and the public are not about whether research ought to be part of the debates over specific public policy but about how one assesses politicized research. For example, educational scholars have recently plunged into the controversial debates about funding, research and ideology in response to Murray and Herrnstein's (1994) *The Bell Curve*, a seriously flawed, ideological treatment

---

<sup>197</sup> Kalaw et al., pg. 11-12..

<sup>198</sup> Hammersley, pg. 117

of inter-racial, intercultural comparisons of Latino, Black and white intelligence and uses its "results", it as the foundation for attacking equity policies in social welfare and education.

With *The Bell Curve*, academics have taken a two-pronged response to this form of politicized research. Such scholars as Henry Giroux, Stanley Arnowitz and Michael Apple have critiqued Murray and Herrstein's "research" collectively – chapter by chapter – in a compilation of essays entitled, *Measured Lies: The Bell Curve Examined*. In this work, they address the content of Herrnstein and Murray's scholarship – the flawed assumptions, research design, the contradictions and selectivity of their analysis. They provide an analysis of "...the nature of public political conversation, the dynamics of knowledge production and distribution, the future of democracy and the efficacy of conventional approaches to the sciences of the human psyche."<sup>199</sup> They discuss *The Bell Curve*, as "ideological treatise," the practices (media, academia, etc) that empower it, and the fallacies and implications of "the culture of objectivity." Part of this treatment was to develop an analysis of *The Bell Curve*'s audience, its financial backers, and the assumptions and agendas of those backers. Lugg's (1996) analysis of Murray and Herrnstein's work and its relation to affirmative action policies in the US speaks directly to the role of conservative foundations and think-tanks in public policy research:

*To begin with, much of The Bell Curve could be defined as public PRolicy or public relations public policy. It has far more to do with the marketing of an idea than framing actual policy. Tied to the rise of American "think tanks", PRolicy has become a large part of the civic discourse. The goal of all think-tanks is to both shape the debate surrounding policy formation and to lobby for the enactment of specific policies through the skillful use and manipulation of policy tools. While ostensibly nonprofit and nonpartisan, most think tanks have a none-too-subtle political agenda that is woven into their policy analysis and proposals. For example, one will probably never see a feminist or an Afrocentrist critique of welfare policy issued from either American Enterprise Institute or the Heritage Foundation. This is not to boldly claim that all research done by think tanks or "think-tankers" is glorified ad copy for either the Democratic or Republican parties. However, such endeavours should be viewed through jaundiced coloured glasses.*<sup>200</sup>

This analysis is important for its deconstruction of the *The Bell Curve* as a text, and its commentary on the way this "research" was produced and "consumed." Not only

---

<sup>199</sup> J. Kincheloe, S. Steinberg and A. Gresson III, (eds.) *Measured Lies: The Bell Curve Examined*. (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press Inc, 1996), pg. 6.

<sup>200</sup> C. Lugg, "Attacking Affirmative Action: Social Darwinism as Public Policy" in J. Kincheloe, S. Steinberg and A. Gresson III, (eds.) *Measured Lies: The Bell Curve Examined*. (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press Inc, 1996).

was the financial backing for the book by the ultra conservative Bradley Foundation and the affiliations of the authors with other equally conservative institutions obscured. Murray and Herrnstein were able to "...assume centre stage, capture a popular audience" and were legitimated by media as respected scholars who offered merely "another important perspective" on the problems of the day.<sup>201</sup>

The case of *The Bell Curve*, I would argue, is a valuable example about the political economy of research in the late twentieth century. The linking of research to politicized public policy debates is part of the ideological landscape, reaffirming the need for critical approaches to contemporary policy issues. This is not to negate Hammersley's important reminders – i.e. that researchers need to maintain some level of psychological autonomy and detachment from political commitments, be conscientious about noting weaknesses in evidence and be transparent in one's reflection and documentation of the research process. It is, however, to point out that one needs to recognize the realities and dynamics of political movements, the central role research plays in those movements, and the need for work to be done on educating citizens on reading and assessing critical research.

Regarding the research of groups like the CCPA and the Donner Foundation, I believe that understanding the ways their research reflects the values of Canadian educators and the proponents of educational choice and traditional schooling respectively, and the proportionate amount of resources directed to supporting these values, is part of a critical analysis. As an extension of my work on the CCPA study, this thesis recasts the educational research of both groups as political acts connected to real social and political movements engaged in a battle to influence Canadian policy.

The Donner Foundation is an interesting case in this discussion of funding and the traditional schooling movement. As discussed in Chapter three, it has funnelled seed-funding to the Parent Network, the most consistent and visible proponent for charter schools and traditional schools in BC, to the Society for Advancing Excellence in Education, to Joseph Freedman's Society for the Advancement of Educational Research and the Aurora Charter School in Edmonton, Alberta. Donner Foundation has not only contributed to the Fraser Institute's research on education policy, it also places its public policy interns with the Fraser Institute.<sup>202</sup> At the time of publication of the CCPA's report,

---

<sup>201</sup> According to Miner (*Selling Out Our Schools* (Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Ltd, 1996), the Bradley Foundation has also been a major financial backer of the educational choice movement in the US.

<sup>202</sup> Donner Canada 1997 Grants, as listed on the foundation website.

the Brown study had reported both King Traditional Elementary and Langley Fundamental Elementary as participants.<sup>203</sup> In light of the involvement of Donner Canadian Foundation-funded groups in current debates about "parents' rights", traditional schools and charter schools across Canada, an analysis that assess its role is germane.

### ***Research and "Reciprocity"***

Critically researching the TSM presented dilemmas for the qualitative researcher, particularly on the issues of informed consent. During the data collection process, I continually struggled with what to divulge to research participants - about traditional schools, about the newly formed CCPA-BC and its organizational orientation, and the study's funders. Given that TSM subjects included activists with a history of opposition to organized labour in general and the BCTF in particular, every encounter with members of the traditional schools community was fraught with the possibility of overt hostility to me and my research. As qualitative theorists have observed, "in much fieldwork, there seems to be no way around the predicament that informed consent – divulging one's identity and research purpose to all and sundry – will kill many a project stone dead".<sup>204</sup> This was certainly borne out in the refusal of "traditional schools" to participate. Nevertheless, concerns that any deception about funding and sponsorship may prove detrimental to the outcomes of the research prompted me to respond to any direct questions about the CCPA study or my own views in as truthful a manner as possible. During the study, we felt anything less would risk discrediting ourselves as researchers, the organization, the funders and the task of critically looking at "traditional schools."

Maintaining a flexible research design was critical to our ability to adhere to this decision and still collect data. We hoped that potential participants would see that interviews and focus groups would be an avenue for "giving their side of the story", for articulating their perspectives and providing their critique of public schooling. We maintained a position of "hope-wait-and-see", with some consolation that should the "traditional schooling" parents and teachers refuse interviews, there was still important information to be collected through documents and other "informed elites".

---

<sup>203</sup> Society for Advancing Excellence in Education. "From the Field – New Research Projects" On-line: <http://www.saaee.bc.ca/research.htm>) Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

<sup>204</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ author of "Locating the Field – Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research", N. Denzen and Y. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994) pg. 90.

After meeting with the Surrey PAC, there was still reason for optimism, as a number of parents expressed a desire to share their experiences. Unfortunately, these potential interviews were blocked by the PAC executive's insistence on a 'collective' response.

We documented our attempts to negotiate both autonomy for the study and access to traditional school communities. First and foremost, the research team drafted a letter of understanding to the BC Teachers Federation, defining an arms length relationship between the research team and the Federation as funders of the study. This document set out that "the BCTF cannot prevent publication of the study if it is dissatisfied with its findings and that, while BCTF will be consulted on this topic, the researchers will not include or withhold information at the behest of the BCTF." Second, in meetings with traditional school parents, the research team explained the ethical and academic constraints we were operating within, most of which were unknown to participants. Dr. McLaren provided a brief explanation of the Ethics Review process and our intent to be even-handed, have the study address misconceptions and stereotypes about "traditional schools", open up issues for discussion rather than intensify polarization, and have the uniqueness of the schools described by those who know them. We felt that both the researchers and traditional school communities shared these interests. We tried to further allay the fears of traditional school parents and staff by offering participants the opportunity to see pertinent sections of the final report prior to final printing. In individual cases, researchers offered potential interviewees the opportunity to discuss questions in advance, or to reply by email.

Given the highly politicized climate surrounding traditional schools and the volatile reaction of key traditional school parents to a CCPA/BCTF study on the topic, we were not successful in obtaining a satisfactory number of interviews with traditional school parents and staff who were intimately involved in the establishment and operation of the three traditional schools. Parents in all three traditional schools opted to abide by their PAC executive's decision and declined participation. Furthermore, the PACs conveyed their position to school and district staff and, in this way, determined those parties' non-involvement in the study.

Optimism gave way to pragmatism. We conveyed in no uncertain terms our intent to continue the study whether they participated or not, hoping this would stimulate their interest in participating. The presence of "access-to-information" legislation that

would enable some level of data collection for researchers studying unwilling public bodies becomes singularly important under "opposition" or conflict research situations.

Critical research as a form of social or cultural criticism of practices, policies, and institutions that form power relations must challenge the notion that only full disclosure is sufficiently ethical. Investigative research methods are, under the circumstances, necessary tools of the critical researcher; otherwise, the researcher may be precluded from conducting critical inquiry of subjects with greater political and institutional power than researchers.

The flexibility and open-endedness of qualitative research, coupled with investigative journalism techniques, seems to be the only way to deal with the complexities of researching such a highly volatile "field". Clearly, denial of access to those most knowledgeable of traditional schools resulted in abandoning any attempts to develop ethnographies of these schools. Lost was the opportunity to develop a large body of data on the motivations and experiences of traditional school parents prior to choosing the traditional school, their struggles to establish the schools, the day-to-day experiences of students and staff in the schools, and their aspirations for this program.

The response of traditional school PAC leaders raised new questions for the CCPA study: why is there such a volatile political climate around Traditional Schools in BC? What has led to this level of politicization and conflict? Who are the key characters in these conflicts and what role have they played? How have these conflicts affected district relations and operations? How has existing education policy contributed/exacerbated the conflicts in these communities? Are these politics unique to the traditional schooling movement or do other alternative programs share them? We shifted our attention to some of these questions and sought data on how traditional programs were situated within the public system and the effects of their implementation on their districts. Policy documents, interviews with other district "elites" – teachers' association representatives, district PAC representatives, trustees, district staff – involved in the complex processes of program approvals provided insight into the types of activities conducted by traditional schooling activists. These participants had perspectives and experiences directly related to actions of the TSM. I found that working with these parents and teachers offered greater opportunities for 'reciprocity.' I found myself considering what I could contribute to parents who support, yet have concerns about, the public education system and want to participate in it? Through the course of my contact with some non-traditional school parents, teachers and trustees, I have been

able to provide them with information and access to research on alternative programs, speak (at their request) at meetings, and discuss their concerns.

During the course of the CCPA study and my own independent work, I came to see my research role as two-fold: first, to bring out unseen features, side-effects and contradictions of TSM movement activism and second, to look critically at the contradictions in the education establishment's response to the TSM. On a practical level, this meant "opening up" the inquiry into traditional schools to other perspectives, other experiences within the system of school districts.

## Bibliography

### Books

- Apple, M. "Becoming Right". In Carlson, D. and Apple, M. (eds.), *Power, Knowledge, Pedagogy – The Meaning of Democratic Education in Unsettling Times*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998.
- Arnowitz, Stanley and Giroux, Henry. *Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate Over Schooling*. New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1985.
- Barlow, M. and Robertson, H. *Class Warfare*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1994.
- Bellamy, L. "Capital, Habitus, Field & Practice: An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu". In Erwin, L. and MacLennan, D. (eds.), *Sociology of Education in Canada: Critical Perspectives on Theory, Research and Practice*. Toronto: Copp Clark and Longman, 1994.
- Berube, M. "Teachers Politics: The Influence of Unions", *Contributions to the Study of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, no. 26, 1988).
- Bibby, Reginald W. *The Bibby Report: Social Trend Canadian Style*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd., 1995.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital" in A.H. Halsey, Hugh Lauder, Phillip Brown, and Amy Wells (eds.) *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Brown, P. "The Third Wave: Education and the Ideology of Parentocracy". In Halsey, A., Lauder, H., Brown, P. and A. Wells (eds.), *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Carlson, D. (1992) "Ideological Conflict and Change in the Sexuality Curriculum". In J. Sears (ed), *Sexuality and the Curriculum – The Politics and Practices of Sexuality Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1992.
- Carr, W. and Harnett, A. *Education and the Struggle for Democracy: The Politics of Educational Ideas*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996.
- Chalmers, Virginia. "White Out: Multicultural Performances in a Progressive School". In Fine, M., Weids, L., Powell, L. and Wong, L. (eds.), *Off White – readings on race, power and society*. New York, London: Routledge, 1997.
- Cherryholmes, Cleo. "Rethinking Educational Discourse-Practices". *Power and Criticism: Poststructural Investigations In Education*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1988.
- Clement, W. and Myles, J. *Relations of Ruling – Class and Gender in Post Industrial Societies*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994.

Coalition for Education Reform. *Could Do Better: What's Wrong with public Education in Ontario and How to Fix It. A Report on Ontario's Public Education System.* Toronto: Coalition for Education Reform, 1994.

Cooper, D. "At the Expense of Christianity; Backlash Discourse and Moral Panic " in *Dangerous Territories – Struggles for Difference and Equality in Education*. L. Roman and L. Eyre (eds.) New York: Routledge, 1997. pg. 45

Corson, D. "Discursive Power in Educational Organizations". In Corson, D. (ed), *Discourse and Power in Educational Organizations*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press, 1995.

Cowley, P., Easton, S. and M. Walker. *1999 Report Card on BC's Secondary Schools*. Vancouver: Fraser Institute, 1999.

Diamond, S. *Spiritual Warfare – The Politics of the Christian Right*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Road to Dominion: Right Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States*. New York: Guilford Press, 1995.

Dickson, Louann. *Focus on Fundamentals: A Longitudinal Look*. Mesa: Mesa Public Schools, July 1991.

Dobson, James and Bauer, G. *Children at Risk*. Vancouver: Word Books, 1994.

Elmore, Richard F. and Guller, Bruce. "Empirical Research on Educational Choice: What Are the Implications for Policy-Makers?" In Fuller, B. and Elmore, R. F. (eds.), *Who Chooses, Who Loses – Culture, Institutions and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.

Erwin, L. and MacLennan, D. (eds.). *Sociology of Education in Canada: Critical perspectives on theory, research and practice*. Toronto: Copp Clark and Longman, 1994.

Fitz, J. and Halpin, D. "Brief Encounters": researching education policymaking in elite settings". In J. Salisbury and S. Delamont, (eds.), *Qualitative Studies in Education*. Aldershot; Brooksfield, Ashgate Pub. 1995.

Freedman, Joseph. "'Bursting Bureaucracy': The Charter Idea Comes to Canada." In Lawton, Stephen B. and Freedman, Joseph (eds.), *Busting Bureaucracy to Reclaim Our Schools*. Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1995.

Fuller, B. and R. F. Elmore (eds.). *Who Chooses, Who Loses – Culture, Institutions and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.

Gewirtz, S., Ball, S. and Bowe, R. *Markets, Choice and Equity in Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995.

- Glatter, R., Woods, P., and Bagley, C. (eds.). *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Glatter, R., Woods, P., and Bagley, C. "Diversity, Differentiation and Hierarchy – School Choice and Parental Preferences". In Glatter, R., Woods, P., and Bagley, C. (eds.), *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Goldring, E. "Parental Involvement and School Choice: Israel and the United States". In Glatter, R., Woods, P., and Bagley, C. (eds.), *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Griffiths, Alison I. and Smith, Dorothy E. "Constructing Cultural Knowledge: Mothering as Discourse". In Gaskell, J. and McLaren, A. (eds.), *Women and Education Second Edition*, Calgary: Detselig Ent. Ltd, 1991.
- Habermas, Jurgen. "Neoconservative Culture Criticism in the United States and West Germany: An Intellectual Movement in Two Political Cultures" in Bernstein, R. (ed) *Habermas and Modernity*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985)
- Halpin, D., Power, S. and Fitz, J. "Opting Into the Past? Grant Maintained Schools and the Reinvention of Tradition". In Glatter, R., Woods, P. and Bagley, C. (eds.), *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Halsey, A., Lauder, H., Brown, P. and A. Wells (eds.). *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Hamm, Cornel. "Constraints on Parents' Rights Concerning the Education of Their Children". In Manley-Casimir, M. (ed), *Family Choice and Schooling*. Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1982. pp. 71-83.
- Hammersley, M. *The Politics of Social Research*. London: Sage Publications, 1995.
- Harvey, L. *Critical Social Research*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- Henig, J. "Local Dynamics of Choice". In Fuller, B. and Elmore, R. F. (eds.), *Who Chooses, Who Loses – Culture, Institutions and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*. New York: Teachers college Press, 1997.
- Herman, D. "'Then I Saw a New Heaven and a New Earth' – Thoughts on the Christian Right and the Problem of Backlash". In Leslie Roman and Linda Eyre (eds.), *Dangerous Territories – Struggles for Difference and Equality in Education*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Hirsch, Donald. "Policies for School Choice: What Can Britain Learn from Abroad?" In Glatter, R., Woods, P., and Bagley, C. (eds.), *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Jones, J. *No Right Turn*. Federal Way: Washington Education Association, 1993.

- Kalaw, C., McLaren, A. and Rehnby, N. *In the Name of Choice – A Study of BC's Traditional Schools*. Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 1998.
- Kenway, J. "Class, Gender and Private Schooling". In Dawkins, David (ed), *Power and Politics in Education*. London: Falmer Press, 1991.
- Kincheloe, Joe and McLaren, P. "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research" in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994.
- Lareau, A. *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Involvement in Elementary Education*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1989.
- Lather, P. *Getting Smart – Feminist Research and the Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Looker, E. Dianne. "Active Capital: The Impact of Parents on Youths' Educational Performance and Plans". In Erwin, L. and MacLennan, D. (eds.), *Sociology of Education in Canada – Critical Perspectives on Theory, Research, and Practice*. Toronto: Copp Clark and Longman, 1994.
- Lugg, C. "Attacking Affirmative Action: Social Darwinism as Public Policy". In Kincheloe, J., Steinberg, S. and Gresson III, A. (eds.), *Measured Lies: The Bell Curve Examined*. Toronto: OISE Press Inc., 1996.
- Manley Casimir, M. (ed). *Family Choice in Schooling: issues and dilemmas*. Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1982.
- Manzer, Ronald. *Public Schools and Political Ideas – Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994
- Martinez, Valerie, Godwin, Kenneth, and Kemerer, Frank R. "Public School Choice in San Antonio: Who Chooses and with What Effects?" In Fuller, B. and Elmore, R. F. (eds.), *Who Chooses, Who Loses – Culture, Institutions and the Unequal Effects of School Choice*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1997.
- Miner, B. and Lowe, R., (eds.) *Selling Out Our Schools – Vouchers, markets and the Future of Public Education*. Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools Ltd., 1996.
- Mortimore, P. "Can Effective Schools Compensate for Society". In Halsey, A., Lauder, H. Brown, P. and Wells, A. (eds.), *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Myers, Henry. *Fundamentally Speaking*. San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1977.
- Neuman, W. L. *Social Research Methods*. Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon, 1991.
- Rehnby, N. *Inventing Crisis*. Vancouver: BC Teachers Federation, 1996.
- Sears, J. (ed) *Sexuality And The Curriculum: The Politics And Practices Of Sexuality Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1992.

West, Ann and Pennell, Hazel. "Changing Admissions Policies and Practices in Inner London: Implications for Policy and Future Research". In Glatter, R., Woods, P. and Bagley, C. (eds.), *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Wilson, Donald J. and Lazerson, Marvin. "Historical and Constitutional Perspectives on Family Choice and Schooling: The Canadian Case", Manley-Casimer, M. (ed) *Family Choice and Schooling: Issues and Dilemmas*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1982.

### **Articles and Periodicals**

Adler, L. "Institutional Responses – Public School Curriculum and Religious Conservatives in California". *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 327-346.

Apple, Michael W. "Curricula and Teaching: Are They Headed Toward Excellence?" *NASSP Bulletin*. September 1988, pp. 14-25.

Balcom, Susan. "Charter Schooling Chalks Up Liberal Support". *Vancouver Sun*, Jan. 26, 1995. Final Edition, p. B8

Ball, Stephen, Bowe, Richard and Gewirtz, Sharon. "Circuits of Schooling: a sociological exploration of parental choice of school in social class contexts". *The Editorial Board of the Sociological Review*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995, pp.52-78.

Bateman, J. "Middle School In". *Langley Advance*. February 20, 1998.

Bell, S. "Ban Urged on Teaching About Homosexuality". *Vancouver Sun*, April 28, 1997. Final Edition, p. B1.

Birmingham, John. "Board Holds Line on Same Sex Stories". *Vancouver Province*, January 13, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Students Like The Uniforms". *The Province (Vancouver)*, June 14, 1998, Final Edition, p.A21

\_\_\_\_\_. "Parents Fight for Back to Basics". *The Province (Vancouver)*, June 14, 1998, Final Edition, p.A20

Bomotti, Sally. "Why do Parents Choose Alternative Schools?" *Educational Leadership*. October 1996, pp. 30-32.

Bowe, Richard, Gewirtz, Sharon and Ball, Stephen. "Captured by the Discourse? Issues and Concerns in Research 'Parental Choice'". *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol. 15, No. 1, 1994.

Boyd, William Lowe, Lugg, Catherine A., and Zahorchak, Gerald L. "Social Traditionalists, Religious Conservatives, and the Politics of Outcome-Based

Education". *Education and Urban Society*. Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 347-365.

Bracey, Gerald. "A Nation of Learners: Nostalgia and Amnesia". *Educational Leadership*. February 1997, p. 53-57.

Brandt, Ron. "On Finding Common Ground with Religious Conservatives: A Conversation with Charles Haynes". *Educational Leadership*. April 1996, pp. 72-75.

Brook, P. "War over Words". *Chatelaine Magazine*. December 1998, pp. 46-58.

Burron, Arnold. "Parents' Rights – Society's Imperatives". *Educational Leadership*. April 1996, pp. 80-82.

*Chilliwack Progress*, Letters to the Editor, Dec. 13, 1995.

Cibulka, James G. "Afterword: Interpreting the Religious Impulse in American Schooling". *Education and Urban Society*. Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 378-387.

Clarkson, F. and Porteus, S. *Challenging the Christian Right – The Activist's Handbook*. Great Barrington: Institute for First Amendment Studies Inc., 1992.

Coulter, David. "Good Schools". *UBC Education*. Fall, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1997.

Culbert, Lori. "Parents estimate they raise \$30 million for BC schools". *Vancouver Sun*. Jan. 15, 1999, pg. A3.

Cummins, J. and Cameron, L. "The ESL Student is the Mainstream: the Marginalization of Diversity in Current Canadian Educational Debates". *English Quarterly*. Vol. 26, No. 3, Spring 1994, pp. 30-33.

Dyck, S. "Can a little knowledge be a bad thing?" *Vancouver Sun*, May 5, 1997, Final Edition, p. A11.

Edwards, T. and Whitty, G. "Marketing Quality: Traditional and Modern Versions of Educational Excellence". In Glatter, R., Woods, P. and Bagley, C. (eds.). *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997.

Elliott, Brian and McCrone, D. "Class, Culture and Morality: a sociological analysis of the New Conservatism". *The Sociological Review*. Vol. 35, No. 3, August 1987, pp. 485-515.

Elliott, Brian and McLennan D. "Education, modernity and Neo Conservative School Reform in Canada, Britain and the US". *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Vol. 15, No. 2, June 1994, pp. 165-185.

Focus on the Family. *Focus on the Family Magazine*. Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, June 1998.

- Fuller, Bruce. (1996) "Is School Choice Working". *Educational Leadership*. October 1996, pp. 37-40.
- Gamoran, Adam. "Do Magnet Schools Boost Achievement?" *Educational Leadership*. October 1996, pp. 42-46.
- Gewirtz, Sharon. "The Education Market, Labour Relations in Schools and Teacher Unionism in the UK". In Glatter, R. Woods, P., and Bagley, C. (eds.), *Choice and Diversity in Schooling – Perspectives and Prospects*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Giroux, Henry A. "Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis". *Harvard Education Review*. Vol.53, No. 3, August 1983.
- Holekstra, G. "Organizer of Forum That Led Recall Campaign Ponders Running for Reform". *Vancouver Sun*, Dec. 16, 1997, Final Edition, P. B7.
- Kunen, James S. "The End of Integration". *Time*. April 29, 1996, pp. 39-45.
- Layton, Donald H. "Religion and the Politics of Education". *Education and Urban Society*. Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 275-278.
- Lee, Valerie E. and Croninger, Robert G. "Parental Choice of Schools and Social Stratification in Education: The Paradox of Detroit". *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. Vol. 16, No. 4, Winter 1994, pp. 434-457.
- McCarthy, M. "People of Faith as Political Activists in Public Schools". *Education and Urban Society*. Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 308-326.
- McMurtry, John. "Education and the Market Model". *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. Vol. 25, No. 2, 1991, pp. 209-217.
- Molnar, Alex. "Charter Schools: The Smiling Face of Disinvestment". *Educational Leadership*. Vol. 54, No. 2, October 1996.
- "More parental access to schools urged in Ontario". *Vancouver Sun*, Nov. 21, 1998
- Morgan, Margaret T. and Robinson, Norman. "The 'Back to the Basics' Movement in Education". *Canadian Journal of Education*. Vol 1, No. 2, 1976, p. 1-11.
- Murnane, Richard J. "Family Choice in Public Education: The Roles of Students, Teachers, and System Designers". *Educational Policy*. Vol. 88, No. 2, Winter 1986, pp. 169-189.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. "A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform". *Elementary School Journal*. Vol. 84, No.2, November 1983, pp. 113-141.
- O'Bryan, Sharon and Parkay, Forrest W. "Back-to-Basics: Reflections on the Past and a Glimpse into the Future". *NASSP Bulletin*. January 1985, pp. 28-33.

- O'Neill, Terry. "In Surrey, meanwhile, it's back back to basics". *British Columbia Report*. January 22, 1996.
- Osborne, Ken. "Back to the Basics - But What are They?" *Education Manitoba*. Vol. 20, No. 2, October/November, 1992.
- Parents for Healthy Children. "Whose Children Are They" Newsletter. Vol. 96/2, 97/1, 97/2, Victoria: Parents for Healthy Children.
- Petronio, Maureen. "The Choices Parents Make." *Educational Leadership*. October 1996, pp. 33-36.
- Pincus, Fred. "From Equity to Excellence: The Rebirth of Educational Conservatism". *Social Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Winter 1984 pg. 50-56.
- Porter, C. "Asian-only Classes Possible, critic warns: A school could become a racial enclave, former principal says", *Vancouver Sun*, Jan. 25, 1999. Pg. A1.
- Purrington, Gordon S. and Layton, Donald H. "The Curious Case of Kiryas Joel: Governmental Accommodation or Capitulation?" *Education and Urban Society*. Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 366-377.
- Rau, K. "Money Buys Minds" in *Canadian Forum*, Toronto: Canadian Forum, July-August 1996.
- "Rethinking Schools". *An Urban Educational Journal*. Vol. 10, No. 3, Spring 1996.
- Richmond News. Letter to the Editor, "Choice Words - Immigrants Should Avoid Friction", March 2, 1999.
- Rosenholtz, S.J. and Cohen, E.G. "Back to Basics and the Desegregated School". In *Elementary School Journal*. Vol. 83, No. 5, 1983. pp. 515-527.
- Scribner, Jay D. and Fusarelli, Lance D. "Rethinking the Nexus Between Religion and Political Culture: Implications for Educational Policy". *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 279-292.
- Shaker, E. "Privatizing Schools: democratic choice or market demand?" in *Education, Limited*. Vol. 1, No. 3, 1999 pp. i-xxiv.
- Sheremata, D. "Rediscovering the three Rs". *Quill and Quire*. February 1997, p. 25.
- Slater, Robert O. "Teacher Traditionalism and Conservatism: A Preliminary Analysis". *Administrator's Notebook*. Vol. 33, No. 8, 1989.
- Smith, A. "The Imaginary Inclusion of the Assimilable 'Good Homosexual': the British New Right's Representation of Sexuality and Race." *Diacritics*. Vol. 24, No 2-3, Summer-Fall 1994, pp. 58-70.

- Smith, D.S. "Parent-Generated Home Study in Canada." *The Canadian School Executive*, February 1996, pp. 9-12.
- Smith, Kevin B. and Meier, Kenneth J. "School Choice: Panacea or Pandora's Box?" *Phi Delta Kappan*. December 1995, pp. 312-316.
- Sorenson, Gail. "Religion and American Public Education – Conservative Religious Agenda and the US Constitution". *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 28, No. 3, May 1996, pp. 293-307.
- Stiller, Brian. "Will a Religious Right Rise in Canada" in *Faith Today*. Toronto: Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 1996.
- The Interim – Canada's Pro-life, Pro-family Newspaper*. Toronto: Interim Publishing, October 1993.
- Van Brummelen, H. *The New Christian Right and North American Education*. South Africa: Institute for Reformational Studies, 1989. Series F1, IRS-Study Pamphlets, Study Pamphlet No. 258.
- Vondra, Jan. "Resolving Conflicts Over Values." *Educational Leadership*. April 1996, pp. 76-79.
- Young, T and Clinchy, E. "How Effective is Choice in Public Education?" In *Choice in Public Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1992.
- Yiu, Gabriel. "Boardroom war Knocked Out Lau", *Vancouver Sun*, July 16, 1998, pg. A13.

### Public Documents

- Adhoc Committee on Traditional Schools. *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Traditional Schools*. School District #33, Chilliwack, December, 1995.
- BC Teachers Federation. "School Choice" Brochure. *Issues in Education Series*. Vancouver: BC Teachers Federation, 1996.
- Beairsto, B. (Associate Superintendent, Memo to School Board Trustees, Richmond School District, Feb. 1, 1999, Re: Estimation of Costs of the Traditional Program.)
- Canada, *British North America (Constitution) Act*, 1867, s. 93
- Donner Canada Annual Report 1996.
- Fraser Institute Conference Flyer, "Student Seminars on Public Policy Issues 1998-1999.
- Kelly, C. (Superintendent's Memo to School Board Trustees, Richmond School District, Feb. 25, 1999, Re: Board Resolution 245/98: Recommendation).

Langley Commission on Education. *Report of the Langley Commission on Education*, 1979.

Letter from Helen Raham, Executive Director, Society for Advancing Excellence in Education to Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. October 23, 1998.

*Ministry of Education Annual Report Statistical Supplement 1994/95*

Minutes, Meeting of the Surrey School Board, 1996-01-25. Surrey, BC.

Parents for Healthy Children. "Critique of Personal Planning Curriculum: Gr. K-7" Second Edition, Victoria, Feb. 1996.

Proposal in Brief Submitted to the Abbotsford School District, Abbotsford, Nov. 28, 1994.

Report of the Adhoc Committee on Traditional Schools to the Education Policy and Planning Committee, Chilliwack School Board, Dec. 19, 1995.

Teachers for Excellence in Education organizational flyer, undated.

Vancouver School Board. *Options 99 Brochure*. Vancouver: Vancouver School Board, 1999.

Vancouver School Board. "Memo to VSB Committee III by the Senior Management Team", Vancouver School Board, Jan. 20, 1999.

### **Other Sources**

BC Civil Liberties Association, "Press Releases" (On-line:

[http://www.bccla.org/press\\_releases/98bigots.html](http://www.bccla.org/press_releases/98bigots.html) Downloaded: March 16, 1999.

Caudell, Lee S. "Basic Training – A Determined Group of Parents fight for a Traditional School". Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Resources: Northwest Education, Spring 1997. On-line:

[http://www.nwrel.org/nweduu/spring\\_97/article8.html](http://www.nwrel.org/nweduu/spring_97/article8.html)

CBC-TV The National (transcript), Feb. 16, 1999.

Christian Heritage Party Website, "Principles, Policies and Programs", On-line:

<http://www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/chp/#policies>. Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

Coleman, Peter. "The Pressure for Choice: An Analysis of a Series of 'Traditional School' Proposals Made to School Boards in BC". The Society for Advancement of Excellence in Education, Education Research Report, May 1998. On-line:

[http://www.saee.bc.ca/educ\\_rpt.html](http://www.saee.bc.ca/educ_rpt.html)

Donner Canada 1997 Grants, as listed on the foundation website,  
<http://donnerfoundation.org/english/text/mission.html> Downloaded: Jan. 31, 1998.

Eastman, T. Interview, Langley Teachers' association, Nov. 12, 1997.

Family Coalition Party Website "Policies" <http://www.familyparty.bc.ca/policy.htm> Downloaded: July 18, 1999.

Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA) "Basic Independent School Data 1996-97 – Number of Schools and Enrolment by Group Classification" On-line: <http://www.direct.ca/fisa/enrolment.htm> Downloaded: June 22, 1999.

Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA) "Enrolment Comparing Public and Independent – Historical" On-line: <http://www.direct.ca/fisa/enrolment.htm> Downloaded: June 22, 1999.

Fieldnotes, Public Meeting Re: Traditional School Proposal, Jan. 14, 1999. Hugh Boyd Secondary School.

Focus on the Family Website: <http://www.fotf.ca>

Freedman, Joseph. *Failing Grades: Canadian Schooling in a Global Economy Annotated Bibliography and Video*. Edmonton: Society for Advancing Educational Research/Full Court Press Inc., 1993.

Gaskell, Jane. "Dilemmas of Educational Choice." Paper prepared for the Canadian Teachers Federation for the national conference, Public Education: Meeting the Challenges, May 1995.

Interview, A. McKittrick, Richmond Trustee, June 17, 1998.

Interview, D. Boulis, Abbotsford Parent, June 16, 1997.

Lane, Brett. "Choice Matters: Policy Alternatives and Implications for Charter Schools". Northwest Regional Educational Policy Laboratory Resources: Charter Schools. On-line: <http://www.nwrel.org/charter/policy.html>

National Association of Christian Educators/Citizens for Excellence in Education. NACE/CEE Website, "Welcome to NACE/CEE", On-line: <http://www.nace-cee.org>. Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

"Resources and Products", On-line: <http://www.nace-cee.org/resource.html> Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

Owens, Peter. BCTF correspondence, May 6, 1998.

Parent Network. "Who We Are" Flyer, undated.

Parent Network. "Donner Foundation Awards Grant", The Net, September 1996. (On-line: <http://www.enet.ca/parentnetwork/newssept.htm>) Downloaded: July 31, 1998).

Parent Network. "Last Chance for Choice Workshop", *The Net*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Sept. 1994.

Parent Network. "Parent Network Receives Grant", *The Net*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Feb. 1995.  
[Parent Network files, C. Kalaw]

Parent Network. *The Net* (on-line archives) "Advocates for Education District #36 – Feb. 25, 1993". Online: <http://www.enet.ca/parentnetwork/nwsfeb93.htm> Downloaded July 31, 1998.

Parker, Shafer, Jr. "Going the gay way, eh?". *World Magazine*. Vol. 12, No. 7, May 3/10, 1997. On-line. [http://www.worldmag.com/world/issue/05-05-97/national\\_3.asp](http://www.worldmag.com/world/issue/05-05-97/national_3.asp)

People for the American Way. *Parental Rights: Trojan Horse of the Religious Right Attack on Public Education*. Washington DC: People for the United Way, 1997. On-line: <http://www.pfaw.org/issues/right/p-rights96.shtml> Downloaded: July 18, 1999.

People for the American Way. *Buying a Movement: Right Wing Foundations and American Politics*. Washington DC: People for the United Way, 1997. On-line: [http://www.pfaw.org/issues/right/rw/rep\\_rwfound02.html](http://www.pfaw.org/issues/right/rw/rep_rwfound02.html) Downloaded: July 18, 1999.

PRO-S.O.C.S. "The Righteous Revolution: Could there be a theocracy in America's future?" 1996. On-line: <http://www.phoenix.net/~prosoc/riterev.html>

Simon Fraser University (SFU) Office of Analytical Studies. Joanne Heslop. Email Correspondence March 12, 1999 re: SFU admission GPA data.

Society for Advancing Excellence in Education. "From the Field – New Research Projects" On-line: <http://www.saee.bc.ca/research.htm>) Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

Telephone interview, Ingrid Wood, District Learning Services, Vancouver School Board, June 12, 1999.

University of British Columbia (UBC) Factbook (On-line:  
[http://www.budgetandplanning.ubc.ca/factbook/factbk98/min\\_gpa.htm](http://www.budgetandplanning.ubc.ca/factbook/factbk98/min_gpa.htm)  
Downloaded: March 12, 1999).

US Department of Education. "Alternative Education Programs for Expelled Students". *Creating Safe and Drug Free Schools - An Action Guide*. US Dept. of Education, September 1996, p. 2. On-line:  
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ACTGID/altersc.html> Downloaded: July 17, 1999.

Van den Hemel, M. "Traditional School Nixed" in *The Review*, March 3, 1999. On-line.  
<http://www.rpl.richmond.bc.ca/community/r...ndreview/archive/rr19990303/morenews.html>

Vancouver School Board Website - List of Alternative Programs. On-line:  
<http://www.vsb.bc.ca> Downloaded: July 17, 1999.