READING CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM AS AN ETHICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an alternative reading of how we might work across difference in multicultural education. Identifying the binary of difference/sameness that currently underlies many multicultural initiatives, this thesis draws on the discourse of critical multiculturalism and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas to provide a way of thinking about difference otherwise than through homogenous categories and/or universal notions of humanity. Of particular concern is the use of empathy in multicultural education which, in asking students to 'feel', 'imagine' or 'understand' the experiences of the 'other', continues to work from within this modern paradigm of identity politics. Through a discussion of Levinas, this thesis adds to the discourse of critical multiculturalism, considering how the unknowability of Otherness might inform notions of ethics and multicultural education. Thus, rather than attempting to thematize the Other in order to 'produce' ethical behaviour, Levinas offers a way of considering the possibilities for ethics that are driven by what we do not know about Otherness, a separation or dynamic of alterity that does not begin with a 'connection' to, nor an 'experience', 'imagination', or 'knowledge' of difference. In the end, it is suggested that Levinas opens up a space in which to theorize ethical relationality through separation, rather than connection, through alterity, rather than being. Such a perspective not only complicates the notion of identity (as does critical multiculturalism), but it goes beyond ontology itself.

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In addition, I am grateful to the teachers who shared with me their experiences and stories of teaching, many of which appear in this thesis. Such examples bring an important balance of the 'practical' to the 'abstract' of theory.

Finally, I want to thank my family, who, although unfamiliar with my life as a perpetual student, trust my decisions and wish me every happiness. This thesis is dedicated to them.

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Introduction: Reading Critical Multiculturalism as an Ethical Discourse

Over the past 20 years or so, an expansive body of literature on equity, social justice and cultural studies has called for educational policy and practice to incorporate issues of social difference in schools (Apple, 1990; 1992; Giroux, 1993; Kanpol, 1995; Lee, 1985; McCarthy, 1988; McCarthy; 1994; Ng, 1995; Sefa Dei, 1996). No longer viewed as a neutral transmission of knowledge, pedagogy has been exposed as a political process which produces and reproduces "official knowledge" based upon the perspectives, values and traditions of "dominant groups" (Apple, 1993, 9-10). Michael Apple (1992) writes that,

> It is during times of social upheaval that [the] relationship of education and power becomes most visible. Such a relationship was and continues to be made manifest in the struggles by women, people of color, and others to have their history and knowledge included in the curriculum (p. 4).

It is in this context of "social upheaval" that multiculturalism has emerged in multiple levels of the school system; this is evidenced in recent attempts to create inclusive curriculum documents (Apple, 1992; Bennett, 1995; Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988; Derman-Sparks, 1989), diverse representations in textbooks and literature (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Diamond & Moore, 1995; Yokota, 1993), anti-biased pedagogical methods and lesson plans (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Eldridge, 1998; Lee, 1985; Meyers, 1993; Schiedewind & Davidson, 1998; for a critique see Bartolome, 1994) and progressive teacher education programmes (Levine-Rasky, 1998; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996). In this way, multiculturalism can be viewed as a much-needed response to narrowly-defined notions of knowledge and nation in Canadian schools.

Identity Politics: The Binary of 'Difference/Sameness'

Taken up by different political and pedagogical agendas, multiculturalism does not carry with it a single, stable meaning of social justice and equality (Lubeck, 1994). Issues of race and racism have been addressed in multiple ways, ranging from a mere 'tolerance' of difference to critical examinations of the self in relation to others (Britzman, 1998; Pinar, 1994; Sefa Dei, 1996; Todd, 1997; 1999; West, 1994). Informed by different theoretical and political perspectives, multicultural pedagogy has been loosely divided into separate "positions" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, 3; see also McCarthy & Apple, 1988; Ng, 1995; Rezai-Rashti, 1995): two of which have been referred to as "liberal multicultural pedagogy" and "anti-racist pedagogy" (Rezai-Rashti, 1995, 4).

Traditionally, liberal multicultural initiatives have dealt with issues of race by celebrating cultural diversity and promoting the equal recognition of individual identities while antiracist perspectives have more critically challenged the unequal social organization of dominant society, examining how cultural differences "are produced historically and ideologically" to mirror and reproduce social inequalities among groups (Ng, 1995, p. xiii). And while they overlap in many ways, it seems that the first tradition focuses on the universal human right for all (different) identities to be treated equally, while the other focuses on the social construction of difference and common experiences of oppression among 'different' identities within dominant systems of power.[1]

In this way, each of the latter discourses has tended to assume a certain stability of identity and difference, used in the service of promoting equal recognition (Gutmann, 1994; Taylor, 1994) or in the service of politically mobilizing around common

experiences of oppression (hooks, 1994; Ng, 1995; West, 1994). Revealed here is the modern binary of difference/sameness; on one hand, it is assumed that racial differences are homogenous and stable and on the other hand, it is suggested that such differences can be connected (or 'overcome') through a recognition of universal human rights and underlying commonalities.

Cultural critic Cornel West (1994) reveals a similar binary in his discussion of the "assimilationist manner" and the "homogenizing impulse" of modern black efforts to combat racism (p. 18). The "assimilationist manner" works from the assumption of a common humanity, thereby constructing a notion of identity as universal. Like many multicultural efforts, this perspective tries to achieve equality from a discourse of sameness; it is suggested that despite superficial differences, people are all the same underneath and therefore deserve the same human rights and privileges. On the other hand, the "homogenizing impulse" works from a notion of identity as difference and thus stabilizes boundaries between racial identities. Similar to anti-racist efforts, this perspective focuses on common experiences (of oppression) among particular racial subjects and in so doing, flattens differences between the multiple and complex subjectivities of any one racial category.

Drawing on West (1994), I suggest that the binary of difference/sameness is what underlies current pedagogies of social justice, as they tend to sway between the theme of identity as difference and identity as universal. Specifically, this binary tends to manifest itself in multicultural pedagogies that work from discourses of knowledge and empathy in their consideration of racial difference. For example, multicultural initiatives which

teach the knowledge of 'other' races, including history, customs, culture, and festivals necessarily make assumptions about who the 'racial' 'other' is and what their differences entail. Similarly, in asking students to experience or imagine the feelings of the 'racial' 'other', discourses of empathy tend to reduce that 'other' to a pre-determined category of what it means to be different while also assuming universal human qualities that allegedly connect different others.

However, because this binary assumes a certain 'truth' or 'realness' of identity (either universal or different), what is left unquestioned are the ethical implications of identity categories themselves and the possibility of a multicultural pedagogy that works from the secrecy of Otherness rather than the knowledge of difference.[2] Responding to this discourse, this thesis tries to step outside of the binary of difference/sameness to consider the ethical possibilities of a pedagogy that begins from Otherness, rather than difference or universality. My interest is to move beyond the rigid identity politics of the binary of difference/sameness to open up questions about teaching and relating across difference as necessarily ethical concerns.

Thus, I am not satisfied with 'solutions' to racism that are so rigidly fixed in modern paradigms in which racist structures and practices have been constructed and maintained in the first place. In an attempt to provide a reading of the ethical possibilities and questions that multicultural pedagogy raises, this thesis works towards three main objectives. First, it considers a framework of Otherness that seems to offer an ethical way of thinking about and relating to the 'racial' 'other'; second, it raises some ethical implications surrounding popular discourses that work through knowledge and empathy

to promote positive race relations in the classroom; and third, it suggests how Otherness might provide alternative ways of understanding and working across differences in multicultural pedagogy.

Critical Multiculturalism: The "Third Space"

The proposition that multicultural pedagogy is a problem of ethics, of considering how to live in and across otherness, alerts us to a particular kind of conversation; specifically, it raises questions about how we might come to think about otherness in a way that refuses to reduce any subjectivity to a singular definition of race or universal category of humanity. Perhaps most importantly for the purpose of this thesis, the view of multicultural pedagogy as a problem of ethics considers how unstable (and unknowable) notions of otherness might operate to incite ethical relationality. While admittedly mainstream multicultural pedagogies, too, attempt to help students work ethically across differences, their tendency to focus on knowledge of and empathy for the 'different' 'other' seems to limit questions of how we might work across difference beyond modern categories of identity.

To consider how multicultural pedagogy might work beyond this limitation, I turn to the discourse of what has been referred to as 'critical multiculturalism' which constructs a view of otherness that is based upon uncertainty and ambiguity.[3] Critical multiculturalism not only recognizes the complex intersectionality of race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, region, culture and nation, but it also considers the psychical processes of identification and desire which complicate these intersectionalities even further. In this way, critical multiculturalism poses a challenge to multicultural positions that I have

suggested remain locked within a modern paradigm of thinking about identity as difference and/or universal. Distinct from liberal and anti-racist discourses, critical multiculturalism is critical of the simple practice of designating the other in terms of such rigid identity politics, instead lending itself to the "Third Space" or the "in-between space" of ethical relations (Bhabha, 1994, 37-38).

For Homi Bhabha (1994), the "Third Space" signifies the possibilities that lie beyond totalizing discourses of meaning and representation (of either difference or sameness); it is a space of enunciation that refuses to categorize 'others' in terms of a unifying past or homogenizing origin of cultural identity. Rather in the "Third Space", the other "exists between two competing identities" as "neither one nor the other, [but as something] different from either alternative" (Grossberg, 1996, 91). On the possibilities created by such a space, Bhabha (1994) suggests:

> It is [the] Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (p. 37).

Operating in this "Third Space", critical multiculturalism opens up the possibility of relating to the other as absolutely other, without reducing her/him to totalizing structures of meaning or containing her/him within fixed categories of identity (Bhabha, 1994). Roger Simon (1992) describes this as "moral practice" or a "pedagogy of possibility" which works "from an ethical imagination constituted within the fullness of a relation to another as an other." He continues by suggesting that, "In this relation, another is not reducible to our ability to know her or him." (pp. 17-18). Through this understanding of critical multiculturalism as the "Third Space", an exciting site is opened up in which the

other can be constantly "translated, rehistoricized and read anew" within multicultural pedagogy (Bhabha, 1994, 37).

My Question: Multiculturalism and Levinasian Ethical Philosophy

Every question possesses a power that does not lie in the answer.

Elie Weisel 1972, 15.

Building on the discourse of critical multiculturalism, my thesis attempts to work through a theoretical framework which reads the other as necessarily complex and non-thematizable. This reading suggests the possibility for ethical relationality in spite of our ability (or inability) to understand difference and in spite of our ability (or inability) to experience otherness. This is because my thesis locates the possibilities for ethical relationality on an entirely different plane; ethics is located in the absolute otherness of the other whose existence cannot be thematized, experienced, imagined or understood. Thus, the view of otherness that this thesis presents does not require a multicultural pedagogy premised on the improvement of knowledge or empathy for racial difference. Alternatively, it considers the ethical possibilities that might lie in what we do not know and might never understand about the secrecy of the other.

A similarly unstable notion of otherness seems to have incited the question that Deborah Britzman, Kelvin Santiago-Valles, Gladys Jimenez-Munoz and Laura Lamash (1994) raise of multicultural pedagogy: What if multicultural pedagogy began "with a recognition of the ambivalence of meaning and the detours of representing identities that are always overburdened with meanings one may not choose but, nonetheless, must confront and transform?" (Britzman et al. 1994, 189). Slightly re-phrasing this question,

my thesis emphasizes the ethical dimension of such an unstable notion of Otherness by asking: What if multiculturalism began with the ethical possibilities that the radical alterity of Otherness brings to bear on the Self rather than a knowledge or empathy for "the fictive, stable categories we imagine, but never perform as identity?" (Walcott, 1998, 170). In short, this thesis considers the possibilities for ethical relationality beyond knowledge and emotionality for the (knowable) other, proposing instead, a framework which theorizes the unknowability of the Other as a condition for ethicality, for learning and for change in multicultural pedagogy.

This means that the vision of multicultural pedagogy that I present in this thesis does not champion a totalizing 'recipe' or 'solution' to racial inequality. Drawing on the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, I add to critical multicultural discourse a perspective of identity and relationality which operates outside of modern paradigms of meaning and being itself. That is, I consider how questions of ethical relationality across racial subjects might be located in one's openness to alterity, rather than in any epistemological teachings that name and contain difference. In this way, my interest is to take up multiculturalism as a suggested in Elie Weisel's (1972) insightful statement quoted at the beginning of this section: as a form of a question, "with a power that does not lie in the answer". Quite different from modern discourses of multiculturalism and anti-racism, I consider how we might think about the possibilities for ethics that are incited by what one does not know (about the other) and what one does not experience or imagine (about the other) in the self/other relation.

Theoretical Framework

> As a particular crystallization of desire, hope is constituted in the need to imagine an alternative human world and to imagine it in a way that enables one to act in the present as if this alternative had already begun to emerge.
>
> Roger Simon, 1992, p. 4.

At a very basic level, the theoretical framework of this thesis is based upon Simon's (1992) articulation of "hope" in constructing a "pedagogy of possibility". In my imagination of "an alternative human world", I employ a reading practice that attempts to be ethical, drawing on the important work of Levinas (1969; 1985; 1998a; 1998b) and Britzman (1998), both of whom attempt to theorize ways of relating to the other as a necessarily ambiguous and complex subjectivity. My intention is not to provide a Levinasian analysis of multicultural pedagogy, but rather, to use particular Levinasian concepts as theoretical "tools" in order to reveal the ethical possibilities of critical multiculturalism and to provide a critical perspective of the common use of empathy in mainstream multicultural initiatives (Gore, 1992, 50).[4]

First, I build on the work of Levinas (1969; 1985; 1998a; 1998b) whose ethical philosophy attempts to interrupt the "said" with the "saying" (Eaglestone, 1997a, 145; 1997b, 176). Although any attempt to define the "saying" defeats its infinite, non-thematizable condition, a loose "(non)definition" seems in order for the purpose of explaining more clearly the theoretical framework through which I will read critical multiculturalism (Eaglestone, 1997a, 141). As a condition of ethics, the "saying" is signified as a mode of communication, a desire to respond ethically to the face of the Other (Levinas, 1969; 1998b). In the moment of the "saying", content or information about the identity of the Other is not communicated, nor does such information motivate

the Self to respond to the Other. Rather, it is precisely the 'non-information', or the desire of the "saying" that commands the ethical response (Eaglestone, 1997a; Levinas, 1969; 1998b).

While the "saying" might be thought of a mode of communication, the "said" can be characterized as the stated communication which designates the Other within a concrete origin or essence of meaning. According to Robert Eaglestone (1997a), "the said...identifies, names or creates fixed entities...[which] 'imprison' 'the lived, a 'state of consciousness', a being into essence" (p. 146). Thus, the "said" seems to be rooted in the content of identities, while the "saying" might be signified in the non-thematizable (ethical) possibilities of the Self/Other relation that operate beyond such essential meanings and designations. It is the "saying's" refusal of definition and desire for the Other that my thesis draws upon to read critical multiculturalism as an ethical discourse and to theorize a pedagogy that tries to work ethically across differences. Through this framework, it is possible to imagine ethical relations that are not rooted in clearly defined communities or essences of identity, but rather in a mode of desire and responsibility for the Other.

Second, I draw on Britzman's (1998) articulation of reading practices as "socially performative", those that can produce a theoretical space in which to "recognize and refuse the confinement of sameness and seduction of affirmation that has as its cost the expulsion of otherness" (p. 85, empahsis added). Informed by such a perspective, the reading practice demonstrated in this thesis does not attempt to "pin down meanings" or "get identities straight", but rather, imagines a sociality that operates outside of "the

dominant conceptual order" (Britzman, 1998, 95) and recognizes a version of difference that constitutes "the only condition of possibility for community" (Britzman, 1998, 85-86). Similarly, it tries to suggest that difference (or what I refer to as Otherness) constitutes the only condition of possibility for ethical (and anti-racist) responses. By refusing a reading practice that is predicated on sameness in my own work, I hope to reveal the ethical possibilities that begin with and necessitate the unknowability and ambiguity of the Other.

Specifically, this thesis attempts to employ Britzman's "reading practices" and Levinas' notion of the "saying" to consider the ways in which the discourse of critical multiculturalism might work as an ethical discourse to operate across difference in educational contexts. In my particular discussion of multiculturalism, both Britzman and Levinas seems to provide a theoretical framework which ruptures the common assumption that ethical encounters originate within rigid social categories of identity and community (see Britzman, 1998; Britzman et al., 1994; Levinas, 1998a and Walcott, 1998). Ultimately, what this theoretical framework allows is a space in which to disrupt established understandings of what it means to be in 'difference' and to relate ethically across 'difference' in multicultural pedagogy (Britzman et al., 1994; Walcott, 1998).

Employing a reading practice which is predicated on difference, rather than sameness means that my understanding of race must similarly be based upon a language of multiplicity rather than rigidity. To do this, I draw on the work of Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) who contend that race is a theoretical category, which is historically, socially and politically constituted. The meaning of race, for Omi and

Winant (1994) is always unsure, unstable and shifting, as it is constantly contested by multiple subjectivities, who "never really belong in boxes [of identity]" (p. 6). Similarly, in his discussion of community, Walcott (1998) makes an important distinction between the rigid categories of identity that "we imagine" and the multiple and complex performativity of identity that always exceeds these imagined constructions (p. 170). Drawing on these unstable notions of race and identity, this thesis will remain true to a concept of race that recognizes its significance within dominant systems of power (Britzman et al., 1994; Ng, 1994; Ng, 1995; Sefa Dei, 1996; Simon, 1992; Walcott, 1998; West, 1993), but will always go back to that "Third space" in which to think about race beyond dominant systems of essential differences and hierarchical categorization (Bhabha, 1996, 66; Britzman et al., 1994; Grossberg, 1996; Walcott, 1998).

The Chapters

The first chapter reveals how conventional ways of understanding identity and difference raise ethical implications for how we think about, represent and relate to the 'racial' 'other'. From this assertion, I consider how 'critical multicultural' theorists such as Britzman (1998), Bhabha (1994) and Grossberg (1996) construct a notion of otherness which provides a theoretical space in which to think about the other beyond modern categories of identity and difference. It is this view of otherness that I propose incites the possibilities for ethical relationality discussed in chapter two.

The second chapter builds on the notions of critical multiculturalism discussed in the first chapter by putting them into conversation with the ethical philosophy of Levinas (1969; 1985; 1991; 1998a; 1998b). In so doing, I reveal how the critical multicultural

notion of otherness as 'hybrid' and 'relational' provides an ethical way of thinking about otherness in multicultural pedagogy. Ultimately, I consider how otherness might signify a possibility for ethical relationality, rather than simply being a source of knowledge or object through which one might improve one's attitudes and understanding of racial difference.

In the third chapter, I read a Levinasian notion of Otherness alongside specific pedagogical practices in multicultural education. First, a common assumption of current multicultural initiatives is reviewed: that empathy and empathy-training activities can work across difference to improve "moral reflection" (Meyers, 1994, 21) and ethical relations between students of different races (Bennett, 1995; Eldridge, 1998; Kanpol, 1995; Meier, 1995). Second, I suggest that the practice of teaching emotions through particular characterizations of identity and difference tends to gloss over questions of ethical relationality and alterity. Ultimately, I propose that such a practice raises serious ethical concerns about what is at stake when we ask students to experience or imagine the emotions of an other in order to promote moral action.

The fourth chapter continues to work from the notion of Otherness as a problem of ethical relationality to imagine alternative ways in which we might work across difference (otherwise than through knowledge and empathy). To do this, I re-visit the major assumptions of identity and difference that this thesis has attempted to challenge: namely, that identities signify fixed and stable differences and that ethical relationality must arise out of a 'bridging' of such differences. The Levinaisan reading that I propose provides an alternative way of thinking about ethical relationality, one which works from

separation and alterity, rather than a human connection among differences (the binary of difference/sameness). In the end, I consider how such a perspective of Otherness informs the way in which multicultural pedagogy might proceed.

Organizing Questions

The questions around which my thesis is organized are informed by a "reading practice" which attempts to interrupt the categories of mainstream multicultural pedagogy to consider the ethical possibilities of communication in the local context of the Self and Other. These questions try to consider the possibilities that might be aroused by a discourse of radical Otherness, rather taking for granted who the 'different' 'other' is and what her/his difference entails. Thus, each chapter of this thesis begins to think about the possibilities for viewing multicultural pedagogy as a problem of ethical relationality: a problem of thinking about and relating to others beyond pre-given categories of homogenous difference and universal humanity.

Moving beyond such categories, the first chapter provides a reading of otherness through a critical multicultural lens to ask: How can we imagine otherness beyond categories of identity and difference? The second chapter considers how such a perspective of otherness might be read as an ethical concern posing the questions: How might Levinasian ethics inform critical multicultural notions of otherness? What are the possibilities and limitations of such a perspective? In the third chapter, I consider how ethics and critical multiculturalism might inform current multicultural practices by addressing the question: What can a Levinasian notion of Otherness teach us about the use of empathy in working across difference in education? Finally, the fourth chapter

considers alternative ways of working across difference, otherwise than through knowledge and empathy. It asks: How might Levinas provide an alternative reading of ethical relationality and how might this inform larger notions of community and multicultural pedagogy? To allow for such questions, this thesis explores the multiple responses that are made possible in the local interactions of the Self and Other and in this way, hopes to open up a discursive space in which to raise questions about relating ethically across difference in educational contexts and society in general.

Chapter One: Critical Multiculturalism and the Construction of Otherness

> The children scrambled up to see the computer screen where a Black female character, named 'Orly' was rhyming off math facts with an obvious Jamaican accent. Some children questioned me, "Why does she sound like that Ms. M?". I explained to them that this little girl sounds different because she is Jamaican: that she was probably born in Jamaica. I went on to tell them that I am Jamaican too, but that I don't have an accent and that my skin is white. Another student (Samuel), who had brought the computer program to class that day, exclaimed that he too was Jamaican. But, he was also Chinese. The other children seemed stunned by this possibility; some even exclaimed, "No, you guys can't be Jamaican, you're not Black!".
>
> Maddy, daycare supervisor of children aged 3 to 5.

This narrative raises many interesting implications associated with naming identity and difference according to social categories. Based on the children's bewildered response to their teacher and fellow classmate, it seems that the notion of living beyond categories of racial identity was difficult for them to grasp. That is, it seems that the students had constructed a very particular notion of what it means to be 'Jamaican', possibly from the image generated on the computer screen viewed that day, and/or through other experiences with the notion of being 'Jamaican'. Either way, the children had developed an understanding of cultural difference based upon a rigid notions of what it means to be Black, White, and Chinese. For example, Maddy's 'Whiteness' and Samuel's 'Chineseness' meant that they could <u>not</u> be Jamaican (signified by 'Blackness'); moreover, Maddy and Samuel could not <u>both</u> be Jamaican because they did not have the similar quality of Black skin.

Revealed in this narrative is the common desire to view racial identities through a pre-given <u>and homogenous</u> category of difference: the racial subject as <u>different from</u> white identities and <u>similar to</u> other identities within the same racial (in this case,

cultural) category. Specifically, it seems that the students became confused upon realizing that Maddy and Samuel could not be explained through a paradigm of identity politics which assumes a fixed and homogenous meaning of cultural identity. Unable to slot their identities neatly into a category of Jamaican cultural identity, the students simply denied the 'Jamaicanness' of Maddy's 'Whiteness' and Samuel's Chinese identity. However, as I submit is the case with all subjectivities, Maddy and Samuel can never be contained within a singular category of identity, be it race, culture, gender, ability or otherwise.

From the above example, I am questioning the notion that we can ever represent or know what it means to be a 'real' Jamaican (or female, or heterosexual etc.) identity. West (1994) poses similar questions about the attempt to access the "real black community" in efforts to combat racism:

> The hidden assumption...is that we have unmediated access to what the "real black community" is and what "positive images" are. [However], these arguments presuppose the very phenomenon to be interrogated and thereby foreclose the very issues that should serve as the subject matter to be investigated.
>
> Any notions of "the real black community" and "positive" images are value laden, socially loaded and ideologically charged. To pursue this discussion is to call into question the possibility of such an uncontested consensus regarding them. (pp. 18-19).

Drawing on West (1994), it seems that what needs to be addressed, and indeed challenged, is the underlying notion of the 'real' which works to construct racial identity as rigid and fixed in actuality. To call into question what it means to be a 'real' racial identity requires that we pay serious attention to theoretical frameworks that dismantle essentialist rhetorics of identity and which at the same time, propose alternative understandings of identity as intersectional and relational.[1]

Changing the Question: From Representations of the 'Real' to the Possibilities of Otherness

It is important to note that in proposing an alternative way of thinking about identity (otherwise that through identity politics), I am not denying the importance of asserting one's own difference as a form of resistance; rather, I am trying to reveal the ways in which difference, as an effect of dominant power, works to produce oppressive and normalized ways of thinking about the other through "regulatory borders of race, gender, class and sexuality" (Britzman et al., 1994, 197).

Based upon such a perspective, we might begin to question the "theoretical underpinnings and political consequences" of relying on modern identity categories in struggles for social justice (Bhabha, 1994; Britzman, 1998; Grossberg, 1994; 1996; Hall, 1996a; Todd, 1997; Walcott, 1998). Lawrence Grossberg (1996) cites David Baily and Stuart Hall to question identity politics within a postmodern context:[2]

> It is perfectly possible that what is politically progressive and opens up new discursive opportunities in the 1970s and 1980s can become a form of closure—and have a repressive value—by the time it is installed as the dominant genre... It will have run out of steam; it will become a style; people will use it not because it opens up anything but because they are being spoken by it, and at that point, you need another shift (pp. 87-88).

Identifying the limitations of modern categories of identity and difference, this statement reveals what this chapter (and this thesis) tries to address: a need to shift our thinking about how to think about and relate across differences in education.

Thus, my concern does not lie with the need to improve student knowledge of difference or even to replace the "bad fictions of stereotypes" with "positive realism" that is often the focus of mainstream multicultural initiatives (Britzman et al., 1994, 189).

Either way, what is taken for granted by such (multicultural) pedagogical practices is the notion of 'racial' identity as 'real'. As discussed above, I am concerned with the unquestioned reliance on rigid notions of 'racial' identity that, when taught and represented 'accurately', are supposed to work across racial difference, but which almost completely ignore the ethical implications of homogenizing identities within a singular category of race (or culture, gender, ability, sexuality etc.) in the process. Alternatively, I am trying to imagine a different way of thinking about difference, a perspective which at once refuses to define otherness through categories of difference and/or universalized notions of humanity. In short, I am attempting to trouble the notion of identity itself and am considering how such a complex notion of identity "might aid in something more" (Walcott, 1998, 161).

To allow for such a discussion, I discuss the ways in which subjectivities always exceed "fictive, stable categories" of identity (Walcott, 1998, 170) through complex processes of identification (Britzman, 1998), cultural hybridity, (Bhabha, 1994), and their positionality before, rather than within modern relations of difference (Grossberg, 1996). The narrative cited at the beginning of this chapter reveals in a concrete way how subjectivities cannot be contained by rigid categories of what it means to be White, Jamaican, Chinese, or Black. Also revealed in this example is the dominant need to do just that: to categorize and explain subjectivities according to pre-fixed notions of identity and difference. My interest it to subvert this desire, to imagine a view of otherness that reveals the contradictory and ambiguous ways in which we perform the politics of identity. In this way, this chapter tries to address one of the organizing questions raised

in the introduction of this thesis: How can we imagine otherness beyond categories of identity and difference?

Otherness as a Relational Ethic

The first aspect of otherness that I discuss is Britzman's (1998) notion of identity as a "relational ethic"; such a perspective complicates the "familiar litany of race, class, gender, sex and so on" by revealing the process of identification which renders subjectivity to be unpredictable and nonthematizable (Britzman et al., 1994, 188; Britzman, 1998).[3] In her discussion of "queer theory", Britzman (1998) describes in detail such a view of identity:

> What seems common to queer theory is an insistence on understanding identity both as a social and historical production and as a relational ethic: identity as neither transcendence, nor equivalence. In queer theory, talk about identity has moved well beyond old formulas which accept experience as telling and transparent and suppose that role models are the transitional object to self-esteem. Something far less comforting is being put into place: namely, identity is examined as a discursive effect of the social, constituted through identifications. (p. 83, italics added).

If identity is an "effect of the social" or "a possibility made in relation to another" (Britzman, 1998, 83), then what might this mean for how we understand identity and how identity and difference are taken up in multicultural pedagogy? Perhaps it means that we cannot assume to know about the 'different' 'other' through a collection of identity categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality. That is, Britzman's view of 'otherness' suggests that access to any 'real' notions of what it means to be a particular identity might be necessarily problematic and even impossible to secure.

For instance, although one may fit into and even identify one's self within the sociological categories of female, black, middle-class, lesbian and able-bodied, it might

not be possible to 'know' her difference (or even to know one's own difference). This might be explained by the complex ways in which we identify with and experience each aspect of our identity in relation to others and in relation to shifting historical, political, ideological and psychical contexts (Britzman, 1998). To cite Britzman (1998) again, "...identity is not the sum of singular and conscious acts but rather a social relation and a psychical event caught up—even as it catches itself—in the unconscious detours of history, memory, and communities" (p. 103). Thus, rather than simply internalizing and becoming a particular kind of racial identity based upon 'authentic' representations, historical 'unity' and/or biological 'truth', Britzman (1998) argues that subjectivities are always in process, always changing depending on the unconscious desires and complex ways in which subjects interpret and identify with others in multiple contexts. From such a perspective, it seems that merely understanding difference as a rigid and uncomplicated 'truth' of identity, either biologically, socially or ideologically constituted, fails to consider the complex (and dialogical) process of identification through which identities are actively involved in remaking and reconstituting themselves beyond explanatory categories of being (Britzman et al., 1994; Yon, 1995).

It is important to note that while Britzman (1998) recognizes the social and historical construction of identity, she seems to focus on the psychical process of identification as a way out of rigid and fixed notions of what it means to be a particular racial identity. Applying this process to education, Britzman (1998) has asked: "What might it mean for pedagogy to think about identity as a problem of making identifications in difference?" (p. 83). Such a question begs that multicultural pedagogy go beyond a

view of identity as a calculable intersection or collection of categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ability. It also challenges a common desire of dominant education: the need for rigid community borders, transparent truths and 'racial' identities as "explanatory phenomena" (Britzman et al., 1994, 199).

Furthermore, it asks us to consider both the historical construction and the identificatory processes that constitute the "structuring present of alterity in the very formulation of the I" (Souter as cited in Hall, 1996a, 16, italics added). This means that we begin to consider the messiness, or "alterity" of identity, as the processes of identification ("identification of, identification with, identification against, over-identification..." [Britzman, 1998, 83]) always live beyond the "familiar litany of race, class, gender, sex and so on" (Britzman et al., 1994, 188). In this way, Britzman offers a way of considering the other as a necessarily complex subjectivity whose identity cannot be simply categorized or explained through the binary difference/sameness, as specifiable difference or as universal.

In a similar vein, Bhabha (1994) discusses the process of identification in his critical examination of stereotyping the (subaltern) other. Specifically, he challenges the "traditional reliance on the stereotype as offering, at any one time, a secure point of identification" (p. 69). He argues that the need to represent the other through neat and tidy categorizations of identity and difference signifies a dominant desire to control and manage otherness.[4] Identifying the complex process of identification as a condition of subjectivity, Bhabha challenges the political objectives of dominant discourses by arguing that "other cultures" are always "in excess" of the stereotypes ('positive' or

'negative') that try to represent and determine their identities (Bhabha, 1994, 66). Operating above and beyond the discourse of stereotyping (and identity itself), subaltern identities construct and re-construct themselves through the "ambivalent, psychical process of identification [and desire]", always evading the dominant fetish to fixate the 'different' 'other' as a whole and containable object (Bhabha, 1994, 70; Britzman, 1998).

Otherness as Hybridity

As discussed above, Bhabha (1994) explores the complex process of identification in the context of post-colonial theory to trouble a commonsense notion of identity as "an essence, explanation, causality or transcendence" (Britzman, 1998, 81). However, he more precisely identifies the operation of power in his conception of subjectivity as "hybrid" (Bhabha, 1994, 4). For Bhabha (1994), "hybridity" is used to describe the ambivalent "third space" that [postcolonial] subjects occupy, as they refuse to embody a pure notion of culture; subjectivity is, in Bhabha's (1994) view, "neither one nor other" (p. 127). Perhaps most importantly, this position of hybridity operates "outside of the signification of difference" and in this way, grants the 'subaltern' subjectivity (for want of a better term) a certain kind of power which allows her/him to elude modern systems of power that seek to contain and hierarchize difference (p.127).

Escaping modern binaries and categories of difference, Bhabha (1994) describes the power of "hybridity":

> Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that the other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition...What is irremediably estranging in the presence of the hybrid...is that the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation:[5]

> cultural differences are not simply there to be seen or appropriated. (p. 114, italics added).

In this view, the notion of subjectivity as "hybrid" provides a discursive space in which to construct and reconstruct identity beyond the imagined purity of culture set up by the "rules of recognition" (Bhabha, 1994, 114) or "dividing practices" that operate within modern discourse (Foucault as cited in Rabinow, 1984, 8). And thus, through multiple identifications, varied experiences and overlapping histories, subjectivities necessarily "displace normalizing, static, or universalizing identities" (Simon, 1995, 103, italics added). Similar to Britzman's notion of identity as a 'relational ethic', such a perspective challenges the binary of difference/sameness inherent in mainstream multicultural pedagogies; the "hybrid" 'Other' cannot be boxed into homogenous categories of difference, nor universalized categories of humanity. In this way, the other embodies power in her/his (uncontainable, non-thematizable) hybridity.

Otherness as Politics of Otherness

The notion, "politics of otherness" is similar to the perspectives of Britzman and Bhabha in that it provides a discursive space for thinking about the other outside of the modern discourses of identity and difference. However, rather than locating identity within complex identifications and overlapping 'third spaces', Grossberg (1996) tends to emphasize the radical otherness of the other "before any specific relations" (p. 94, italics added). Grossberg (1994) distinguishes the notion of 'difference' from 'otherness' by suggesting that, "difference makes the identity of one term depend totally on its relation to, its difference from, another term, while 'otherness' recognizes that the 'other' exists in its own place, independently of any specific relations of difference" (p. 96, italics added).

Emphasized here is the otherness of the other, as s/he exists independent of any categorizations of identity or evaluations of difference in modern systems of power. Like Britzman and Bhabha, his attempt to construct the other as radically other works to escape normalizing processes of categorization and oppressive processes of evaluation. However, while Britzman and Bhabha theorize this possibility through notions of relationality and identification, Grossberg (1996) holds onto, but re-works the notion of identity as positivity, "grant[ing] each term an unspecified, but specifiable positivity" (p. 94). Thus, rather than constructing otherness as a relation, Grossberg suggests instead a positive view of otherness before any processes of identification and relationality, as difference in its own right.[6]

On the Possibilities of Otherness in Multicultural Education

While each of the critical multicultural concepts discussed above offers a distinct challenge to the position of identity politics (identity as a specifiable difference), what is important for the purpose of this chapter is their conception of the notions of identity and difference beyond the binary of difference/sameness. Specifically, this practice seems to indicate that critical theorists like Britzman, Bhabha and Grossberg are striving for a perspective of identity and difference that refuses to flatten complex subjectivities within universal categories of humanity or homogenous categories of racial difference. While not abandoning the notion of identity altogether, what is troubled are the modern notions of identity and difference which ultimately work to homogenize diverse subjectivities and feed dominant power structures with the necessary 'ammunition' required to contain and stratify otherness (Bhabha, 1994).

In this sense, the critical multicultural notions of 'relational ethic', 'hybridity' and 'otherness' are important in discussions of multicultural education because of their implications for a non-essentialist multicultural pedagogy. Not confined to the binary of difference/sameness which assumes the stability of identity, critical multiculturalism offers a theoretical framework through which multicultural education can consider how identities already trouble, rather than adhere to, rigid categories of identity. Ultimately, it is this perspective of critical multiculturalism that opens up possibilities for ethics and political change through its consideration of both the "necessity and 'impossibility' of identities, and the suturing of the psychic and the discursive in their constitution" (Hall, 1996a, 16). Provided here is a way of thinking about identity and difference outside of modern paradigms which demand certainty and definition in their understanding of identity and difference.

In relation to the example cited at the beginning of this chapter, multicultural education might begin to address how 'Jamaican' identities already live beyond dominant representations and how identities are necessarily intersectional through identifications that happen through multiple and complex performances of identity. In this way, the content of the computer program of 'Orly' might not be the only focus for multicultural pedagogy. Rather, teachers might explore the confused discussion that followed the presentation of this Jamaican 'other', considering the processes that never allow identities to fit into categories of race. In so doing, teachers and students might consider the multiple aspects of identity that complicate racial and cultural categories (gender, region, hue etc.) and how racial identities work through the complex processes of identification

to complicate such intersections even further. Such a discussion might lead to an understanding of identity as ever-changing and as a "constant site of trouble", one which cannot be explained simply through the outside marker of race or culture (Butler, 1991, 14).

New Directions: Building on Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism

Through its consideration of psychical processes and local subject positions, the critical multicultural attention to notions of otherness seems to have shifted the focus away from an exclusive analysis of social structures and dominant institutions. What this means for multicultural education is not a denial of unequal systems of power, but a careful consideration of the tension between the ideological, political, social, historical and psychic meanings that burden identities as well as the local processes that can "confront and transform" those identities (Britzman et al., 1994, 189). In this way, critical multiculturalism departs from liberal multiculturalism and anti-racism; instead of focussing on equal recognition (multiculturalism) and/or the oppressive conditions created by dominant structures (anti-racism), critical multiculturalism works from a different position altogether. It turns its attention to the possibilities created by the ambivalence, contradiction and multiplicity that subjectivities perform in relation to others—beyond tolerance and in spite of dominant institutions.

In this sense, the concept of otherness as discussed in critical multiculturalism offers an implicit critique of mainstream multicultural pedagogies and points toward different questions and implications for multicultural education. Based upon such a perspective, West (1994) highlights the limitations of multicultural and anti-racist

practices discussed above and calls for a new direction for multicultural education that I think can be addressed by the view of otherness that critical multiculturalism presents:

> The main aim now is not simply access to representation in order to produce positive images of homogenous communities—though broader access remains a practical and political problem [liberal multiculturalism]. Nor is the primary goal here that of contesting stereotypes—though contestation remains a significant albeit limited venture [anti-racism]. Social structural analyses of empire, exterminism, class, race, gender, nature, age, sexual orientation, nation and region are the springboards—though not the landing grounds—for the most desirable forms of critical practice... (p. 19).

If social structural analyses are the "springboards" for critical practice, then perhaps the uneasy concept of otherness as necessarily 'relational', 'hybrid' and 'absolutely other' takes us to the next step of analysis—to consider the tension of identity in relation to ideological structures and in identificatory relations to others.

Ultimately, the focus on the complex relationality at the level of the self/other relationship alerts us to the notion that what is at stake in multicultural education might not be the increase of knowledge of identity and difference, but rather a consideration of the implications of representing the other within a paradigm of difference/sameness as well as a way of viewing otherness that tries to go beyond this modern discourse. It is in this way that critical multiculturalism springboards from "social structural analyses"; in its consideration of identity and difference, otherness is not a source of knowledge, but a possibility for ethical relationality constructed in relation to the self. To theorize the ethical concerns of the aforementioned concepts of critical multiculturalism, I now turn to Levinas whose ethical philosophy begins with a similar notion of Otherness as a condition for ethical encounters.

Chapter Two: Reading Otherness Through Levinas

> Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics. They need an ethics, but they cannot find any other ethics than an ethics founded on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is, and so on. I am struck by this similarity of problems.
>
> Michel Foucault, 1984, 343.

In its disruption of identity and consideration of radical difference, critical multiculturalism seems to be grappling with the problematic raised by Foucault cited above: 'finding' a principle of ethics that can work with non-essentialist and "nonsynchronous" notions of identity and difference in and out of the classroom (McCarthy, 1988, 265). By "nonsynchronous", I mean the multidimensionality of subjectivities constituted through their complex and shifting location in social, political, historical and psychic relations. In this chapter, I respond to this dilemma by reading the critical multicultural notions, "relational ethic", "hybridity" and "otherness" as being informed by Levinasian ethical philosophy. In the end, I demonstrate the possibilities and limitations of a Levinasian view of Otherness by examining a textual example of Self/Other relationality. In so doing, I attempt to respond to Foucault's statement by opening up a space in which a theory of ethics can operate in multicultural pedagogy, refusing to reduce notions of identity and difference to totalizing schemata of what it means to be an 'other'. And while this thesis will ultimately be suggesting the <u>possibilities</u> of returning to a theory of ethics in addressing questions of multiculturalism, I am not subscribing to a moral pedagogy that falls back into the discourse of rigid identity politics that I am trying to challenge; that is, my reading practice tries to remain true to Levinas by <u>not</u> examining the other as an <u>object</u> of moral contemplation, nor

subscribing to a vision of multicultural pedagogy which works from the rigidity of moral role models or rules of moral conduct (Bauman, 1993; Silin, 1995).

The Ethical Philosophy of Levinas

The philosophy of Levinas works from the foundation of ambivalence and instability assumed in the aforementioned critical multicultural notions of "relational ethic" (Britzman, 1998), "hybridity" (Bhabha, 1994) and "politics of otherness" (Grossberg, 1996). Offering no moral code or single method, Levinas theorizes the ethical response to lie in one's openness to the radical Otherness of the Other, before any conceptions of being or knowledge (Levinas, 1985; see also Bauman, 1993). Demonstrating the "violence" of knowledge, Levinas (1998a) makes the following statement,

> By relating to beings in the openness of being, understanding finds a meaning for them in terms of being. In this sense, understanding does not invoke them, but only names them. And thus, with regard to beings, understanding carries out an act of violence and of negation. A partial negation, which is violence. (p. 9).

Implied in this passage is the notion that knowledge, concepts or understanding of the Other might actually limit the ethical possibilities between Self and Other.[1] Thus, it is argued that the ethical response does not lie within socially constructed categories of being, nor in questions of ontology that attempt to name the other (Levinas, 1969; 1985; 1998a; 1998b). Instead, the ethical response is said to lie in the sociality between the Self and Other, a relationship characterized by Levinas as an openness to the radical Otherness of the Other which is signified by the face (Levinas, 1969; 1985; 1998a; see also Bauman, 1993).

For Levinas, the face is significant because it cannot be limited to a conception of being; "it signifies otherwise" and in this way, it commands the ethical response beyond meaning and being itself (Levinas, 1998a, 10). As discussed above, this means that the Other cannot be accessed through a discourse of knowledge or understanding; rather, the relationality between human beings is characterized by that which is other than knowledge and that which is beyond ontology. This relationality might be characterized as a mode of communication which does not refer to the content of words, nor the subject of discussion, but rather the desire to respond to the face of the Other (Levinas, 1998). It is this moment that Levinas describes that I find useful in my reading of critical multiculturalism as an ethical discourse.

Reading Critical Multiculturalism Through Levinas

That Levinas recognizes the necessary Otherness of the Other before structures of meaning, before processes of differentiation and before identity politics reveals the ethical concern underlying the notion of otherness in critical multiculturalism. Drawing on Levinas, I suggest that multicultural pedagogies need not be so concerned with epistemological problems of coming to know the Other, but rather the ethical concern of responding to the Other as necessarily and radically Other. At this point, I would like to return to a discussion of the specific critical multicultural notions raised in the previous chapter to examine the ways in which my appeal to Levinasian ethical philosophy might help us to think about otherness in critical multiculturalism as an ethical, rather than epistemological concern. I would also like to note that while I have drawn on the philosophy of Levinas to work through the discourse of critical multiculturalism as an

ethical one, I am not suggesting that the critical multicultural theorists that I cite necessary subscribe to his (or my) views.[2]

'Politics of Otherness' and 'Alterity'

As suggested above, Levinas proposes that the Other is absolutely Other in ways that are unknowable to the Self. It is precisely this notion of Otherness that Levinas describes as a condition for ethics. In Levinasian terms, this radical form of Otherness is referred to as "alterity" (Levinas, 1969, 194). To more clearly explain Levinas's (1985) view of alterity, it might be useful to quote him at length:

> The face is signification, and signification without context. I mean that the Other, in the rectitude of his face, is not a character within a context. Ordinarily one is a 'character': a professor at the Sorbonne, a Supreme Court justice, son of so-and-so, everything that is in one's passport, the manner of dressing, of presenting oneself. And all signification in the usual sense of the term is relative to such a context: the meaning of something is in its relation to another thing. Here, to the contrary, the face is meaning all by itself. You are you. In this sense one can say that the face is not 'seen'. It is what cannot become a content, which your thought would embrace; it is uncontainable, it leads you beyond. It is this that the signification of the face makes its escape from knowing...but to speak truly, the appearance in being of these 'ethical peculiarities'—the humanity of man—is a rupture of being." (pp. 86-87, italics added).

What is emphasized by Levinas (1985) is the unknowable Otherness of the Other before any relations of difference, power, meaning or being. In this way, his notion of alterity can be read alongside Grossberg's notion of a "politics of otherness". Like Grossberg, Levinas argues that the Other exists before any relations of difference that attempt to characterize identity. In this way, it seems that both Grossberg and Levinas try to provide a way of viewing otherness that strives to be ethical, refusing to reduce the Other to the pre-determined categories of the difference/sameness binary: identity as difference and/or identity as universal.

Beyond this however, their similarities end. While Grossberg (1994; 1996) recognizes otherness as a primordial state of being 'different', Levinas theorizes Otherness as a condition that leads us beyond being. Through the concept of "religion", Levinas (1998a) distinguishes the notion of Otherness as "alterity" from the notion of otherness as being different:

> 'Religion' remains the relationship to a being as a being. It does not consist in conceiving of him as a being, an act in which the being is already assimilated—even if that assimilation ends in releasing him as a being—in letting him be. Nor does it consist in...overstepping the bounds of the rational in an effort to understand beings. (p. 8).

Drawing on this passage, it seems that Grossberg offers a perspective of the other which allows her/him to be before any relations of difference; yet, he still remains within a discourse of ontology that Levinas seeks to disrupt. In this sense, while Grossberg's notion of otherness that recognizes the possibilities of being an other beyond systems of categorization ("releasing him as a being"), he continues to conceive of what it means to be an Other, thus assimilating the Other to a particular notion of being different.

Recall that for Grossberg, the underlying assumption of otherness is still predicated on a kind of "positivity" in which the other is re-imagined and re-constructed as meaning all by itself, independent of any specific relations. It is true that Levinas (1985) might not disagree with the notion of "absolute individuation" in conceiving the Other as a separate being (p. 81);[3] however, he goes on to offer a theoretical map through which Otherness can be understood beyond Grossberg's attempt to re-locate identity before systems of differentiation and power. That is, Levinas (1985) goes on to suggest another "mark of being" which allows an "escape of being" (p. 59). It is this escape of

being that constitutes one's relationship with the Other and can only occur in one's openness to the alterity of the Other.

In this way, for Levinas, Otherness signifies more than a state of being different; it is a condition of ethical relationality that commands the Self to escape the confines of being altogether in order to respond to the call of the Other. Commenting further on this possibility, Levinas (1985) argues that, "To be human means to live as if one were not a being among beings. As if through human spirituality, the categories of being were inverted into an 'otherwise than being'. Not only into a 'being otherwise', being otherwise is still being" (p. 100). Thus, I read Grossberg's notion of otherness alongside Levinasian philosophy; this latter view of otherness provides the possibility of 'being otherwise', beyond dominant relations of difference; however, what needs to be added is the possibility that Levinas raises: the possibility of being outside of being.

In short, for Levinas, the Other is Other because s/he signifies infinity—and it is in the sociality with the infinite alterity of the Other that the confines of totality and ontology can be eluded, and in which the Self is commanded to respond ethically outside of being (Levinas, 1985, 1998a). To further theorize the notion of Otherness beyond a discourse of ontology, Levinas (1985) turns to the notion of sociality (p. 60), which reveals a way in which the Self can relate to the Other "otherwise than through knowledge" and ultimately, beyond being itself (Levinas, 1985, 61). Building on the notion of 'non-being' in the ethical relation, I use Levinas to build on Britzman's earlier recognition of identity as a "relational ethic".

'Relational Ethic' and 'Sociality'

Levinas (1969; 1985; 1998a; 1998b) specifies that the ethical moment is located in the nonthematizable relationship between the Self and Other. Thus, for Levinas (1985), the ethical relation is not concerned with the "promise of a more complete and adequate truth" that categories of being (different) imply (p. 91); instead, he is concerned with the Self's openness and response to the vulnerable, yet powerful face of the Other (Levinas, 1969; 1985; 1998a). Rather than any knowledge or content of identity, it is the sociality with the alterity of the Other that puts the Self in "communion" with the Other (Levinas, 1985, 60). It is here that I use Levinas to build on the "relational ethic" theorized by Britzman (1998). That is, although the Other is absolutely Other (as in Grossberg's 'politics of otherness'), there is a necessarily sociality between two subjects which constitutes the ethical response (Levinas, 1985; 1998a). For Levinas, the sociality between the Self and Other is said to be the only ethical way of escaping the solitude of being without reducing the Other to the totality of pre-determined categories of identity. In the words of Levinas (1985), "sociality [is] a way of escaping being otherwise than through knowledge." (p. 61).

That is, for Levinas, the notion of sociality with an Other allows one to respond ethically beyond one's being; through Levinas, Britzman's notion of identity as a "relational ethic" can be understood as a necessary condition for the ethical response. As mentioned above, it is in sociality with the radical alterity of the Other that the infinite possibilities for the ethical response are opened up, more than any finitude of knowledge or intelligibility of identity (Levinas, 1985). Thus, with respect to Britzman's proposal that identity must always be an identification with an Other, it might be argued that it is

this "relational ethic" that signifies the ethical mode of communication that Levinas theorizes. In a concise and powerful way, Levinas (1985) suggests that not only identity, but ethics itself lies within the "face-to-face" sociality between Self and Other (p. 77): the "insurmountability of the duality of beings" (p. 67). Thus, I am suggesting that the relationality between Self and Other and the ethical possibilities that this relationship signifies can be read alongside Britzman's "relational ethic" to reveal the ethical significance of viewing identity as a relation, or in Britzman's own words, as "a possibility made in relation to another" (p. 83).

In the words of Levinas (1985), "...relationships with alterity...contrast strongly with those whereby the Same dominates or absorbs or includes the other, and whose model is knowledge" (p. 62). It seems that Britzman's notion of identity as a relational ethic gets at just this: the possibility of relating to others otherwise than through knowledge. And while Britzman (1998) works within a discourse of ontology, Levinas adds the possibility of relating to the unknowability of the Other otherwise than through being. What is important for the purposes of this thesis is Levinas's suggestion that the non-thematizable Other arouses, and in fact, commands the Self to respond ethically outside of being. Explored more carefully in chapter 4, such a perspective might require a multicultural pedagogy that is concerned with an openness to the radical Otherness that the Other signifies, rather than continuing to rely on discourses of knowledge and emotionality for 'different' 'racial' 'others'.

'Hybridity' and 'Infinity'

In addition to his understanding of Otherness as a non-thematizable relation, Levinas (1969; 1985; 1998a) has argued that in the context of sociality, the Other is not equal or similar to the Self. However, quite different from Britzman and Grossberg, his characterization of the inequality of the Self/Other relation locates the Other above the Self; and it is in this position that the ethical response is made possible. Levinas (1998b) describes the "asymmetry of intersubjectivity" (p. 105) in Totality and Infinity (1969):

> The being that presents himself in the face comes from a dimension of height, a dimension of transcendence whereby he can present himself as a stranger without opposing me as obstacle or enemy. More, for my position as I consist in being able to respond to this essential destitution of the Other, finding the resources for myself. The Other who dominates me in his transcendence is thus the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, to whom I am obligated. (p. 215, italics added).

Drawing on this passage, the Other is positioned in advance of the Self, in a place of "height" and "elevation" that commands the Self to be responsible for the Other, more than all others. (Levinas, 1985, 88). In this way, Levinas (1985) specifies that it is not only in the sociality between the Self and Other where ethics lies, but in the asymmetrical positionality of this relation.

Also signified in the above quote is the contradictory nature of the power of ethics, as it is at once dominating as well as weak and vulnerable. In this way, it becomes apparent that for Levinas, the power of ethics "is entirely different from the power of identities" within political, social and economic structures of modern power (Cohen, 1985, 13). Rather than possessing power, what makes the Other (and indeed ethics itself) "forceful" is precisely what opposes power: the vulnerability of the face that signifies the infinite responsibility for the Self to respond (Cohen, 1985, 13). Thus, the power that Levinas describes is located in the contradictory and hybrid position of the Other as both

"height" and "plight" (Cohen, 1985, 15).

This version of power steps outside of modern binaries (i.e. rich/poor, white/black) to suggest that Otherness goes beyond either category to signify "Infinity", which ultimately commands the ethical response. In the words of translator Richard Cohen (1985), "Moral force is not stronger than the powers of being and essence, the totalizing, synthesizing powers, it is better, and this is its ultimate strength." (p. 14, italics in original). Thus, similar to Bhabha's notion of "hybridity", Levinas suggests that the power of the Other is signified in the "Infinity" of the face of the Other. The notion of "Infinity" is important because, like hybridity, it signifies the capacity to think about and respond to Otherness beyond binaries of difference/sameness, black/white, oppressor/oppressed and so on (Levinas, 1985, 91). Ultimately, the "Infinity" of the face signifies the limitless possibilities for the Self to respond. In this way, the Other is better than discourses that attempt to categorize and contain difference, and it is in this non-thematizable condition where ethics lies.

Levinas's (1985) perspective of the "Infinity" of the Other is captured in the following passage: "The face is exposed, menaced, as if inviting us to an act of violence. At the same time, the face is what forbids us to kill" (p. 86). Here, it is apparent that Levinas locates a certain kind of (non)power in the alterity of the Other which ruptures notions of identity, difference and being itself and in this way, signifies the limitless possibilities for the Self to respond (Levinas, 1969; 1985). Perhaps more importantly for the purpose of this thesis, such a perspective locates power, and indeed ethics, in the unintelligibility of Otherness. Rather than relying on rigid categories of race and identity

as sites around which to mobilize political struggles for social justice, the view of identity as "hybrid" and "infinite" seems to address the ways in which the nonthematizable face of the Other commands the Self to exceed its own capacity to respond.[4]

On the Possibilities and Limitations of Levinasian Ethics for Multicultural Pedagogy

The Possibilities: Going beyond categories of identity, difference and being

> To be that intimate with flesh and blood, so close to the body's ache to heal, you learn how little to take for granted, defying death in the bargain. You are an instrument, and your engine is concentration. There's not a lot of room for ego when you're swabbing the open wound of the eye.
>
> Paul Monette, 1988, on caring for his partner living with AIDS, p. 263.

This passage is a poignant account of the ethical relationality that Levinas theorizes: a relationality that begins with the face of the Other which ultimately "ache[s] to heal" the "wounding" that the Other signifies (Simon, 2000, 7). As has been discussed previously, a Levinasian perspective of Otherness refuses to reduce the Other to origins of identity or categories of difference (for example, a black identity, a female identity, a person living with AIDS etc.). Even further however, Levinas considers the possibilities for ethical relationality that happen because of an openness to the alterity of the Other, a responsibility for the Other, or, a kind of consciousness that "is the urgency of a destination leading to the other and not an eternal return to self" (Levinas as cited in Simon, 2000, 10). This perspective provides the theoretical space to pose and address questions such as: How do we think about and respond to Otherness beyond categories of identity and difference? What might this mean for relating ethically across difference in multicultural education? What makes possible and/or limits our capacity for relating across difference?

Addressing these questions, Levinas offers a theoretical space in which to move beyond rigid identity politics as have theorists like Britzman, Bhabha and Grossberg. And while the latter theorists focus on multiplicity of identity, the intersectionality of categories and the complex relationality among subjectivities, Levinas offers still more. That is, Levinas opens up a space in which to theorize ethical relationality through separation, rather than connection, through alterity, rather than being. Such a perspective not only complicates the notion of identity (as does critical multiculturalism), but it goes beyond ontology itself. In this way, Levinas offers a way of thinking about Otherness and the possibilities of the Self/Other relation without needing to thematize the Other, without needing to characterize relationships, and even without needing to find commonalities (no matter how complex they might be) among subjectivities in order to 'produce' ethical encounters.[5]

The Limitations: Escaping ourselves?

While offering a theoretical space in which to imagine the possibilities beyond being, what makes Levinasian philosophy problematic is that it leaves no room for a contemplation of one's ego, including psychical needs, desires and demands as well as social roles and identity positions, in the ethical response. And although I have argued that this "Third Space" of ambiguity might be a place of empowerment and possibility, I wonder about the capacity of subjectivities to respond in such a selfless way. That is, I am worried about how teachers can attend to each and every student without considering implications for the Self or the Other in her/his response. Specifically, I wonder what happens to the ego and the unconscious when relating to the 'different' 'other'. Do

teachers 'forget' racist assumptions? Do they 'ignore' unconscious memories of their own childhood? Do they 'rise above' the shackles of their own imaginings, desires and fears?

In response to such questions, Sharon Todd (1997) calls for a multicultural pedagogy that works with desire to critically examine the ways in which unconscious processes play into our "acceptance, rejection , or indifference to difference." (p. 253). Thus, rather than working to respond beyond the unconscious demands and desires of the ego, this vision of multicultural pedagogy asks teachers and students to consider how their conscious responses to difference are necessarily bound to unconscious desires that are "at once private and eminently connected to public attitudes, representations, and norms" (p. 254). Todd (1997) comments on the need to interrogate desire in multicultural pedagogy:

> We need to understand more fully how desire operates in its specificity to sustain as well as challenge existing forms of disparity in terms of both the symbolic and the embodied nature of the pedagogical encounter....In order to transform desires, we must create the kind of pedagogical space that paradoxically acknowledges their unpredictability, their indeterminacy....I am suggesting that teachers and students participate in an environment where each assumes responsibility for self-questioning, for recognizing the play of desire in their acceptance, rejection, or indifference to difference. (pp. 248, 253).

In this view, the desires of teachers and students are central to any discussion of difference in multicultural pedagogy. It is in recognizing and understanding unconscious processes that a space is provided in which teachers and students can confront their own prejudices and transform desires and responses to 'different' 'others' (see also Todd, 1999).

From this psychoanalytic perspective, we might wonder how and if it is possible to live beyond a discourse of the self as Levinas suggests. Furthermore, we might ask whether living beyond being or confronting multiple facets of the self (or both) is a fruitful path to a multicultural pedagogy of ethics and social justice. Although seemingly opposite, I believe that both a Levinasian perspective and a psychoanalytic perspective of education can inform our practice of multicultural pedagogy. A psychoanalytic perspective alerts us to psychic demands and desires that might limit our capacity to respond outside of being while Levinasian philosophy allows us to consider the paradoxical possibility of "a loosening up or unclamping of one's ego within which one is still obligated to respond" (Simon, 2000, 7, italics added; see also Levinas, 1991).[6] In the final section of this chapter, I explore a specific example of Self/Other relationality to more clearly articulate the possibilities and limitations of Levinasian philosophy in theorizing the ethical response.

The Sunflower

Simon Wiesenthal's (1969/1997) The Sunflower is an autobiographical account of the life of concentration camp prisoner named Simon who endures and witnesses horrifying atrocities at the hands of the Nazi regime.[7] Living within this structure of extreme suffering and oppression, Simon is faced with a request of a dying Nazi soldier that reveals the possibilities for ethics that Levinas theorizes. I will describe this moment and then examine the possibilities and limitations for ethics that such a situation might arouse. Of course, my description of Simon's meeting with the SS soldier cannot capture the complexity of the characters and vivid experiences that Wiesenthal works through in

exquisite detail; however, my interest is to reveal the possibilities and limitations of Levinasian philosophy through a concrete example. In the end, I will consider what implications this case study might have in multicultural pedagogy.

The moment I describe from Wiesenthal's The Sunflower involves Simon and a Nazi soldier named Karl. On his deathbed, Karl requests that his nurse "fetch a Jewish prisoner" so that he can confess a horrific crime in which he tortured and killed hundreds of Jewish men, women and children (p. 28). Throughout this encounter, Simon describes contradictory emotions of anger, pain, disgust and remorse; yet, other feelings seem indescribable, as Simon is compelled to listen to Karl, but is not sure why. For instance, as Karl reaches the harrowing climax of his crime, Simon says, "I really do not know what kept me. But there was something in his voice that prevented me from obeying my instinct to end the interview" (pp. 41-42). Moreover, Wiesenthal describes moments in which Simon "forgets" himself and his location, as he almost reflexively swats a fly away from Karl's face and bends down to retrieve a letter from Karl's mother that has dropped on the floor. Perhaps what is most important for the purpose of this thesis is the way in which Simon responds to Karl's request for forgiveness. To capture this moment, it is necessary to quote Wiesenthal at length:

> "I know what I have told you is terrible. In the long nights while I have been waiting for death, time and time again I have longed to talk about it to a Jew and beg forgiveness from him. Only I didn't know whether there were any Jews left...
>
> I know that what I am asking is almost too much for you, but without your answer I cannot die in peace."
>
> Now there was an uncanny silence in the room. I looked through the window. The front of the buildings opposite was flooded with sunshine. The sun was high in the heavens. There was only a small triangular shadow in the courtyard....

> Two men who had never known each other had been brought together for a few hours by Fate. One asks the other for help. But the other was himself helpless and able to nothing for him.
>
> I stood up and looked in his direction, at his folded hands. Between them there seemed to rest a sunflower.
>
> At last, I made up my mind and without a word I left the room. (pp. 54–55).

The Possibility of 'Being-for-the-Other'

Despite the atrocious conditions of war and genocide that make Simon and Karl antagonists, their encounter seems to demonstrate an "ache to heal" (Monette, 1988, 263), or in Levinasian terms, a possibility of "being-for-the-other" (Levinas, 1985, 52). For example, Simon's inexplicable desire to listen to Karl, his response of swatting the insect away from Karl's face and his silent response to Karl's request for forgiveness seem to reflect the possibilities for ethics even within oppressive structures that are supposed to define how subjectivities understand and relate to each other. That is, although the conditions of their meeting had already attached meanings to their identities (Karl as a murderer and Simon as a victim), the relationality between these two subjectivitites was more complex than such rigid categories of identity often allow.

It is here that Levinasian philosophy can provide insight into the ethical possibilities of the relationship between Simon and Karl beyond identity categories. In the moments described above, it seems that Simon was relating to the "radical alterity" of Karl as an Other, rather than as an SS soldier with a history of annihilating hundreds and thousands of innocent people. In his sociality with the face of the Other, rather than his knowledge of the content of Karl's identity, Simon was confronted with the Levinsian notion of "Infinity" which according to Todd (in press), "represents the limitless

possibilities for the 'Self' to respond" (p. 9). Simon describes this limitless possibility as a moment "without thinking":

> I forgot for a moment where I was and then I heard a buzzing sound. A bluebottle, probably attracted by the smell flew round the head of the dying man, who could not see it nor could he see me wave it away.
>
> "Thanks", he nevertheless whispered. And for the first time I realized that I, a defenseless subhuman, had contrived to lighten the lot of an equally defenseless superhuman, without thinking, simply as a matter of course. (p. 37).

Indicated in this passage is the notion that ethics does not lie in concepts, knowledge or rules of morality, nor in questions of ontology; instead, it seems to lie in the on-going Self/Other relationship which, in its non-thematizable sociality, commands the ethical response. In this way, the ethical response seems to be signified by the face of the Other and in this example, manifests itself in the simple action of swatting an insect away from Karl's face. What is also made clear in this example is the paradoxical power of the vulnerability of the Other; discussed in more detail in chapter 4, it seems that the Self is commanded to respond to the Other (in this case, Karl) precisely because he signifies "defenseless[ness]", suffering or pain.

Also revealed in the relationship between Simon and Karl is the asymmetry of the ethical relationship. Not only was Karl positioned in a place of height or elevation to command the ethical response, Simon was placed in a position which bore the infinite responsibility to respond more than any other. This is indicated when Karl states, "I know that what I am asking is almost too much for you, but without your answer I cannot die in peace". Such a statement signifies the burden of the ethical response, but also its necessity in human relationships. Even further, Simon did not expect a reciprocal gesture from the SS soldier, for he knew that Karl would die within hours. This means that any

last attempt to plead with Nazi officials or to speak publicly about the atrocities of Hitler's regime were not options that Simon might demand in exchange for granting Karl forgiveness. In a certain way, if this were the case, Simon's ethical response to the SS man might be easier to understand; that is, we might more easily make sense of his ethical behaviour if we knew he was getting something in return from this 'guilty' man. Yet, Simon seemed to be driven by something much less rational and much less understandable. This is the moment of ethics, driven by nothing other than the face of the Other which signifies the infinite possibilities for the Self to respond.

Levinas's notion of Infinity also signifies the limitations of relating to Otherness simply through neat and tidy categories of identity, which are often the focus of mainstream multicultural pedagogies. While at first the encounter between Simon and Karl was predicated on Simon's identity as a Jew and Karl's identity as an SS soldier, this is not what incited the ethical response. Rather, relating through roles might have actually worked to limit the ethical relationality within this Self/Other encounter. That is, if Simon had related to Karl through his 'role' as an SS soldier, the Infinity that his face signified would not have been revealed to Simon. To assume that the Other can be reduced to categories of identity and knowledge is already not to have been ethical. Instead, Levinas provides a space in which subjectivities can relate ethically in spite of pre-given, antagonistic, often binary identity positions (SS soldier/Jewish prisoner, white/black, gay/straight).

Finally, Simon's silent response to the request of Karl as well as his openness to the alterity of the face of the Other seems to open up the possibilities for how we think

about the ethical response. That is, Simon's passive silence and openness can be read as ethical responses, even though they do not fall into the commonsense discourse which constructs ethics and ethical behaviour as active and/or operating on a particular project, object or person. Rather, Simon's passive and receptive silence seems to suggest that ethical responses can go beyond the commonplace concepts, rules and codes that are thought to constitute moral conduct. Levinas (1998a) elaborates on the "passivity" of ethics: "The humanity of consciousness is definitely not in its powers, but in its responsibility: in passivity, in reception, in obligation with regard to the other" (p. 112). Based on this perspective, we might add to our concern for larger projects of politics and justice, a remembering the ways in which we are implicated in ethical moments at the local level of the Self/Other relationship. And it is through Levinas that we might consider the paradoxically profound implications of relatively 'small' gestures.

Enter: The Ego

While Levinas forces us to think about Otherness beyond categories of identity and calls for a consideration of the ethical possibilities that are incited in such a context, his notion of 'being otherwise' is not without limitations. According to Levinasian philosophy, the ethical response is incited by the alterity that the Other signifies; however, as mentioned earlier, such a perspective also requires that the Self relate to the Other beyond any concepts and categories of being. This means that a subject must respond above and beyond pre-conceived notions of the Other and beyond her/his own psyche (including unconscious desires, memories, thoughts, ideas etc.) if one is to engage ethically with the Other.

In the context of the case study example of Simon and Karl, I still wonder about the possibilities for relating ethically to others who in some way call up feelings of hurt, anger or fear within one's own ego. For instance, I wonder about the limitations of relating ethically to a soldier who has violated one's psyche and social identity as a Jewish man. What was Simon's responsibility towards this man who has destroyed Jewish people in such an atrocious way? What is at stake in Levinas's provocative statement about infinite responsibility: "I am responsible for the persecutions that I undergo."(Levinas, 1985, 99)? It seems that Levinas's vision of ethics is asking subjectivities to attempt the difficult task of forgetting the Self as well as past injustices committed against the Self in the name of relating ethically in the very local and immediate context of the face-to-face. Thus, for Levinas, the knowledge of history, identity, difference and politics does not necessitate the ethical response; it is the radical alterity of the Other that incites the ethical response, and thus every Self who comes in contact with any Other is capable and responsible for the ethical response.

Even further, that Levinas locates ethics in the immediate and private relationship of the Self and Other, there is little room for discussions of social justice and relationality to multiple others. That is, while Levinas provides a clear picture of how the Self is commanded to respond to the alterity that the solitary Other signifies, he is not as clear about how this local relationality might inform relations across multiple Others. In relation to the example discussed above, I wonder how Levinas might help us understand the possibilities for ethical relationality outside of the hospital room encounter between Simon and Karl. How might Levinas inform larger questions of social responsibility and

justice? Moreover, I wonder how a Levinasian notion of justice might remain true to the original interpersonal relation with the face of the Other, and not take on universalized notions of what it means to be ethical and what it means to be an Other.

Before working through the problematic of social justice and relationality to multiple others, I consider the possibilities that Levinas brings to multicultural pedagogy, specifically in relation to the way in which we typically 'do' multicultural education. Through a Levinasian perspective, I suggest that the methodologies and strategies of multicultural pedagogy do not always save us; they do not guarantee ethical moments between students. And while I do not believe that Levinas offers any guarantees either (nor do I think this should be the goal of multicultural pedagogy), his understanding of Otherness helps us to work through more slippery moments of teaching multiculturally. In the chapter that follows, I examine the underlying assumptions of 'empathy' in multicultural pedagogical initiatives through the lens of Levinasian philosophy, revealing the possibilities and limitations of claiming to improve ethical relations between different 'racial' 'others' through the discourses of knowledge and emotion that Levinas critiques. In this way, I try to respond to the third organizing question posed in the introduction of this thesis: What might a Levinasian notion of Otherness and ethical relationality teach us about how we currently attempt to work across difference in education?

Chapter Three: Re-Reading the Discourse of Empathy

> I try to have my students think about how it would feel to be another person. It sounds harsh, but I think kids can handle it; they need to experience how it feels to be hurt so that they realize the impact of their own actions on others.
>
> Donna, a grade 8 teacher, speaks about how she deals with racial conflict in her classroom.

This quote reveals a common way of addressing issues of social (in)justice in multicultural pedagogy; structured around a discourse of empathy, it is assumed that students need to "step in the shoes of the 'other'" in order to understand the impact of intolerant actions on others. (Bennett, 1995; Eldridge, 1998; Hutchinson & Romano, 1998; Kanpol, 1995; Schniedewind & Davidson, 1998; for a critique see Brtizman, 1998; McCarthy, 1994). Like the discourse of multiculturalism, empathy carries with it multiple meanings; the two forms of empathy discussed in this chapter include 'empathy as experience', defined as the attempt to teach students to <u>experience</u> the emotions of others, and 'empathy as imagination', defined as the attempt to have students <u>imagine</u> what it might be like to be an other. In calling up emotions of anger, fear, guilt, sadness, horror and frustration that might have been and still be felt by 'others', students are said to develop a better understanding of the experiences of 'different' 'racial' identities, an awareness of their deep connection with 'others' and ultimately, a strong commitment to social justice.

However, theorist Cameron McCarthy (1994) has critiqued the use of empathy and empathy-training activities in multicultural pedagogy. He argues that the focus on improving emotions and cultural understanding fails to address dominant systems of power and forms of knowledge which have historically and politically subordinated

'different' 'racial' identities (p. 290). In the words of McCarthy (1994):

> As departments of education, textbook publishers, and intellectual entrepreneurs push more normative themes of cultural understanding and sensitivity training, the actual implementation of a critical emancipatory multiculturalism in the school curriculum and in pedagogical and teacher-education practices in the university has been effectively deferred (Critical multiculturalism is defined here as the radical redefiniton of school knowledge from the heterogeneous perspectives and identities of racially disadvantaged groups—a process that goes beyond the language of "inclusivity" and emphasizes relationality and multivocality as the central intellectual forces in the production of knowledge.) (p. 290, italics added).

Thus, according to McCarthy, empathy is a limited strategy in working across difference because of its inability to work with a "critical emancipatory multiculturalism" to reveal the dominant production of knowledge and to re-imagine knowledge-production itself. While this critique is well-taken, some empathy-training activities have attempted to incorporate the social/political context of being different, rather than simply constructing cultural identity as a 'benign' difference manifested in customs, celebrations and food (see Eldridge, 1998; Robertson, 1997; Yeager et al. 1999). Yet, even in the attempt to situate difference in the political context of dominant power and culture, what is still left unproblematized are the ethical implications of representing the (imagined) 'reality' of otherness and the claim that students must feel the emotions of this 'reality' in order to respond ethically.

The purpose of this chapter is to build on my discussion of otherness as an ethical concern of multicultural pedagogy; however, I now examine the ethical implications of a particular practice in multicultural discourse which tries to bridge the gap between the Self and Other with common feelings, understanding and imaginative reconstruction: namely, empathy. An exploration of this discourse is important, not only because

empathy is a popular strategy in multicultural pedagogy, but because the ethical view of Otherness that I have explored in the previous chapter poses a challenge to the basic assumptions of how empathy works across difference.

To allow for such a discussion, I explore three issues. First, I examine a common use of empathy in multicultural pedagogy; this version of empathy constructs the dynamic between self and other through a discourse of sameness: what I have referred to as, 'empathy as experience'. Second, I consider an alternative perspective of empathy that comes out of psychoanalytic feminism, one which attempts to go beyond the discourse of sameness to respect the internal workings of the other as necessarily complex and non-thematizable: what I have referred to as, 'empathy as imagination'. The third issue that I explore refers again to the philosophy of Levinas (1969; 1985; 1998a; 1998b) to consider how one might relate ethically across difference beyond a discourse of feelings or imagination of the 'different' 'other'. I refer to this as simply 'ethics'. In this way, I bring a Levinasian perspective of Otherness to the common practice of empathy to consider the possibilities and limitations that come along with the practice of representing the 'different' 'racial' 'other' (to be experienced by the Self) and the assumption that if students experience (or imagine) these emotions, they will respond ethically to racial difference.

It is important to note that I am <u>not</u> suggesting that empathy and empathy-training activities do not 'work' to arouse within students feelings of guilt, fear, anger, frustration and so on; however, I am concerned with the ethical implications that go along with asking students <u>to experience or imagine an other</u>. My concern has two dimensions; first,

I wonder about the ethical implications of claiming to represent the life and experiences of otherness and second, I am concerned about what is at stake when multicultural pedagogy intends to manage students' feelings in the name of improved relations between racial subjects.

Empathy as Experience: 'I know how you feel'

Empathy, in this view, can be defined as the experience of relatively universal similarities, "of oppression, pain and feelings, albeit in different forms" across different identities (Kanpol, 1995, 179; see also Bennett, 1995; Eldridge, 1998). Thus, although racial subjects might have different experiences, it is suggested that human subjects are more deeply connected through common human emotions. Barry Kanpol (1995) advocates such a version of empathy in multicultural education when he calls for "a form of cultural politics that includes identifying and empathizing with differences as well as unifying similarities between race, class and gender intersections" (p. 179, italics added). In this view, experiencing common feelings among different identities works to mediate the gap between the self and other to encourage ethical relationality.

Kanpol (1995) refers to this as a "border pedagogy" which, "calls for the binding of the mental life of different others" (p. 181, italics added). He goes on to suggest that,

> A border pedagogy that begins to recount personal and community experiences has the possibility of creating intersubjective consciousness that transcends dividing, cutting, and competing differences into an arena of mutual tolerance, celebration over difference and joy over unity, solidarity, and similarity. (pp. 180-181).

For Kanpol (1995), "empathy becomes this border crossing" (p. 181). Within this context, commonalties among human identities are said to bridge the gap of differences,

which are constructed as necessarily "dividing, cutting and competing". It is further proposed that teachers need to cognitively and affectively empathize with their students, feeling what they feel in order to better understand their differences and necessary connection to other human beings.

Kanpol (1995) cites examples from observations of two different classrooms to illustrate how empathy might work to connect identities through common human emotions. Ultimately, what is emphasized is the goal of recognizing similarities among differences through "role-reversals" (in which students 'step into the shoes' of the 'other' in order to feel for that 'other'), universal rules of moral conduct (which assume a universal standard of human goodness) and activities which encourage students to share common human energies (which focus on connecting identities based upon their common humanity).

Such a perspective is important for the purpose of this thesis because it reflects the dominant desire to consider the other within the modern binary of difference/sameness discussed in the introduction of this thesis. On one hand, 'different' identities are assumed to be fixed in meaning (to be experienced and felt as a 'real' Black identity for example) and, at the same time, 'difference' is said to be 'overcome' through feeling the universal emotions and experiences among diverse identities (Bennett, 1995; Eldridge, 1998; Hutchinson & Romano, 1998; Kanpol, 1995; Schniedewind & Davidson, 1998; for a critique see McCarthy, 1994). In the section that follows, I work through a specific example to reveal the underlying assumptions of 'empathy as experience' and to consider the possibilities and limitations of attempting to work across difference through

this common practice of 'getting in the shoes of' the 'other'.

Empathy as Experience in Practice

'Empathy as experience' has been played out in numerous multicultural initiatives which attempt to work across difference by alerting students to the human capacity to suffer, to experience pain, joy and fear (Bennett, 1995; Davidson & Davidson, 1994; Eldridge, 1998; Meier, 1995; Schniedewind & Davidson, 1998; Yeager et al., 1999). For example, in her important work on community and democratic public education, Deborah Meier (1995) calls for a "new definition of [what it means to be] well-educated" describing it (among other things) as, "...the habit of imagining how others think, feel and see the world—the habit of stepping into the shoes of others—[as] one of our new basics" (p. 170, italics added). This suggests that in order to relate ethically, students must be able to experience the life and feelings of the other.

Similarly, Deborah Eldridge (1998) offers a specific set of lessons in her Multicultural Plans for the Elementary Classroom, called "In their shoes" in which students are said to, "experience the feelings and hardships of others"(pp. 146-149). The rationale for this set of lessons is to encourage students to "internalize the material and view the situations from different perspectives" (p. 146). Thus, the purpose of this empathy-training activity is twofold: students are to feel the emotions of the other as well as to understand different points of view. To do this, scenarios of "African Americans", "Native Americans" and "Women" act as "prompts" from which students can experience otherness (through writing, role-play, debate, poetry, letters, discussion and so on), to increase their awareness of oppression and capacity to respond ethically to

difference (Eldridge, 1998, 146). At this point, I would like to elaborate upon some specific pedagogical examples that Eldridge proposes in order to consider in detail the possibilities and limitations that such activities might hold for both the others and selves involved.

Eldridge (1998) offers several scenarios in order for students to experience 'Africanness'; one example reads,

> Your owner is going to break up your family, sending your brother to one plantation, your mother and father to another, and keeping you where you are. He is a kindly man, but thinks more about his land and money than he does his slaves. You are wondering what to do. (p. 147).

Furthermore, to experience the emotional mental state of "Native Americans", Eldridge offers scenarios such as this:

> You are preparing to take a journey to visit the President of the United States to speak to him about the wrongs you feel are taking place against your people. How will you express yourself? What will you tell him? Remember that you speak little English. (p. 148).

Finally, Eldridge attempts to characterize 'womanness':

> Your father has just told you that you cannot go to a university like your brother did. 'It's not for women,' he states. You want to become a great mathematician, and you know that you require much more education. However, no women that you know have ever learned more than basic reading and writing. What will you do? (p. 149).

Such discourses of empathy tend to make two main assumptions: first, that the other is a stable and discrete entity that can be represented, known and felt as 'real': and second, that by experiencing this otherness, feelings of empathy can bridge differences among identities to improve (racial) attitudes towards difference and ultimately work towards a more just world. As mentioned above, I am not arguing that feelings of empathy

themselves are not possible, that students will not experience feelings of guilt, anger, fear, injustice and so on. What I am trying to do is to consider the possibilities and limitations that are afforded by such practices.

On the Possibilities of Empathy as Experience

Judith Robertson (1997) examines some of these possibilities and limitations in her discussion of the use of traumatic literature (autobiographical accounts, personal stories etc.) in teaching about "worlds of hurt" (p. 457). That is, Robertson explores the value of asking students to feel the emotions and experiences of otherness as a vehicle for teaching about difference and injustice. Specifically, Robertson (1997) suggests that inviting students to engage in the lives and experiences of otherness can cause the ego to, "wake-up, or to remember what [it] would prefer to forget: namely, [its] fragile notions of the self as separate and benign" (p. 461). Thus, rather than perpetuating the myth that individuals are detached and wholly autonomous individuals, empathy asks students to consider the effects of their actions on others and in this way, asks them to consider their implication in "paradigms of destruction...and catastrophic suffering in the world today" (Robertson, 1997, 461). If reading is a "psychic event", as Robertson describes, then it is possible that reading stories of oppression or role-playing scenarios of injustice will allow students to experience suffering as well as the experience of dominating others (Robertson, 1997, 464). The assumption is that by experiencing the traumatic conditions of the other, students will be more likely to rise up against injustice and less likely to repeat such catastrophes in the future.

This assumption is demonstrated in the scenarios provided by Eldridge (1998)

which ask students to experience the fear that a slave might feel, the frustrations that a Native person might feel and the disappointment and anger that a woman might feel in given circumstances (almost always from the past). Through such experiences, students are said to (citing Eldridge again), "experience the feelings and hardships of others", thereby developing strong human connections to others and more sensitive understandings of the lives of others (pp. 146-149).

As mentioned by Robertson, such practices might have important implications for how students view themselves in relation to others (i.e. a student's Whiteness might be understood in its relation to Blackness, rather than being a benign aspect of identity). However, what this discourse does not allow for is a discussion of the contradictory effects and ethical implications of teaching empathy, and indeed emotionality. In the section that follows, I consider three ethical concerns that 'empathy as experience' seems to take for granted: the first deals with the construction of the 'different' 'other', the second deals with managing the emotions of subjects in the classroom and the third considers the notion of connecting differences through 'human' experiences, qualities and indeed emotions.

On the Limitations of Empathy as Experience

Constructing the 'Different' 'Other'

First of all, I am concerned about the ethical implications of lesson plans which rely on the neat and tidy categories of identity and difference. In their attempts to describe scenarios of the other (in order for the self to experience that otherness), these activities also work to construct what it means to be that other (for example, 'African',

'Native' or 'Woman'). Thus, underlying the notion that the self can experience the feelings of the 'different' 'other', it is assumed that the 'difference' of the 'other' represents an "inner truth" that can be experienced and felt as "real" (Britzman, et al., 1994, 197; Britzman, 1998). That is, the practice of 'stepping into the shoes' of the other rests on certain assumptions of who 'different' people are and what their identities entail. At the same time, it is assumed that there exists a universal category of humanity which, when tapped into, can overcome the 'conflict' and 'frustrations' that differences arouse.

Left unproblematized are the notions that history/experience does not 'add up' to define identities (Berman, 1990; Bhabha, 1994; Walcott, 1998), that feelings cannot transcend history (Britzman, 1998) and that differences "among, between, and within individuals" (Todd, 1997, 237) are necessarily complex, contradictory and non-thematizable in the first place (Bhabha, 1994; Britzman, 1998; Grossberg, 1994; 1996; Levinas, 1969; 1985; 1998b; Todd, 1997). In short, empathy only allows us to consider a notion of otherness within a discourse of ontology (Who is the 'racial' 'other'? What does the 'other' feel?) and limits a conversation about the ethical implications of relying on a discourse of ontology in the consideration of ethical relationality. As suggested in the previous chapter, I submit that the Otherness of the Other cannot be contained (ethically) in the representations that discourses of empathy often provide, as it is impossible to characterize the non-thematizable secrecy of Otherness in any discourse of ontology. In effect, the discourse of empathy might prevent us from asking questions about the possibilities for ethics beyond a pedagogy of emotions or knowledge.[1]

Managing Student Emotions

The second part of my concern with the use of empathy as experience in multicultural pedagogy (as it is presented in the above discussion and example), is its underlying purpose to alter student emotionality through experiencing (the often traumatic and oppressive) conditions of otherness. In this way, I am concerned with the ethical implications of teaching students to experience otherness, to teach emotionality. If, as Robertson (1997) suggests, empathy and empathy-training activities have the capacity to arouse in students the emotions of fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, anger, aggression and so on, then I must question what purposes this kind of pedagogy works toward and what kinds of ethical implications it holds for the students it teaches. In short, I am concerned with the attempt to manage children's emotions in order for them to behave in certain ways. And while empathy works in the name of improved ethical relations, the practice of managing students' emotions seems to work paradoxically to support the dominant structures of domination and subordination that multicultural pedagogy seeks to challenge.

In addition to my concern with the attempt to make students feel certain emotions as part of a pedagogy of social justice, I also want to raise the issue that the emotions aroused might not be the ones that empathy intends. I do not dispute the possibility that children experience some form of emotionality through empathy-training activities and I do not dispute that some children might pick up on implicit cues that empathy-training activities communicate and thus behave in a tolerant way towards 'different' 'racial' 'others'; however, I remain skeptical of the possibility of making anyone feel anything. Todd (1997) reminds us that the internal workings of desire, and I would add emotion,

are necessarily unpredictable, ambivalent and contradictory, making any attempt to control them difficult, if not impossible to uphold. From such a perspective, any multicultural pedagogy that is predicated on the task of teaching empathy might not work so easily towards its objectives of improved attitudes and its resultant promise of moral conduct.

While these activities might result in emotions that are intended to promote social change (for example, guilt, remorse, shame, pain and fear), there is also the possibility that such activities might result in emotions that work against the intentions of empathy (Robertson, 1997). That is, empathy-training activities might also produce emotions that work to incite the oppressive conditions they seek to challenge. Commenting on the taken for granted practice of "step[ping] into the shoes of 'the 'other'", Britzman, Santiago-Valles, Jimenez-Munoz and Lamash (1994) state:

> Such an enlightenment narrative assumes, on the one hand, that students will already want to recognize and transform oppressive relations and the bad old stereotypes that sustain them, and, one the other hand, that such knowledge—if indeed it can be made accessible—immediately leads to progress. (p. 197).

From this assertion, it seems plausible that even after participating in empathy-training activities, students might not feel anything at all, and might not be motivated to change oppressive conditions.

Such a perspective raises the following questions: What happens if empathy becomes a venue for legitimizing cruelty? What happens if students remain indifferent to difference? Even though empathy-training activities provide alleged sites in which to feel what an other feels, students may feel a host of emotions that are not on the empathy agenda, including those of aggression, hatred, disgust and even indifference. In this way,

empathy-training activities might act as legitimate spaces in which students can act out power over others, and/or continue to deny their implication in the life of others.

For example, rather than experiencing the emotions of the Native person described in the scenario above and thus feeling empathy for that other, a student might remain indifferent to Native difference, or decide to portray this difference in a stereotyped manner. In this sense, empathy has not worked towards its goal of equalizing the self and other as human subjects, but has perpetuated the dominant structure of the 'superior' imagined self and the 'inferior' imagined other. In addition, a student who plays the role of a judge or murderer might derive pleasure from holding power over an other, rather than being moved by the dangers of domination and abused power. For instance, in a scenario of Eldridge's lesson plans (not described above),[2] students are asked to play the role of a slave master's child who must decide whether to hide a slave. As mentioned above, such scenarios are not outside of the possibility for oppressive conditions to be perpetuated, rather than eradicated.

Bridging the Gap of Difference with 'Humanity'

Ultimately, I wonder whether empathy always results in the positive and productive emotions it promises and more fundamentally, I wonder whether the assumptions of this discourse might actually work to limit ethical responses. In mediating the gap between the self and other with common emotionality, might empathy limit the non-thematizable conditions of ethical relationality that Levinas describes? Addressing this question, Todd (in press) draws on Levinas to argue, "...whatever psychical bridges we do make with the Other, such as identification or empathy...merely

serve to underscore the chasm that in fact separates Self and Other...where Levinas locates the conditions for ethicality" (pp. 8-9, italics added). From this perspective, it seems that the project of connecting different others through an arousal of empathy—achieved through the experience of universal 'human' emotions—might actually undermine the conditions for ethicality that Levinas theorizes. That is, in claiming to experience otherness, we necessarily flatten the radical alterity of the Other and collapse the separation of the Self/Other divide which, according to Levinas, are the very conditions of ethical relationality.

Moreover, Ann Chinnery (2000) suggests that a pedagogy which constructs ethical relations around 'human' experiences and commonalities might itself set up conditions for morally contemptible actions. Specifically, she states:

> ...on the basis of perceived similarity, moral obligation is only necessarily extended to those persons and situations into which one is able imaginatively to project oneself; and one need only to deny the other possession of the requisite set of 'human' qualities in order to reasonably deny his or her status as a human being worthy of moral concern. My point here is that a conception of ethics and moral obligation that appeals primarily to a notion of perceived similarity – no matter how expansive – can have both morally laudable and contemptible results, and is thus finally inadequate (p. 5).

Thus, while Todd argues that collapsing the necessary gap between Self and Other limits the conditions of alterity that result in ethical relationality, Chinnery reveals how this version of empathy might actually justify unethical behaviour, when 'different' others are constructed to be 'unhuman' and therefore unworthy of moral concern.

If, as I have suggested, empathy (as experience) tends to reduce the other to pre-fixed categories of difference as well as universal notions of humanity, what other framework might multicultural pedagogy use to think about otherness and the

possibilities for the ethical response? how can we theorize difference as a condition of ethics, rather than an obstacle to it? Addressing these questions, I turn to another dynamic of empathy which I believe begins to address the limitations of the discourse just described. While in the end, I still try to move beyond the assumptions that even this perspective provides, I find it useful in that it problematizes the notion of otherness and provides an alternative framework through which to think about the conditions for the ethical response beyond sameness and universality.

Empathy as Imagination: 'I can imagine what you might be feeling'

Rather than claiming that the self can access the other through the experience of universal human emotions, Diana T. Meyers (1994) makes an important distinction between claiming to experience otherness and understanding otherness. That is, her account of empathy does not assume that one can know or share the feelings of the other; rather, Meyers (1994) suggests that "empathizers do not [I would add, cannot] share the subjective states of those with whom they empathize" (p. 33, italics added). This recognition requires an entirely different 'definition' of empathy, one which does not assume an understanding of difference as a containable entity or humanity as a universal category. To allow for such a perspective, Meyers (1994) makes another distinction between what she calls, "sympathy" and "empathy"; the former involves "sharing another person's feelings", while the latter involves "imaginatively reconstructing another person's feelings" which does not mean that one can claim to know exactly what another feels (p. 33). What is possible, according to Meyers (1994), is the ability to imagine what it might be like to be an other and to respond ethically according to this imaginative

reconstruction.

Making even a further distinction, Meyers (1994) argues that 'empathy' can be categorized as either "incident-specific" or "broad" (pp. 34-38). The former involves "learning as much as one can about [the other] and the situation s/he faces, and then projecting as best one can one's own profile of interests, needs, and the like into that constellation of circumstances" (p. 35) while the latter involves, "grasp[ing] the circumstances of that person's life along with the beliefs, desires, abilities, vulnerabilities, limitations, and traits of character that give rise to these experiences" (pp. 35-36). For Meyers, "incident-specific empathy" is limited in that it reduces the other to the parameters of the self; the self understands the other only through the lens of her/his own personal history and experiences.

Thus, through incident-specific empathy, it might only be possible to empathize with those who one shares 'similar' experiences.[3] And as Chinnery has pointed out, relying on the assumption of sameness in (multicultural) pedagogy can paradoxically lead to unethical relations through the construction of the 'different' 'other' as 'unhuman'. On the other hand, "broad empathy" is said to encourage ethical relations between "people who are institutionally positioned as antagonists" by allowing the self to imagine what it might be like to be in the context of the other, rather than sharing her/his feelings (sympathy) or referring to one's own feelings in similar circumstances (incident-specific empathy) (Meyers, 1994, 38,126).

In this sense, "broad empathy" tries to go beyond the rigid identity politics of Kanpol's (1995) discussion of empathy and the many lesson plans and units organized

around this theme (see Bennett, 1995; Eldridge, 1998; Hutchinson & Romano, 1998; Kanpol, 1995; Schniedewind & Davidson, 1998). That is, Meyers (1994) works from the assumption that otherness is non-thematizable in the context of the ethical response. Her approach is more tentative, as she tries to imagine the possibilities for empathy that result from the self's admittedly imperfect way of trying to understand how an other might feel, given the other's circumstances, abilities, vulnerabilities, limitations and possibilities. In order to consider the possibilities and limitations of such a perspective, I now turn to another example which grapples with the notion of empathy as imaginative reconstruction.

Empathy as Imagination in Practice

Jaylynne Hutchinson and Rosalie Romano (1998) offer a particularly interesting teaching method in their discussion and practice of teaching for social justice. This method, called "storyline", seems to work from the notion of empathy as imaginative reconstruction described by Meyers in order to help students understand their implication in the lives of others (p. 255). In general, this strategy asks students to construct characters of subjects who are considered other, "not one of them" (Hutchinson & Romano, 1998, 256). Each character plays a part in the story that the class creates through questioning, character interactions and conflicts. The main purpose of this method is to allow students to re-construct the life and experiences of an other so that they can imagine what it might be like to be that other given that other's circumstances, abilities, limitations, personal history and so on. To illustrate this method more clearly, it might be useful to quote the Hutchinson and Romano (1998) at length:

> ...storyline draws on the students' field of experience and knowledge by engaging them in creative problem-solving about their characters. 'Chase' [a student] has to explain about 'Brian' [his homeless character] to his peers and then their characters must now interact with his. In so doing, Brian becomes a part of the story, as they become part of Brian's. A community forms by such small stories shared with each other. Over time, these homeless characters form associations with one another and weave each other into their own stories as they meet the challenges of living on the street. This is not simply a grouping of students, but once characters in the storyline have been created and introduced, they act in character and others must respond to the actions each take. One does not act in isolation. This is a powerful lesson related to social justice that at best is only abstractly addressed in traditional education. (p. 263).

Based upon this description, storyline seems to work from the assumption that if students can imagine and play out the complex life experiences of an other, they will be able to internalize and empathize with her/his troubles, vulnerabilities and limitations as well as her/his successes and abilities. Thus, the imaginative component of this pedagogy is central to the children's understanding and development of empathy towards others.

Different from the empathy that Kanpol describes, students do not try to experience exactly what particular homeless others feel by tapping into 'human' emotions. Instead, the students imagine how they might feel based upon an elaborate imaginative exercise which takes into account the complex and layered aspects of the other's life. Working from this distinction, I pose the following questions: How might the notion of empathy as imagination add to the former discussion of empathy as experience? What are the possibilities are limitations of imagining otherness?

On the Possibilities of Empathy as Imagination

Meyers's (1994) discussion of "broad empathy" offers an important perspective, specifically in relation to the role it might play as "handmaiden" to a more traditional view of ethics which is based upon impartial reason (p. 38). Dominating the discourse of

education, impartial reason focuses on the ability of the self to conform to pre-established laws of morality which do not necessarily consider the local context in which the ethical response occurs (Noddings, 1994). Challenging this point of view, Meyers (1994) supplements the traditional question ("Would I want to be treated like that?") with the more tentative question of empathy ("What is it like to be you?" or, "Would I want to be treated like that if I were you?") (p. 39).

By altering this ethical question, Meyers (1994) asks us to consider the diverse experiences of otherness, rather than adhering to universal rules and codes which tend to operate from rigid categories of what it means to be moral or human. Moreover, in her attempt to refuse a discourse of 'sameness' and 'universality', Meyers (1994) refers to the "subject of moral reflection...as a nonunitary subject" who is endowed with the capacity to tolerate ambiguity that otherness brings to bear on the self (p. 168). Thus, through Meyers's construction of empathy, the possibilities of responding ethically through an imagination of the contradictory and complex aspects of otherness, rather than assumptions of 'humanity', become apparent.[4]

This perspective seems to differ from Kanpol's (1995) description of empathy as that which melds difference through a discourse of universalism and unity. In his assumption that one can empathize with difference through a recognition of similarities between the self and other, Kanpol falls into Meyers' description of "sympathy" (claiming to feel what another [human] feels) or perhaps more appropriately, "incident-specific empathy" (projecting one's own feelings onto another). Working from a position of "broad empathy", Meyers (1994) challenges the claim that all identities have universal

feelings because of its tendency to reduce the other to an overarching category of humanity. Furthermore, her position offers a way of understanding how ethicality might operate even when subjects do not themselves experience the same ('universal') emotions of other. Thus, Meyers provides a framework through which to consider the possibilities for ethical relationality beyond discourses commonality, universalism and humanity.

The example described above serves to illustrate how this might be played out in the classroom. That is, the students do not deal with the issue of homelessness through universal rules of moral conduct ('It is not nice to call other people names'), nor do they attempt to experience homelessness ('I know what it is like to be you'); rather, students imaginatively reconstruct the experiences of homeless people and try to imagine what it might be like to be that person through their own imagination of that otherness. Thus, similar to the possibilities of 'empathy as experience', 'empathy as imagination' might teach children of their on-going implication in the lives of others, as the characters in their story mutually affect each other. The possibilities of 'empathy as imagination' not only alerts students to the relationality of the self and other, but also tries to problematize the notion of otherness itself. Perhaps most importantly, students do not attempt to experience the 'human' qualities of a 'different' 'identity', but try to imaginatively re-construct otherness according to their own experiences, thoughts and beliefs (as well as those of the imagined other).

On the Limitations of Empathy as Imagination

While the notion of 'empathy as imagination' attempts to refuse a discourse of universality, the practice of imagining the other still seems to operate from the

assumption that otherness can be known by the self and that such understanding will promote ethical responses (Britzman et al., 1994; Meyers, 1994; Noddings, 1994). The fundamental conception of this form of empathy is that subjects can (and do) imaginatively reconstruct others and that such imagination will result in ethical responses. Yet, this version of empathy cannot ask or respond to the question: What if subjects cannot (or do not) imagine otherness? And although I am aware of the capacity of the imagination to take us to places not directly experienced by ourselves, I am also careful to consider its limitations. Here I am referring to the possibility that subjects might not be able to fathom (through imagination) certain circumstances of others.

For example, if not already a part of their direct experience, how can students imagine the atrocities of the holocaust, homelessness, racism, slavery and genocide? Aside from the ethical implications of 'making students feel' raised in the previous section, I wonder: What are we expecting of the imagination when we ask students to conceive of such inconceivable events? What if students cannot imagine these horrifying experiences?[5] Is this simply an unwillingness, or an inability, to engage (through imagination)? And if students cannot imagine otherness, how can we still conceive of the possibilities for ethics? I propose that a paradigm of 'empathy as imagination', like 'empathy as experience', cannot conceive of ethics outside of assumptions of 'knowing' and 'feeling' for (a specifiable) difference. Explored in more detail in the final section, I propose that Levinas offers a "particularly promising" framework of relationality, which considers the possibility for ethicality even before, and beyond the capacity to understand, imagine or experience an other (Chinnery, 2000, 1).

Moreover, although Meyers (1994) clearly states that "empathy is defeated if one simply projects one's own characteristic emotional responses onto the other" (p. 33), her notion of empathy tends to reduce the other to the parameters of the self.[6] By the parameters of the self, I am referring to the tendency to structure one's response to others around one's own imagination, needs and desires as well as one's own thoughts and experiences of what the difference of the imagined other might entail.[7] If the notion of empathy as imagination relies on the self-interested imaginings constructed and produced by the ego, I am led to question how imagination, even 'positive' imaginings which supposedly produce empathy, might actually work to serve the desires of the self: to see itself as 'positive', autonomous and separate from structures of destruction and suffering.

Robertson (1997) has referred to this unconscious mechanism as the "compulsion...to imagine the self as rescuer" (p. 462). Casting this concern in the context of the example described above, I raise the following issue: even if a child's behaviour matches the intended outcomes of empathy (imagining the life of a homeless other in order to act to change the conditions that cause those experiences), I wonder if this behaviour necessarily reveals an understanding of one's implication in structures of oppression, or a desire to "rescue the self from the difficult acknowledgement of one's own narcissism, aggression, and capacity to hate" (Robertson, 1997, 462). If, as Robertson suggests, the self is primarily concerned with protecting itself from the "unbearable truths" of its own prejudices, I am skeptical of how empathy can alert students to their implication in structures of oppression. This "lure of redemption", as Robertson (1997) points out, might work paradoxically to "exempt" students from any

implication in ideologies of oppression and racism, and thus fails to confront students with the ways in which we are all bound up in such atrocities of the past and present (be it conscious or unconscious) (p. 462).

Furthermore, in Meyer's (1994) description of empathy as the imaginative reconstruction of "another's subjective state", it is unclear to me when "one's own emotional life" works to promote ethical relations and when it works to dominate the other (p. 33). Elaborating further on this concern, authors like Britzman (1998) have questioned the possibility of accessing otherness through imagination. Britzman (1998) has referred to this assumption as "naïve empathy"(p. 83) and goes on to describe this naivete with the help of Sigmund Freud:

> As Freud remarks: 'We shall always tend to consider [Britzman adds: we can imagine] people's distress objectively—that is, to place ourselves, with our own wants and sensibilities, in their conditions, and then to examine what occasions we should find in them for experiencing happiness or unhappiness'. Yet even in this very imagined moment, <u>one can only imagine the self</u>. If one cannot 'feel [one's] way into people' without, in actuality, representing the self as the arbitrator and judge of the other's actions and possibilities, perhaps it is time to question what one wants from empathy and whether the educational insistence that feelings are the royal road to attitudinal change is how identificatory structures actually work (p. 84, italics added).

Argued here is what Robertson (1997) has argued previously: the notion that what the self imagines about the other "is, in essence, what lives within the 'self'" (p. 462). In this way, imagining otherness must always reduce the other to what the self imagines that other to be based upon her/his <u>own</u> experiences, desires and emotions.

Of course, such a perspective offers a serious challenge to the notion of 'empathy as <u>experience</u>', as it raises the question of whether we can actually 'objectively' experience otherness without in some implicating the self. Yet, I read Britzman's final

comment as a challenge to 'empathy as imagination' as well. While I recognize that imagining otherness might work to encourage students to understand their effects on others and the conditions of others' lives, it continues to focus on the self as the central figure for inciting the ethical response. That is, both 'empathy as experience' and 'empathy as imagination' assume that ethics lies within the transformation of and/or improvement of the emotions and knowledge of the self. As we have seen, what is left unproblematized are the ethical implications of categorizing otherness (to be experienced or imagined), but what is also taken for granted is the location of ethics within the improved attitude of the self. My reading of Levinas begs another question: What if we begin with the Other?

Ethics: 'You command me'

In following a discourse structured around improving the self through experiencing or imagining otherness, it seems that the self becomes positioned above the other, or at least on the same plane, in order to make the ethical response possible. In this view, the non-thematizable Otherness of the Other seems to be a secondary discourse in the projects of empathy described above. Specifically, the exercises of "In their shoes" and the pedagogical method of "storyline" works from assumptions that the perspectives, emotions and understandings of the self needs to be worked on and improved through education in order for students to respond ethically to difference. Rather than the alterity of the Other disrupting the complacency of being for the Self, mainstream multicultural initiatives tend to focus their attention on improving the emotionality of students (selves) in order to produce ethical responses toward others. However, drawing on Levinas,

multicultural questions that focus on the Self (I know how you feel; how would I like to be treated if I were you?) might be re-phrased to recognize the alterity of the Other as the necessary condition of ethics. Such a question might look something like this: How does the Other command the Self to respond?

By starting with this Levinasian question, we can imagine the possibility of responding ethically to the Other because s/he afflicts and disrupts the complacency of being for the Self; this view is quite different from a framework in which the Self relates to the Other by containing, assimilating and reconstructing the Other to suit (or fit within) its own paradigm of experience and emotion. Todd (in press) offers a similar comparison when she juxtaposes the "Socratic method" of teaching and a Levinasian perspective of relationality (p. 10). Focussing exclusively on the I, the former (Socratic method) subscribes to a view of teaching which "brings out of the I that which it already contains" (p. 10, italics added). What this method implies is a relatively gentle and pacifist view of learning and relationality. Offering a challenge to this perspective, Todd draws on Levinas to propose a more disruptive and uncomfortable understanding of relationality. That is, while the Socratic method, "erases the significance of the Other and claims that learning is a recovery contained within the I", Levinas suggests quite the opposite: that learning is "a disruption of the I provoked by an Other in the moment of sociality" (Todd, in press, p. 10, italics added).

Following this comparison, I propose that when multicultural initiatives locate ethical (and anti-racist) responses in an 'improvement of the I' and in the self's 'experience' or 'imagination' of the other, what is forgotten are the ways in which the

alterity of Otherness commands the ethical response in spite of the 'improved' knowledge or emotions of the self. If as Levinas suggests, the non-thematizability of the Other disrupts the complacency of being for the Self, is the Self or a discourse of self-improvement the (only) place to begin our examination of ethics in multicultural education? How can we re-imagine ethics (and multicultural pedagogy) so that begins with the Other?

A multicultural pedagogy that begins with the Other raises more questions (than answers) about how we 'do' multicultural education. If ethical relationality is a disruption, what might this mean for how we think about and represent others in multicultural pedagogy? How might we think about difference differently? How can the notion of alterity inform our practice of multicultural pedagogy and our understanding of student/teacher relationships? Such questions do not beg for more activities around empathy, nor social analysis; rather, they demand that teachers constantly re-work their practices by offering a framework from which to consider the ethical implications of one's multicultural practice, always informed by the face of the Other.

In this way, I am not necessarily suggesting that multicultural pedagogy needs to teach students anything 'new' about the content of 'different' identities, but instead work to uncover what is already there within the Self/Other relationship. Todd (in press) helps to flesh out this idea in her distinction between "applied" and "implied" ethics (p. 8). The former involves the application of "this or that principle to a scene where the conditions or contingencies of ethicality may be found" while the latter "necessitates reading teaching-learning encounters for the way they promote conditions for being...which

involves relationships between the Self and Other." (p. 8). Drawing on Todd, I propose that multicultural pedagogy might begin to consider the possibilities aroused in the Self/Other relation, rather than focussing exclusively on implementing methods which produce 'moral' subjects (or Selves).

Beginning with the alterity of the Other, the possibilities for ethical moments in the classroom might be allowed to operate infinitely, commanding action, and indeed change. While this chapter has introduced some questions that the Levinasian notion of alterity brings to multicultural pedagogy, the chapter that follows considers in more detail how Levinasian ethics might inform our understanding of how we relate across differences, otherwise than through knowledge and empathy. That is, I address the final organizing question of this thesis: How might Levinas provide an alternative reading of ethical relationality and how might this inform larger notions of community and multicultural pedagogy?

Chapter Four: Ethical Relationality Redefined as Alterity

'Us' and 'Them': One teacher's understanding of how to work across difference

Jo-anne, who identifies herself as an "anti-racist educator", recounts her understanding of a situation between two groups of students at the suburban school where she teaches. Jo-anne speaks:

> A while back, I remember that some students from 'inner city' areas had to be bused in to attend our school. At first, the kids at our school refused to hang out with these students. I was beside myself. Eventually and gradually however, the 'suburban' students began to talk and hang out with those from the 'inner city' group. It was almost as if these kids began to empathize with their alienation and finally started include them in their cliques. Of course, before this, they used to do little things, like one time I saw a 'suburban' kid reach over to pat another kid's back in gym class after he missed scoring a major point in soccer. However, I don't think that they really started to get along until after they had they thought about the effects of their exclusive actions. It was like they were shielded from these students' feelings until they imagined how it might feel to be alienated for themselves.

What immediately struck me about this interpretation is the assumption that the ethical response is defined as the 'inclusion' of 'inner city' 'others' and that such a response results from feelings of empathy. Discussed in more detail in chapter 3, the common assumptions of rigid identity categories and the possibility of human solidarity create a dynamic between 'suburban' 'selves' and 'inner city' 'others' that is characterized by a binary of difference/sameness. As distinct (and homogenous) communities, the 'suburban' group responded to the 'inner city' group because of a universal connection; they could imagine or feel what others feel—an assimilation of the other to their own thought processes and emotionality. And while this interpretation allows us to ask questions about the possibilities of understanding and feeling for difference, it limits questions of how we might relate otherwise than through a dynamic

that is focussed on the content of knowledge/emotionality and the universal connection among human beings that such a dynamic supposedly creates.

It is the purpose of this chapter to explore the assumptions signified in above example, specifically in relation to its notion of identity and the kind of community that such a construction assumes. To do this, I briefly re-visit the dynamic of empathy that is thought to connect the 'bipolar' constructions of self and other (see chapter 3). From here, I draw again on the discourse of critical multiculturalism and Levinasian ethics to propose an alternative reading of the possibilities for ethical relationality whereby the Self responds because of the vulnerability and suffering that the Other signifies. In the end, I propose how this alternative understanding might open up possibilities for thinking about notions of identity and community in multicultural pedagogy.

Identity and Community: Reflections of 'Reality'?

Signified in the above example is the assumption that identity is a neatly packaged reflection of 'reality'; as we saw in chapter 1, it is assumed that identity unproblematically signifies a collection of experiences about what it means to be a particular subject (be it 'inner city', 'suburban', 'black', 'white', and so on). For instance, the language of the above narrative focuses on the differences between 'suburban' and 'inner city' students and in so doing, seems to take for granted what it means to be a 'suburban' or 'inner city' subject. In short, this narrative seems to signify the way in which multicultural discourse constructs difference: as necessarily autonomous within an identity, homogenous within a group and as necessarily distinct from other social identities and groups.

In relying on a discourse of identity politics, a very particular notion of community and society is constructed. Like the identity constructions themselves, communities, in this view, are thought to reflect the tightly-sealed identity categories that make them up; hence, we get the rigidly constructed notions of an 'inner city' community, an 'Italian' community, an 'East Asian' community and so on. Extended to the larger context of society, such tightly sealed community borders construct the notion of Canada as a 'cultural mosaic'. This conjures up the image of a nation with compartmentalized sections of different communities, each representing common racial identities who are necessarily different from other racial identities and communities. This perspective requires a multicultural pedagogy which can 'know' about difference and which can impart this knowledge (cognitive and affective) on students to 'improve' their responses to difference.

The basic assumption of identity as reflective of a singular 'reality' is what drives a number of multicultural (and anti-racist) initiatives; agendas often call for an exploration of racial histories, experiences, epistemologies, as well as the inclusion of 'positive' racial images. As we have seen, the agendas of such initiatives assume the dynamic of knowledge and emotionality between self and other; they can range from teaching 'factual' or 'accurate' information about the 'other' to experiencing (or imagining) otherness in order to connect different racial communities (see chapter 3). However, as discussed previously, what tends to be taken for granted is the notion of the 'real'. That is, such initiatives tend to assume that there exist uncomplicated histories, experiences, knowledges and representations that make up 'pure' and 'true' racial

identities to be taught and experienced through multicultural education.

Working across difference: Knowing and Feeling for the 'Real'

In assuming that identities are stable and communities homogenous, what is also revealed are common assumptions about how to work across the differences that these identities supposedly represent. Specifically, the teacher's narrative detailed at the beginning of this chapter suggests that the school community is made-up of presumed categories of identities who exist in bipolar camps of suburbia or the inner city. Not only is it assumed that the students fit into the neat and tidy categories of what it means to be and live in suburbia and the inner city, but it is also assumed that the only way in which students might respond ethically is through the process of empathizing with the taken for granted assumptions of what it means to be the 'other'.

Thus, revealed in this example is a common assumption of how the gap between self and other is mediated: through a bond of emotion or knowledge for the other. Yet, as detailed in the previous chapter, the assumption that identities can be connected through common emotions, knowledge or experiences works from two mistaken assumptions: 1) that identities represent a certain 'truth' that can be 'known' and 'felt' as 'real' and 2) that complex and contradictory subjectivities operate on the same plane—characterized through common emotions and knowledge of identity and difference. Based upon these assumptions, the goal of pedagogy has been to increase student knowledge of particular differences and to improve emotionality by linking those differences to more universal experiences, feelings, thoughts and so on.

Living within modern binaries of us/them, what is continually left unproblematized is the notion that identities always live beyond such categories. To assume that a dynamic of 'knowledge' and 'emotion' can connect different (and stable) identities glosses over the complexity of identity and difference in the first place. Specifically, it suggests that existence can be thematized, to be shared through knowledge and emotion, and that this form of relationality is what constitutes the ethical response. Considered less often are the "incommunicable" aspects of being and the possibility of relating ethically across non-thematizable differences (Levinas, 1985, 59). This means that rather than pretending to know and access otherness, we problematize what it means to be an other and what it means to be with others in a way that does not take for granted who others are and what that otherness entails.

As we have seen in the second chapter of this thesis, another way of understanding identity might be to consider the ways in which identities always spill over the demarcations of social categories, intersecting each other in ways that do not lend themselves to such regulatory borders of being. I now (re)turn to a consideration of identity which tries to go beyond the rigid identity politics that we so often assume and that multicultural pedagogies so often promote. And although the perspectives of this chapter are similar to those proposed by the critical multicultural theorists of chapter 2, I now draw on theorists whose consideration of identity speaks more directly to questions of community and multicultural pedagogy.[1] Perhaps most importantly, I build on a reading of identity as 'relational' to provide an alternative perspective of how multicultural pedagogy might work across (unstable and non-thematizable) differences.

Identity and Community: Identificatory 'Relations'?

Offering a critique of the rigid identity politics of social categories (i.e. 'Black', 'White', 'Chinese' and so on), Walcott (1998) cites A. Yeatman's (1995) notion of a "political identity" which is predicated on one's multiple identifications with others, rather than any singular history or experience of race, class, gender etc. (p. 165). In this way, identity is understood as a complex and contradictory set of discursive relations which cannot be contained in rigid categories of identity or difference. Describing a similar understanding of identity, Daniel Yon (1995) suggests that,

> Personal identity is never simply a 'mirroring' of 'cultural identity'. Instead, the relationship between the two is a negotiated one that is characterized by ambivalence, contradiction and tension....Identity claims are made in two directions through a process of 'splitting' and 'doubling' between who one is and one is not" (pp. 318-319).

Such a perspective can be read alongside both Britzman's (1998) and Bhabha's (1994) notions of "relational ethic" and "hybridity", as it works from a decentred and de-essentialized notion of identity as a site of multiple discursive relations. This creates the possibility of understanding racial identity beyond "pigmentation and physiology", and even beyond the mimetic process of internalizing socially constructed notions of what it means to be 'Black', 'White', 'Spanish' and so on (Yon, 1995, 319).

This unstable terrain of identity has been demonstrated by theorists like Walcott (1998) and Yon (1995) who have drawn on textual examples, the "performativity of music" (Walcott, 1998, 159) and ethnographic narratives (Yon, 1995) to reveal the complex locations of identities in contradictory discourses of meaning (Yon, 1995).

Specifically, Yon (1995) refers to the narratives of his ethnographic research in a Toronto high school to suggest that,

> race...emerges...as cultural practices; as a site of fashion; as adherence to specific forms of popular culture; as specific ways of talking. This, as we have seen, creates the paradoxical situation whereby a "White" student can be categorized as "Black" and, conversely, a "Black" student as "White". We also see an instance of a "Spanish student" taking delight in being mistaken for "Black" because of his identification with "Black" popular culture, which includes basketball and hip hop culture but denying the prospects of Spanish famale students being similarly "cross-racial" (p. 319).

Drawing on this passage, it seems that, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, identity categories overlap and intersect in such a way that they can never signify a singular or fixed meaning of a particular racial identity. In this view, identity is rather a relation with others, or an identification with multiple discourses of meaning.

As we have also seen in chapter 2, Levinas works in a similar way by refusing to contain subjectivities within a pre-fixed category of being. For Levinas, the very existence of the Self is "initially for an Other" (Levinas, 1985, 96), or in Britzman's (1998) words, is "a possibility made in relation to another" (p. 83). Fundamentally then, the Self cannot exist without an Other; even further, it is the infinite responsibility for the Other that makes the Self possible. Levinas (1985) describes this relation in terms of "proximity":

> Subjectivity is not for itself; it is, once again for another....the proximity of the Other is presented as the fact that the Other is not simply close to me in space, or close like a parent, but he approaches me essentially insofar as I feel myself–<u>insofar as I am–responsible for him</u>. (p. 96, italics added).

Indicated in this passage is the possibility of being for another as the very condition of being. In this way, Levinas might be read alongside the discourse of critical

multiculturalism which attempts to trouble commonsense notions of identity as rigid and fixed, as he too disrupts pre-established categories of being.

Yet, even beyond this, Levinas's notion of subjectivity is first and foremost for another. In this view, the notion of subjectivity must always already be in relation with Otherness; specifically, Levinas claims that the proximity of the Other commands the Self to respond ethically outside of being. Thus, for Levinas, subjectivity is indeed a relation, (thus complicating essentialist categories of identity) but beyond this, this relationality is what allows the Self to escape being itself. It is here that Levinas might be distinguished from critical multicultural notions of identity and difference. That is, subjectivity not only operates outside of modern categories of identity, but outside ontology itself. Before discussing this distinction further, I consider how the notion of identity as a relation might re-define rigid notions of community in multicultural pedagogy.

Working Across Difference: Identification

The notion of identity as a relation not only provides a way of understanding how identities might operate beyond the categories, but also how we might become ethically engaged beyond our alleged membership (or non-membership) to particular social categories. Provided here is a way of considering how identities might become responsible for others within a community defined by common political identifications, rather than 'common' racial identities, histories, emotions, or experiences. In this way, the notion of identity as intersectional and political disrupts stable notions of community and nation by recognizing the intricate cross-cutting of identity categories, rather than

their mutual exclusivity. This opens up a space for a community constituted out of political identifications, a community that emerges from a complex and contradictory notion of identity as identification, rather than a source of pure and true racial difference. In the words of Walcott (1998),

> These identifications point to human forms that [Sylvia] Wynter [1990] suggests are different from Western and humanist notions of mankind, which impose the categories of sex, gender, race, sexuality, and other signifiers of difference as the present structure of governance. Such a structure represses how we cross cut each other and how that cross-cutting might aid in something more. (p. 161).

The notion of identity as identification holds important implications for the practice of multicultural pedagogy. First, it provides a way of considering the complex ways in which we perform identity as a relation and second, it recognizes how we might create communities through such an unstable notion of subjectivity.

Referring to the example of 'suburban' and 'inner city' students, it is possible that their connection to each other resulted not necessarily from increased empathy, but from their common identifications: through music, movies, sports, abilities, political commitments, families, teachers, fears and so on (see also Huynh, 2000; McCarthy, 1998). For example, the small gesture of patting another student on the back during a soccer game might signify a moment of intersectionality, a time when identities were joined through common identification as a temporary team, or appreciation for skill (or failure) in a particular sport. These identifications do not require that one know or empathize with the 'other' in the construction of a multicultural community, but that s/he recognize as a basis for belonging the intersectionality and interconnectedness of identities that already live beyond "imagined categories" (Walcott, 1998, 161). In this

way, the dynamic between self and other and indeed others does not assume a mutual exclusivity between the self and other, but an identification of how the other might intersect with one's own self.

What such a perspective allows is an understanding of how subjectivities already live outside of identity categories and how this might open up the possibilities for relating across differences. That is, it allows us to consider how relationality might happen beyond the knowledge of, and emotion for, 'pure' and 'true' identity categories. In this way, the notion of identity as intersectional works well with a Levinasian notion of Otherness; in both discourses, it is suggested that the Other cannot be reduced to overarching categories of humanity or homogenous categories of difference. Instead, through the notions of "relational ethic", "hybridity" and "otherness", the Other is theorized as non-thematizable, a subjectivity that is always operating between, rather than snugly within, modern categories of identity or difference.

The possibility of identity being "cross-racial" or "hybrid" suggest a need for education to address the ways in which students live out their lives as 'others' by incorporating the subversive and contradictory ways in which subjects work through the discourses of popular culture and popular media (see also Huynh, 2000). Such discourses provide a context in which to recognize the complex hybridity of identity, the intersectionality of the self and other and the ways in which identities might be joined through political commitments, popular media and the like, rather than through a simple membership to singular categories of difference or universal category of humanity. Thus, in the context of multicultural pedagogy, the notion of identity as intersectional and

unstable allows us to consider an alternative framework through which to understand the dynamic between self and other, otherwise than through knowledge of or empathy for a 'pure' and 'true' 'other'.

And while the discourse of critical multiculturalism discussed in this section attempts to trouble such neat and tidy packages of identity, it seems to operate from a notion of connection or interconnectedness among human beings. This, of course, allows for an important discussion about the implication of the self in the life of the other and the possibility of mobilizing around common political identifications; however, what is not allowed is a more unpopular discussion around how we might relate ethically, and even be implicated in otherness, through a relationship of separation, rather than commonality.[2] Thus, what I propose to add to this discussion is yet another possibility of how subjectivities might relate ethically across difference. This perspective follows the critical multicultural call for a multiple and complex view of otherness while also proposing the possibility of relating through alterity, rather than through (common) conditions of being. Thus, it suggests the possibility of relating beyond being itself.

Working across Difference: Separation and Alterity

While I argue that the gap between the self and other is a separation, mediated by a dynamic of alterity, what has dominated discourses self/other relationality is a binary assumption of "sympathetic fusion" and "conflictual separation" (Meyers, 1994, 125). This binary reflects a major theme with which this thesis has attempted to challenge: that ethical relationality must arise out of a fusion of different identities while violence, destruction and injustice come out of a separation between the self and other.[3] The

following section attempts to provide a more useful reading of the connection/separation binary by considering how the separation between Self and Other might paradoxically work to bind them in an ethical relationship characterized by responsibility, rather than commonality.

In this way, I attempt to respond to Britzman's (1998) question, "How might any body come to be called—in the name of community—to the service of the self/other divide?" (p. 102); and to my own question: How might multicultural pedagogy rethink notions of subjectivity and relationality as ethical concerns, rather than as problems of unifying relatively stable identities and communities? To do this, I draw on Levinas to consider how the ethical response might characterized as an openness to the Other commanded by a dynamic of alterity and separation, rather than 'common' histories or identities or even common political commitments or identifications among multiple and complex identities.

Levinas (1991c) proposes that the ethical Self/Other relation is characterized by a particular mode of communication, one which is incited in the moment of facing the Other in all of her/his alterity. Paradoxically, the way in which alterity affects the Self can best be described through the notions of pain, violence or suffering. Thus, what Levinas theorizes as a bond between the Self and Other is a separation which signifies the capacity to suffer; it is this possibility of suffering that commands the Self to respond to the Other outside of any discourse of being, knowledge, empathy or political identification. In the Translator's Introduction to Otherwise that Being, Alphonso Lingis (1991) explains,

> ...it is especially as pain that Levinas conceives the impact of alterity. It is being shaken in the complacency and pleasure of contentment. Being exposed to the other is being exposed to being wounded and outraged. Exceeded on all sides by responsibilities beyond its control and its capacity even to fulfill, the responsible subject is depicted by Levinas in distress... (p. xxiv-xxv).

Drawing on this passage, it seems that what 'connects' subjects is a separation which renders the Self susceptible "to being affected" (Lingis, 1991, xxiv). That is, in the face of alterity, the Self is confronted with the vulnerability or susceptibility to suffering that the Other signifies. In this state of "distress" or urgency, the relationality with alterity becomes a bond of infinite responsibility which commands the ethical response.

Commenting on the ethical possibilities that separation and alterity demand, Levinas states (1998a):

> The other is the only being whose negation can be declared only as total: a murder. The other is the only being I can want to kill. I can want to. Yet this power is the complete opposite of power....The temptation of total negation, which spans the infinity of that attempt and its impossibility—is the presence of the face. To be in relation with the other face to face—is to be unable to kill. (pp. 9-10).

If the Other is the only being I can want to kill and if, at the same time, the alterity of the Other is what prevents its own murder, then it seems that the vulnerability of the Other incites a certain kind of responsibility which confronts the Self, forcing an escape of being through the burden of the infinite capacity to respond.

This perspective is important because it suggests the possibility of understanding the dynamic of Self/Other relationality beyond a discourse of ontology, and beyond the desire to contain subjects within a fixed essence of meaning. Levinas (1991b) uses the notion of "substitution" to explain the way in which the 'Self' responds to the vulnerability of the Other. In this relation, the Self works beyond its own essence by

substituting itself "for all" in the face of the Other (p. 113). In Ethics and Infinity (1985), Levinas explains:

> Positively, we will say that since the Other looks at me, I am responsible for him, without even having taken on responsibilities in his regard; his responsibility is incumbent on me. It is responsibility that goes beyond what I do. Usually, one is responsible for what one does oneself. I say, in Otherwise that Being, that responsibility is initially for the Other. This means that I am responsible for his very responsibility...The I always has one responsibility more than all the others. (p. 96, 99).

Here, the Self is engaged in a relationship with the Other that is characterized by a radical openness to alterity: an asymmetrical relationship in which the Self is commanded to respond by the alterity that the Other signifies (p. 115). In the relationship with the Other, the Self is affected, or afflicted, with an overwhelming responsibility for the Other more than all the others.

Building on this statement, I suggest that the capacity to suffer is what underlies the ethical relation itself; individuals are responsible for the Other because of the recognition that, as separate individuals, the Self can bring about suffering for the Other. In the ethical relation, this implies that instead of acting on one's capacity to dominate, one is driven by the capacity to suffer that the Other signifies. And while a discourse of empathy or dynamic that connects identities might focus on the content of the relation between the two groups of students discussed at the beginning of this chapter (i.e. focussing on who the 'other' is, what it feels like to be an 'other' and what constitutes an ethical response), a Levinasian perspective tries to uncover the ethical mode of communication that is driven by what we do not know about Otherness, a separation or dynamic of alterity that incites ethics. Thus, while thematizing what constitutes an

ethical response and how we might 'get there' has largely been the project of multicultural pedagogies, Levinas suggests an alternative focus: that the initial effort, or non-thematizable relationality with the Other, might itself signify the possibility for ethics.

For instance, returning to the narrative cited at the beginning of this chapter, what is considered to be a "small thing" (and hence, not really 'ethical') might actually demonstrate how the Self and Other work across difference through their separateness, rather than through knowledge or emotion, to engage in ethical relationality. That is, the immediate (and seemingly automatic or reflexive) gesture of patting the Other on the back might signify the ethical response that is commanded by the dynamic of alterity that Levinas describes. The Self (who pats the Other) might have responded not because of improved knowledge, emotion or even identification with the Other, but out of an openness to the capacity to suffer that the Other signifies. Such a perspective not only suggests an entirely different notion of what it means to respond ethically, but also, an entirely different way of thinking about what incites the ethical response. In short, a Levinasian perspective opens up infinite possibilities for what it might mean to respond ethically (no matter how "small" a gesture may be) and opens up the possibilities for relating ethically beyond discourses of knowledge and emotion that tend to reduce the Other to the same.

As I have mentioned previously, my reading of critical multiculturalism and Levinasian ethics (which attempts to rupture categories of identity) does not mean that I do not recognize the importance that such identity categories have served in struggles for

social justice. Thus, in relation to the above example, I acknowledge that the notion of identity as stable and homogenous might be helpful in recognizing the historical ways in which certain identities and communities (referred to here as 'inner city') have been oppressed in dominant structures of power and privilege. I also recognize that the notion of identity as relational has been useful in imagining how identities might live beyond such social categories.

However, Levinas proposes a notion of relationality that allows us to ask different questions about the possibilities for community and ethical possibilities among subjectivities. This perspective alerts us to something quite different from social demarcations and common identifications. And while such a perspective does not guarantee the inevitability of the ethical response, it raises interesting implications for how we understand and work to incite ethics in multicultural education. From the admittedly abstract portrait of ethical relationality that Levinas paints, I now turn to a discussion of inciting ethics, considering some general directions that multicultural pedagogy might consider if it is to think of itself as a practice and concern of ethics.

Inciting Ethics through Separation and Alterity

If the Levinasian notion of subjectivity signifies a kind of non-representable, responsible relation with the Other, the following questions might be raised: What might this mean for how multicultural education might proceed? How might teachers work with students to incite ethical possibilities? In the final section of this chapter, I turn to a discussion which tries to imagine some implications that Levinas might have for the way in which we currently think about and do multicultural pedagogy. The direction that I

propose is admittedly tentative, as there must also be ethical implications for its theory and practice.

As I discussed in chapter 2, I am unsure of what is at stake in asking the Self to act without any concern for its own ego, desires, history and vulnerabilities. And I am unsure of what is at risk in asking teachers to submit themselves to a pedagogy that is not governed by specific rules or standards, especially as they operate in a system that is by its very nature defined by such rigidity. Having said that, this section merely suggests a direction in which to turn, a pathway that might allow for a consideration of multicultural pedagogy as an ethical practice with 'real' implications for the 'others' in our classrooms. I am not suggesting that we do anything that isn't already there, only that we attend to it and consider how it might inform our practice. The 'it' that I refer to is the underlying ethical relationality between Self and Other.

From 'Understanding Difference' to an 'Openness to Alterity'

What a Levinasian perspective suggests to multicultural pedagogies is the need to move past an almost exclusive obsession with the content of our relations with others, be it through increased knowledge or improved emotionality. And while I do not necessarily dispute the value that discussions of (racial) identity sometimes bring, I am suggesting the need to add to our practice an entirely different set of questions about identity, community, and ethical relationality. As mentioned above, I am suggesting the need for multicultural pedagogy to include a recognition of a radical openness to the Other and how this openness signifies the infinite responsibility of the ethical response. Thus, rather than focussing exclusively on trying to understand the difference that

another identity entails, multicultural pedagogy might begin with the assumption that difference, as non-thematizable, incites an ethical mode of communication between the Self and Other.

This kind of pedagogy might create a space in which to recognize the "saying", rather than the "said" of the Other; that is, multicultural pedagogy might begin to consider the ethical mode of communication between Self and Other which does not require a knowledge of or emotionality for a particular other. In this way, a space is opened up in which we might consider the possibilities for ethical relationality even when students or teachers do not (or cannot) empathize, understand or even 'agree' with another's difference. This kind of pedagogy goes beyond tolerance to grapple with ethical questions of how we might live in difference and relate across differences in spite of identity categories "that are always already overburdened with meaning" (Britzman et al., 1994, 189).

The notion of ethics that Levinas suggests means that in addition to focussing on empathetic emotionality, experiences of oppression, structures of power, political identifications and unconscious prejudices, we might need to pay attention to the ways in which we are already engaged in ethical relations with the Other. That is, multicultural pedagogy might begin to work with students to uncover the conditions of ethical relationality that make communication with an Other possible. In this way, students might also engage in an exploration about the kinds of conditions that incite and/or limit the possibilities for the ethical response. Within this context, multicultural pedagogy might become concerned with the ethical <u>implications</u> of constructing others (either

socially or psychically) as well as exploring ways of thinking about otherness in a way that goes beyond meaning and being itself.

The Teacher/Student Relationship: An Ethical Self/Other Relationality

A Levinasian notion of ethics also suggests that multicultural pedagogy re-define the way in which it constructs teachers and students in the ethical relationship. Discussed in detail in chapter 3, empathy-training activities assume that ethics can be finessed through 'proper' pedagogical initiatives that arouse empathetic emotions towards difference. Yet, rather of taking for granted multicultural theory and practice as being necessarily ethical (because it works to arouse 'proper' empathetic emotions through 'accurate' depictions of difference), we might need to consider the ways in which ethical relations operate in spite of any teachings of knowledge or empathetic emotions. In short, we might need to give students more credit for their capacity to be ethical.

By this, I am suggesting that we re-consider the notion of subjectivity itself: as that which by its very nature is radically separate from the Other, but yet always in relation with and responsible for the Other more than all others (Chinnery, 2000). In practical terms, this suggests a need to consider how students (and teachers) are already engaged in ethical relations, operating beyond what discourses of knowledge and emotion promise to teach. Thus, rather than trying to teach about the 'other' and 'proper' moral conduct, a multicultural pedagogy informed by Levinas might become more concerned with learning from the Other and being open to the alterity that s/he signifies.

In this way, I am suggesting that multicultural pedagogy begin to move beyond the mistaken assumption that 'our' teaching is what makes 'them' ethical. Instead, I

propose that we begin to pay attention to the conditions of student relationships that make ethical relationality possible. Understood in this way, teachers are not unquestionably cast into a position of 'all-knowing moral judge' and students into the opposing positions of 'blank slate' or 'immoral deviant'. Instead, what is provided is a space in which teachers and students can work together to examine the conditions of ethics in their own lives, rather than being told by some authority what is 'ethical' and how to be 'ethical'. Such a perspective holds interesting implications for education, as it suggests that teachers and students already engage in ethical relations, always living "in advance" of the roles/identities/communities they are supposed to occupy in the classroom (Walcott, 1998).

Towards a Pedagogy of Responsibility

Providing students with a multidimensional and contradictory notion of identity and community encourages a more complex reading of who 'others' are and what communities entail. By opening up the notions of identity and community, teachers and students alike are confronted with their necessary implication in the lives of others, not because they share similar identities, or even common identifications, but because they belong to a non-representable community characterized by responsibility for each Other. Furthermore, working with students to understand the possibilities and limitations of boundaries, identities and communities in multicultural education emphasizes the ambiguous nature of ethical questions. This suggests a need for multicultural pedagogy to engage in analysis about what constitutes 'ethics', 'community' and 'openness' as well

as an engagement with the possibilities and limitations of such a relation, rather than focussing exclusively on rigid demarcations of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'.[4]

Lastly, allowing students to analyze and examine multiple theories, examples, implications and conditions for ethics encourages them to develop more complex, multi-layered understandings of how ethics might be played out between Self and Other. Rather than unquestionably accepting classroom rules and codes of conduct as inciting ethical responses, students might begin to locate ethics in the non-thematizable face of the Other and the "nonsynchrony" of 'other' communities (McCarthy, 1988, 272). In this context, "nonsynchrony" refers to the complex and contradictory ways in which subjectivities slip in and out of categories to complicate the notion of community—a collection of multiple identities who belong to each Other through the unrepresentable condition of responsibility. Ultimately, this perspective might lead students to consider the ethical implications surrounding the rigid construction of identities and communities in modern discourse and to consider an alternative way in which to think about and respond to Otherness.

My call to re-think notions of identity and multicultural pedagogy leads <u>not</u> to new and improved exercises in directing emotions or understandings of difference. I am not interested in "getting identities straight" in order to represent and increase empathy towards these so-called 'others' (Britzman, 1998, 95). What I am interested in is a path of inquiry which can help students and teachers to read their own responses and dilemmas <u>as ethical concerns</u>. Thus, rather than trying to pinpoint precisely what is an ethical response between the 'suburban' and 'inner city' students, multicultural pedagogy

might begin to explore the multiple possibilities that the condition of separation and dynamic of alterity incite in spite of rigid constructions of identity and community. In this sense, a Levinasian notion of Self/Other relationality reminds us that ethics might lie precisely in what we do not know and in this way, might begin to re-construct multicultural pedagogy as a constant (and welcomed) site of confrontation and transformation in education.

Ultimately, Levinas re-directs the focus of multicultural education so that it includes not more discussion about what is moral and who is different, but a recognition of the on-going "marching-together"[5] (as opposed to isolated moments) of ethical relationality and an examination of the conditions that might incite or limit this relationality (Levinas, 1998b, 116). The conclusion of this thesis expands on the possibilities that the Levinasian Self/Other relation offers to our thoughts and practices of multicultural pedagogy and relationality to others. To allow for this concluding discussion, I consider how the Levinasian notion of the "Third Party" might inform larger questions of relationality to multiple others and pedagogies of social justice in general (Levinas, 1991c, 157).

Conclusion: Levinasian Social Justice: Always wanting more of itself

This thesis has asked: What if multiculturalism began with the ethical possibilities that Otherness brings to bear on the Self rather than a knowledge or empathy for "the fictive, stable categories we imagine, but never perform as identity?" (Walcott, 1998, 170). Throughout the previous chapters, I have tried to offer an ethical way of thinking about the Other and based on such a perspective, have raised ethical implications that come along with teaching multiculturally. In this way, I have attempted to address the three objectives of this thesis; in chapter 2, my discussion of 'critical multiculturalism' provides a view of otherness that is decidedly unstable and which tries to move beyond the rigid discourse of identity categories and 'real' differences; in chapter 3, I have tried to provide a framework through which to reflect on the ethical implications of the use of particular multicultural practices which rely on such rigid constructions of identity: namely, empathy; and finally, in chapter 4, I build on the notion of ethics as framework for reflection to propose a dynamic of relationality that re-frames our understanding of how we relate across differences.

Moving from the latter discussion, I now consider how a Levinasian view of ethics informs how we might operate across multiple subjectivitities, or what Levinas (1991c) refers to as the "Third Party" (p. 157). This chapter tries to offer a productive reading of the tension between the macro and the micro by responding to the following question: How can the ethical relationality of the local Self/Other relationship be extended to inform larger projects of social justice, multicultural pedagogy and the democratic goal to live ethically as multiracial citizens? That is, I am interested in how

Levinas, and the intimate Self/Other relationship, might inform the social/political concerns that pedagogies of social justice try to address.

The "Third Party"

As discussed in chapter 2, Levinas locates ethics in the face-to-face relationality with the alterity of the Other. However, he also admits that our lives do not consist only of these intimate face-to-face encounters; "there is always a third" (Levinas, 1998b, 104). Levinas (1991c) argues that the entry of the "Third Party" interrupts the asymmetry of the Self/Other relation, but at the same time, provokes a new kind of relationality which is necessary for the order of justice among multiple others (p. 157). In disturbing the intimacy of the Self/Other relation, the "Third Party" forces a conscious self-questioning about how one might respond and relate ethically to multiple others in society. Thus, while the local interaction of the Self and Other is characterized as a unique and irreplaceable responsibility, the entrance of the "Third Party" allows us to consider how the unthematizability of the relationship to the Other might inform the ways in which we relate to multiple others.

Levinas (1998b) goes on to describe how the entry of the "Third Party" incites questions of social justice:

> I don't live in a world in which there is but one single "first comer"; there is always a third party in the world: he or she is also my other, my fellow. Hence, it is important to me to know which of the two takes precedence....Must not human beings who are incomparable, be compared? Thus justice, here, takes precedence over the taking upon of the fate of the other. I must judge, where before I was to assume responsibilities. Here is the birth of the theoretical; here the concern for justice is born, which is the basis of the theoretical. (p. 104).

Drawing on this passage, it seems that social justice might be incited by the presence of a

third party who on one hand, interrupts the intimacy of the Self/Other relation, but who on the other hand, provokes "the theoretical" which in some sense, lays the foundation of society. That is, while Levinas (1998b) argues that justice always involves a kind of violence (by weighing, pondering and judging otherness), it is always borne out of the initial interpersonal relation itself.

In traditional discourses, the notion of relating to multiple others suggests the need for neutral, impersonal and universal systems of social justice. However, what Levinas describes is quite the opposite. He suggests that systems of social justice are spawned out of the consciousness that the "Third Party" brings to the Self/Other relation, rather than being put in place to control the relation itself. In this view, multicultural pedagogy (and pedagogies of social justice) are borne out of the Self/Other relation; the Self/Other relation is what makes these larger initiatives of social justice possible. On this point, Levinas (1991b) states:

> [Justice] is always starting out from the Face, from the responsibility for the other that justice appears, which calls for judgement and comparison, a comparison of what is in principle incomparable....At a certain moment, there is a necessity for a "weighing", a comparison, a pondering, and in this sense philosophy would be the appearance of wisdom from the depths of that initial charity. (p. 104).

In this passage, Levinas describes the birth of the theoretical, social justice if you like, as that which comes out of the initial Self/Other relation.

Such a perspective of social justice is important, as it proposes interesting implications for multicultural pedagogy and society in general. I now turn to an exploration of two specific implications; the first considers how the notion of the "Third Party" provokes a consciousness or questioning of pedagogical practices (what I refer to

as a 'site of reflection') and the second considers how this consciousness might open up what the conception of social justice means in the context of multicultural pedagogy and society in general.

A Site of Reflection

If the initial Self/Other relation gives rise to notions of social justice, I propose that the meanings, assumptions, constructions and agendas of multicultural pedagogy need to be held in check by what underlies its concerns: the face of the Other. On this point, Zygmunt Bauman (1997) is helpful:

> Concern with human rights is an appeal to the 'surplus of charity'; one might say, to something larger than any letter of Law, than anything that the state has done so far. State-administered justice is born of charity gestated and groomed within the primary ethical situation; yet justice may be administered only if it never stops being prompted by its original spiritus movens, if it knows of itself as a never-ending chase of a forever elusive goal—the re-creation among the individuals/citizens of the uniqueness of the Other as Face...If it knows that it cannot match the kindness which gave it birth and keeps it alive'—but that it cannot ever stop trying to do just that. (p. 223).

Based upon this perspective, it seems that multicultural pedagogy is indeed made possible because of the memory of the relationality of the Self and Other. While the memory of this relationality is what drives initiatives of social justice, it is often what gets forgotten in our implementation and practice of multicultural pedagogy. That is, while our focus on improving student knowledge of 'other' cultures, attitudes towards race, and critical thinking skills is indeed necessary, we need also to recognize the necessary asymmetry of the ethical relation that makes such "impersonal" notions of social justice possible in the first place (Bauman, 1997, 223).

In this way, I reiterate that multicultural pedagogy pay attention to questions that

remind us of our on-going relationality with the Other. In our reflection, we might ask: Am I serving the Other? How am I constructing the 'other'? How might I be inciting or limiting the ethics in my classroom? What are the ethical implications of my practice? How is ethical relationality already operating in my classroom? Rather than proclaiming the liberatory effects of multicultural pedagogy by virtue of its liberatory intentions, I am suggesting that multicultural pedagogy be re-located as a humble outcome of the ethical relationship that Levinas theorizes. From this perspective, multicultural pedagogy might be re-defined as a site of continual transformation, always driven by the original interpersonal relation that makes its theory and practice possible in the first place. To further explain the notion of multicultural pedagogy as a site of continual reflection and change, I use the next section of this conclusion to re-imagine and re-define what social justice might mean in multicultural pedagogy and society in general.

Ethics: The Desire of Communication Supplements the Neutrality of Reason

The notion of social justice that a Levinasian perspective constructs is based upon the ethical mode of communication between Self and Other. Always driven by the infinite possibilities that the Other signifies, Levinas broadens our perspective of social justice (and indeed community itself), locating it in the response (an openness) to the alterity of Otherness. If multicultural pedagogy, and social justice itself, is borne out of the ethical Self/Other relation and the consciousness that the "Third Party" incites, then it seems that we need to broaden our perspectives of what social justice means in the first place.

The traditional legislation of human rights and codes of moral conduct around

which multicultural pedagogies are often structured seem to serve the purpose of policing behaviour and at the same time creating an illusion that social justice has been 'achieved'. Yet, Levinas reminds us that, as a relation with alterity, theories and practices of social justice might be better characterized in terms of desire, rather than rational knowledge. Driven by desire, the notion of social justice becomes, in Bauman's (1997) words, "a forever elusive goal" which does not offer the promise that we will ever 'get there'.

On one hand, such a perspective might seem fatalistic and indeed unproductive in working towards social justice. Yet, on the other hand, this perspective also raises alternative (and productive) ways to define social justice itself. Specifically, if justice is not thought of as a destination, but as an ethical relation, we can become more open to the notion of multicultural pedagogy as that which is always in process, always transforming, and always open to the Other. Instead of being satisfied with more knowledge, better attitudes and the content of emotions, we might need to think of pedagogy as a relation with desire, that "cannot be satisfied...that in some way nourishes itself on its own hungers and is augmented by its satisfaction." (Levinas, 1985, 92).

Thus, drawing on Levinas, I believe that the notion of social justice needs to be re-located in the infinity of desire, rather than finitude of knowledge. In this way, social justice can never be reduced to rules or codes of conduct (which do not signify ethics in the first place), but instead operates as a desire among multiple subjectivities, as a dynamic that does not pretend to 'know' justice, but that always wants more of justice. On this point, it might be useful to quote Philippe Nemo in the translator's introduction of

Ethics and Infinity (1985) when he calls for the need to go beyond the essential question, "What is ethics?", to ask, "What is better?" (p. 8). Drawing on this notion in a discussion of social justice, we might argue that social justice is not about finding a solution, but always searching for a better way of relating across difference (which, augmented by desire, can never be satisfied).

Challenging the Structure of Education and Classroom Practices

The unstable terrain of Levinasian ethics poses interesting implications for structures of education that currently exist. Organized around the project of enlightenment, modern education is obsessed with linear success, moral certainty, 'more' and 'better' knowledge, universality, definitive categories, stable notions of identity and difference and a focus on the self (i.e. self-improvement, self-esteem and so on). However, as I have suggested previously, identities already live beyond such mechanistic structures and thus, pedagogies that are based upon such rigidity necessarily expulse otherness in their demand for certainty, knowledge and self-improvement. In calling for a pedagogy that admits what we do not know, and what we can never know, a space might be opened up in which to consider the ethical implications and contradictory effects of pedagogy as well as the on-going ethical relationality that is always already a part of student/teacher, student/student relationships.

Of course, in attending to the conditions which might incite ethical relations, multicultural pedagogy might also work through the ambivalence of ethical dilemmas, considering also the conditions that might limit ethical relationality between the Self and Other. Such a perspective does not claim that 'unethical' behaviour happens only

because of a failure to establish appropriate rules or because of a lack of knowledge about difference. After all, crimes against others can be committed even when rules are in place and even when one 'knows' another's difference. Thus, for Levinas, the ethical response cannot be 'secured' by rules or knowledge, only by the face of the Other. And in this recognition, he re-locates the question of multiculturalism entirely: to consider the ways in which we are ethical not because of rules, but in spite of them, not because of knowledge, but in spite of it.

Thus, Levinas poses a challenge to the (exclusive) use of moral codes which tend to be the foundation of current multicultural education policy and mission statements. Rather than focussing so rigidly on the management of student behaviour and improvement of knowledge, a perspective of multicultural pedagogy as ethical asks that we also consider the implications of that which cannot be managed or taught through lock-step approaches to moral conduct. This means that we begin to re-think and engage with pedagogy as an on-going relation with unknowable differences, rather than a simple procedure of delivering knowledge about different identities and 'proper' behaviour. In this sense, ambivalence, change, confrontation and transformation might become the main themes of education, as we work from notions of multiple successes, moral ambivalence, local contexts, unknowable Otherness and the complexity and intersectionality of categories.

It is in this way that Otherness as an ethical concern might differ from other multicultural pedagogies whose focus remains on discourses of emotionality and knowledge; it provides a space in which to imagine how others live beyond modern

categories and how living "in excess" necessarily challenges dominant structures while also signifying the possibilities for ethical responses (Bhabha, 1994, 66). It is from such a perspective that students might begin to develop new strategies and definitions of community, those which go beyond a discourse of inclusion (which tends to begrudgingly accept those who are 'different') to suggest that all others are necessarily Other, and therefore ultimately responsible for others beyond categories of race, gender, culture, age, ability and so on.

A Thesis Always Wanting more of Itself: Final Comments and Further Questions

The exploration of Otherness in this thesis has suggested the need to re-define what we mean by identity, difference, ethics, social justice and indeed multicultural pedagogy. I have tried to bring an ethical dimension to each of the latter notions to argue that it is through instability and indeed alterity of Otherness that any movement towards social justice might be mobilized. Such unstable notions of otherness have become the focus of the discourse that I have referred to as 'critical multiculturalism' (i.e. Bhabha, 1994; Britzman, 1998; 1998b, Gorssberg, 1996; see also Walcott, 1998; Yon, 1995). Following this perspective, it seems that ethics does not come from the roles we teach our students to play: the 'tolerant' student, the 'sensitive' student, the 'empathetic' student, nor the roles we play ourselves: the 'tolerant' teacher, the 'sensitive' teacher, the 'empathetic' teacher. Of course, these roles might help to control behaviour and shape emotionality, but they do not by themselves signify the relationality between Self and Other that Levinas calls ethics.

If the direction that I suggest for multicultural pedagogy is not based upon

knowledge, emotion, meaning or being, then what drives my vision? First of all, I believe that Levinasian philosophy can alert teachers to the importance of understanding that the knowledge, curriculum expectations and emotionality of multicultural practices hold ethical implications for the students we teach. Second of all, it asks that we go beyond the desire for predictable moments that knowledge and empathy often promise in order to seize the more unpopular moments when meaning breaks down, when the Self is disrupted and when Otherness threatens to break the stride of our often too rigid notions of identity and difference. Such a pedagogy must work from a newly defined notions of difference and social justice to engage in disrupting the effects of its own practice, driven by the face of the Other.

My exploration of multicultural pedagogy as a question of ethics has not only led me to consider different directions for education, but has also raised questions that need further examination. Specifically, if current multicultural pedagogies have taken up the notions of identity and difference as essential categories, how might we re-think, re-name and re-organize ourselves around struggles of social justice? What implications does this view of Otherness hold for notions of community and nation? or as Grossberg (1996) has stated, "What are the conditions through which people can belong to a common collective without becoming representatives of a single definition?" (p. 88). These questions beg that we begin to re-think and re-imagine the notions of identity and Self/Other relationality so that they work from the non-thematizable Otherness of the Other, rather than the themes of enlightenment, clear-cut boundaries and 'self-obsession' that pervade the current (albeit multiple) discourse of multicultural pedagogy as we know it.

A more radical set of questions might read: Is multicultural pedagogy as we know it indeed necessary for ethical relations to occur across differences? If not, what set of social relations is necessary? It is precisely this frightening gap that I think needs to be explored in discussions of how multicultural pedagogy might work across difference. And even though it does not suggest how we can teach ethics or Otherness, it suggests how we might examine and re-define our pedagogy so that it tries to incorporate unstable notions of Otherness as a framework to consider the possibilities and limitations of ethics in our classrooms and in our own practice of multicultural pedagogy.

Ultimately, what Levinas brings to multicultural education is the recognition that teaching, as relationality, is always more, an ethical moment, and that the responsibility of teachers (and students) goes beyond what can be taught or managed. Drawing on both critical multiculturalism and ethics, it might be time to add to our efforts of 'self-improvement' a discourse that considers a Levinasian notion of subjectivity, as that which begins with a relation to the alterity of the Other. Moving away from the notion of multicultural education as a pedagogy about 'others', a Levinaisan perspective re-defines multicultural pedagogy as a "possibility made in relation to another" (Britzman, 1998, 83, italics added). It is through this local relationality that we can think about and respond to Otherness in a way that works toward a more just world.

Endnotes

Introduction: Reading Critical Multiculturalism as an Ethical Discourse

[1] Of course, I recognize that my demarcation of 'anti-racist' and 'multicultural' pedagogies is indeed crude. I wish to emphasize that I have drawn such a distinct line for the purpose of discussing the binary of difference/sameness that these positions tend to represent. However, I recognize that in practice and in theory, they do overlap and intersect each other in many ways.

[2] Throughout this thesis, I follow Levinas's use of upper and lower case lettering when referring to the notion of (O)otherness. That is, I use upper case lettering when making reference to the ethical and intimate Self/Other relationality that Levinas describes while lower case lettering is used to describe otherness and others in a more general sense.

[3] In my discussion of critical multiculturalism, I refer to theorists such as Deborah Britzman, Homi Bhabha and Lawrence Grossberg. The concepts of otherness that these theorists propose lend themselves to 'critical multiculturalism' because of the way in which they disrupt conventional notions of identity as rigid reflections and explanations of 'real' social differences.

[4] Jennifer Gore's (1993), The Struggle for Pedagogies, follows a similar theoretical framework; she draws on Michel Foucault's notion, "regime of truth", to identify the normalizing tendencies of feminist and critical pedagogy.

Chapter One: Critical Multiculturalism and the Construction of Otherness

[1] Throughout this thesis, I will explore different aspects of the notion of identity as relational; however, the purpose of this chapter is to set a theoretical foundation for later discussion of the ethical implications and possibilities that such a notion of identity incites in multicultural pedagogy.

[2] Although I am uncomfortable with the binary created by the literal translation of the term "postmodernism" (after/anti-modernism), I use it in the critical and thoughtful way that Homi Bhabha (1994) has described: "If the jargon of our times—postmodernity, postcoloniality, postfeminism—has any meaning at all, it does not lie in the popular use of the 'post' to indicate sequentially—after-feminism; or polarity—anti-modernism. These terms that insistently gesture to the beyond, only embody its restless and revisionary energy if they transform the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment. For instance, if the interest in postmodernism is limited to the celebration of the fragmentation of the 'grand narratives' of postenlightenment rationalism then, for all its intellectual excitement, it remains a profoundly parochial enterprise. (p. 4, italics added).

[3] Similarly, Douglas Crimp (1991) states, "Identification is, of course, identification with an other, which means that identity is never identical to itself. This alienation from the self it constructs...does not mean simply that any proclamation of identity will only be partial, that it will be exceeded by other aspects of identity, but rather that identity is always a relation, never simply a positivity...[P]erhaps we can begin to rethink identity politics as politics of relational identities formed through political identifications that constantly remake those identities (as cited in Britzman, 1998, 83, italics added).

[4] Grossberg (1994) has pointed out how this dominant desire gets played out through the metaphor of a "differentiating machine": "...a machine that discursively (or ideologically) produces differentially valued subject positions (through a discursive interpellation), which, when articulated to maps of meaning, produce what we more commonly call identities." (p. 99).

[5] Although this thesis suggests that notions of identity and difference in multicultural pedagogy are indeed ethical concerns, I, like Bhabha, am not also suggesting that the Other is an object of moral contemplation; rather, I am trying to propose an ethical vision of Otherness as a non-object, as that which goes beyond being. In so doing, I am suggesting that the common representation of identity as difference holds serious ethical implications for the Other in multicultural pedagogy.

[6] As I will demonstrate in the chapter that follows, Levinas's notion of Otherness provides a productive reading of the seemingly different perspectives presented above: identity as relational (Britzman, Bhabha) and identity as absolute otherness (Grossberg). As we will see, Levinas's reading of the Self/Other relationship works with both concepts of relationality and Otherness; yet, Levinas is less concerned with how the other is different (through processes of identification and/or her/his location before relations of difference), and is more concerned with the Self's relationality with the absolute and non-thematizable Otherness of the Other. In this way, Levinas reveals the ethical possibilities that are signified in one's relation with the absolute Otherness (or alterity) of the Other, rather than stopping at a theory of the ways in which subjectivities exceed modern categories of identity. In short, Levinas goes beyond a theory of how subjectivities elude modern categories to focus on how Otherness commands an escape of being altogether.

Chapter Two: Reading Otherness Through Levinas

[1] Similar to Levinas, Zygmunt Bauman (1997) suggests that 'morality' lies before the universal rules and codes of society. On this point, he states, "I am moral before I think...when concepts, standards, rules enter the stage, moral impulse makes an exit." (p. 61, italics in original).

[2] In addition, I would like to point out that have re-organized the order in which I discuss each theorist because I find that they more easily speak to (or fit into) a Levinasian framework in this way.

[3] For instance, Levinas (1985) states, "In reality, the fact of being is what is most private; existence is the sole thing I cannot communicate; I can tell about it, but I cannot share my existence. Solitude thus appears here as the isolation which marks the very event of being." (pp. 57-58). Thus, for Levinas, the virtue of existing is a solitude, a state of existence that, as Grossberg (1996) states, occurs "before any specific relations of difference" (p. 94).

[4] In the translator's introduction of Otherwise Than Being, it is stated that, "Alterity comes to me from without, and comes by exceeding my capacities–like the idea of infinity in Descartes, which is put into me, which I could not have accounted for out of myself–and whose very reality as infinity is in this exceeding of any capacity" (Lingis, 1991, xxiii).

[5] I consider what a Levinasian view of ethical relationality might look like and propose some implications for multicultural pedagogy in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

[6] While the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and Levinas is indeed interesting, it is beyond the scope of this thesis and so the discussion considered above will remain in its brief form.

[7] Although Wiesenthal's account is indeed autobiographical, he refers to himself in the third person (Simon) throughout the entire text. Following this trend, my discussion continues to refer to Wiesenthal in the third person, as a character named Simon.

Chapter Three: Re-reading the Discourse of Empathy

[1] Britzman, Santiago-Valles, Jiminez-Munoz and Lamash (1994) get at this Levinasian perspective in their suggestion for multicultural pedagogy: "...while the knowledge of social difference is essential to teaching multiculture, there is nothing essential about the knowledge of social difference" (p. 188).

[2] This scenario reads, "The African American slave who has taken care of you since you were a baby asks you to help hide her brother, who has just run away from his owner in the neighboring town. That owner was cruel, and he fed and clothed his slaves poorly. You want to help, but you know you, your slave, and her brother could face terrible consequences if caught. What will you do?" (Eldridge, 1998, 149).

[3] This limitation is addressed by Meyers when she states that, "Since incident-specific empathy with strangers affords little opportunity to exchange information or to verify the understanding one reaches, it is relatively crude and conjectural, and, consequently, it is not likely to greatly enrich one's moral view." (p. 35).

[4] Similarly, Nel Noddings' (1994) vision of moral education goes beyond the Kantian perspective of conforming to universal principles and laws to consider the significance of knowing and responding to the diverse and unique needs of each student, thereby engendering ethical responses of respect and consideration in each of them. Rather than focussing on abstract moral codes, Noddings suggests the need for education to include in its "instructional arrangements", the nurturing of caring and relationality through "modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation" (p. 176). Like Meyers (1994) her argument rests on the assumption that 'knowing' one's students (and the 'Other') will work to build ethical relationships; on this point, she states that, "To shape [moral] persons, teachers need not only intellectual capabilities but also a fund of knowledge about the particular persons with whom they are working" (p. 176).

[5] Here, I am reminded of a student who, when asked to imagine the possibility of being an orphan [an exercise accompanying his reading of a grade 5 novel, The Pinballs (1977) by Betsy Byars], was deeply confused and overwhelmed by the possibility. He commented, "I cannot imagine that because that would mean I would have to imagine my parents dead. How can I do that? I don't know what life would be like without them". For the remainder of the class discussion, he remained silent. Of course, this might be read as an unwillingness to imagine or engage in the life of an other, but it might also be read as an inability to identify with an experience and identity so different from his own understanding of family and life itself. And if one's life is so different from another (if the imagination cannot bridge the gap of difference), must it always result in unethical behaviour? How can we conceive of ethics beyond the ability to understand, imagine or experience the other?

[6] At this point, I would recognize an inherent contradiction of this argument; on one hand, I recognize that operating 'outside of the parameters of the Self' suggests an impossible task; yet, based upon my reading of Levinas, I wish to emphasize the limitations of responding to Otherness through one's own (or any) discourse of being. My claim that empathy as imagination reduces Otherness to the parameters of the Self does recognize the difficulty of the claim that one can 'escape the Self' in one's relations with others (see chapter 2); however, I remain true to a Levinasian perspective by emphasizing that there is "no self without another who summons it to responsibility" [Paul Ricoeur, cited in Peter Kemp, "Ricoeur between Heidegger and Levinas: Original Affirmation between Ontological Contestation and Ethical Injunction," in *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action*, ed. Richard Kearney (London: Sage, 1996), 46]. Drawing on this passage, I suggest that any discourse which begins with and returns to the Self impedes the recognition that it is the Other who makes the Self possible in the first place. And although I am aware that the Self is a necessary (and indeed paramount) player in the ethical Self/Other relationship, I draw on Levinas to imagine how ethicality might be aroused by a rupturing of the Self, rather than a referencing to the Self.

[7] It is important to note that, in a slightly different context, Britzman (1998) too worries about "the social and psychic costs of an excessive self-regard" (p. 99, italics added). Using Freud's concept of narcissism, Britzman demonstrates the self's desire for purity (i.e. "the desire to be unencumbered by the demand of the other") and the concomitant process of projection in which the self projects "what is impure in the self onto others" (p. 99) (see Freud, 1915/1959; see also Todd, 1999).

Chapter Four: Ethical Relationality Redefined as Alterity

[1] Britzman (1998) too discusses notions of community and antiracist pedagogy; however, her analysis engages more deeply with psychoanalytic concerns, which are not the focus of this thesis.

[2] At this point, I would like to re-iterate Todd's (in press) statement, "...whatever psychical bridges we do make with the Other, such as identification or empathy...merely serve to underscore the chasm that in fact separates Self and Other...where Levinas locates the conditions for ethicality" (Todd, in press, 8-9, italics added).

[3] Meyers (1994) understands this binary in a slightly different context. For Meyers, the binary of "sympathetic fusion" and "conflictual separation" is problematic because it prevents the possibilities for "mutual recognition" whereby subjects are involved in the "concomitant" process of "recognizing and being recognized" (p. 125, italics added). Meyers's suggests that any subject who is located in the position of "sympathetic fusion" cannot at the same time be separate and therefore be recognized by others. Conversely, if a subject is understood in terms of "conflictual separation", s/he cannot become "fused", or involved in the process of "recognizing" others. In this sense, Meyers points out the ways in which such a binary might limit ethical relationality. My reading of this binary draws on Levinas to emphasize the possibilities of the necessary separateness of Self/Other relationship in the moment of ethics. In short, I consider the possibility of relating ethically, while also (or perhaps more appropriately, 'as a result of') maintaining the radical 'separation' between Self and Other and the absolute 'alterity' of the Other.

[4] Here, I am referring to the current focus on the 'right' teaching methods and the 'wrong' teaching methods (Bartolome, 1998), the 'right' representations of difference and the 'wrong' representations of difference (Britzman et al., 1994), the 'right' way to respond and the 'wrong' way to respond. Rather than focussing on such codes of moral conduct, Levinas helps us navigate through more murky waters, alerting us to moments when such codes do not save us (i.e. empathy), and to the ways in which subjectivities are ethical in spite of regulatory standards.

[5] The literal translation for this notion is written as, "zusammen-marschieren" (Levinas, 1998b, 116).

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