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Voices from the secondary school: Women English teachers engaged in critical pedagogy

Mitchell, Suzanne Mancuso, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1993

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VOICES FROM THE SECONDARY SCHOOL:

WOMEN ENGLISH TEACHERS ENGAGED

IN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

by

Suzanne Mancuso Mitchell

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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APPROVAL PAGE

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The purpose of this study was to give voice to secondary women English teachers engaged in critical pedagogy in their classrooms and to add to the femininine discourse concerned with secondary education.

This dissertation represents a qualitative study of five such English teachers from two school districts in a southern state. These women were selected for this study because they have reputations as strong, outspoken teachers whose classrooms afford students the opportunity for critical thinking, intellectual inquiry, and relevant discussion. Each teacher was interviewed for approximately two and one half hours. Specifically, they discussed their educational roles as intellectuals, as professionals, as women, and as critical pedagogues in the classroom. The transcripts of their interviews were critically analyzed and compared to the literature concerned with these aspects of secondary English education.

Of particular significance in their discourse was the importance of nurturance, their professionalism defined in terms of collegiality and commitment, sexism in secondary schools, and their descriptions of the realities teachers face in contemporary schools.

To my parents -- Evelyn and Sam Mancuso

My first critical educators

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CHAPTER I

IN SEARCH OF A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

A "Passion for Ignorance"

> Our culture in general (and that includes schools, the media, and our social institutions) has helped educate students to acquire a veritable passion for ignorance. (McLaren, 1989, p. 189)

In Life in Schools, McLaren expresses concern over the lack of critical pedagogy in many of our public schools. He remarks that the "passion for ignorance" which presently infects our culture and, consequently, our schools, can be attributed to "a refusal to acknowledge that our subjectivities have been constructed out of the information and social practices that surround us" (Lacan in McLaren, p. 189). We can learn from our ignorance but only if we have the "critical constructs with which to recover that knowledge which we choose not to know" (p. 189). Without those constructs, students who are unable to find meaning may resort to violence or insulate themselves in an intellectual vacuum where anything more challenging than the "nightly news" is met with apathy. McLaren maintains that this passion for ignorance serves the purposes of the dominant culture which is threatened

by critical intellectuals who might question its "ideals."

Enter the classroom teacher engaged in critical pedagogy. In a critical classroom, both the teacher and students work together as investigators to interrogate the "prevailing ideas, values and worldviews of the dominant culture" (McLaren, p. 189). Students are encouraged to reflect upon alternatives to our present social values and constructs. In addition, critical educators strive to make learning relevant to their students' lives by calling on the experiences of the students themselves. When these experiences are sometimes demonstrated to be problematic, as in the instances of racism and sexism, then knowledge becomes critical. Further, when students use this knowledge to empower others, the knowledge itself becomes transformative.

McLaren contends that not all students will want to take part in a discourse informed by critical pedagogy. Many, in fact, will openly resist. Moreover, teachers may have personal problems which circumscribe the scope of the pedagogy which can actually be implemented. However, those teachers who are in search of a critical pedagogy can "create agendas of possibility in their classrooms" (McLaren, p. 190). In such classrooms, students are not blamed as the sole reason for resistance nor are they viewed only as "lazy, defiant, lacking in ambition, or

genetically inferior" (p. 190). Instead, teachers and students together critically examine the larger society to help them understand reasons for student resistance.

As a veteran teacher with 20 years' experience, I consider myself to be a critical educator. However, in defining myself as such, I must take into consideration the subject matter that I teach -- English. Incorporating the ideas of McLaren and others (Freire, 1970, 1973; Greene, 1978, 1988; Apple, 1979; Giroux, 1988) who advocate the establishment of a critical pedagogy in the classroom means that I must approach the teaching of English in a critical manner. Moreover, I must define for myself what it means to be a critical English teacher.

I believe that a critical educator is more than a purveyor of subject matter. Instead, she/he views subject matter as a vehicle for looking at the larger world. Too often our classrooms have become places of accommodation where students are taught how to fit into the world as it presently exists instead of considering the possibility of creating a better world. The critical educator has an obligation to encourage students to look beyond the given and to envision things as they might be rather than as they are. This obligation extends beyond the classroom itself and into the profession as a whole. For the critical educator then, education should be of a dynamic

rather than of a static character. The profession should constantly be reexamining itself and reassessing its role in society. Should education exist merely to reinforce and to perpetuate the society as it presently exists or should education question, disturb, provoke and agitate within the existing society to produce a state of disequilibrium where necessary change can be effected? The critical educator would answer that education should fill the latter role, and as a critical educator, I would have to agree.

How does the critical high school English teacher inculcate these ideas into her everyday teaching experience? The very nature of the discipline provides the seed bed in which critical thinking, questioning, and evaluating can germinate. However, the flourishing of ideas in any classroom requires nourishment and an atmosphere conducive to growth. Too often in the past, and sadly, often in the present, English classrooms were and are sterile places where students experience lessons on grammar taken out of context, write on topics which bear no relevance to their lives, read literature in which they see no value, recite and regurgitate names, characters, literary terms and plot summaries. In contrast, the critical English classroom is one where literature provides a springboard from which students can generate ideas, raise questions, see relationships and

draw conclusions. Moreover, writing in a critical English classroom becomes a vehicle whereby students may find their own voices and express their own feelings. In essence, critical thinking is encouraged through reading, writing and discussion.

Critical thinking is one of the current buzzwords in education and commonly refers to higher level thinking as opposed to memorization and factual recall. In the critical English class, however, critical thinking means even more. It means encouraging students to think about their own lives and about the society in which they live. It also means helping them to see their roles in the larger society and what they can do to improve not only the quality of their own lives, but the quality of those around them. There are those who would say that English teachers ought to stick just to teaching grammar, literature and composition and to stay away from controversial issues which can be considered too political. To those critics I would answer that the critical English teacher has a duty, even a moral obligation, to move beyond subject matter to get her/his students to think so that they can indeed become thoughtful, caring, sensitive and active in the American society in which we live. It matters little that a person can recite Shakespeare or diagram a sentence if she/he has no regard for anyone other than herself/himself.

My Evolution as a Critical Educator

I cannot honestly say that I have always been both a critical English teacher and educator, an admission which might seem ironic since I graduated from college and began teaching in 1968, a time marked by political unrest, protest marches, demonstrations and dissent. No, I have come to critical pedagogy in the last ten years after having experienced a variety of teaching assignments and after living and teaching in different states. This is not to say, however, that I was never engaged in critical pedagogy prior to this time. In some form or other, I have always interrogated my responsibilities as an educator and a member of the teaching profession. But it has only been in the last ten years that I have focused on and emphasized critical pedagogy in my classroom.

In Tennyson's poem "Ulysses," the speaker, in thinking back over his life, says, "I am a part of all that I have met;..." Like Ulysses, I feel that I too am a part of all that I have met, and all that I have met have become a part of me. My varied experiences in teaching have all contributed to my development as a critical educator. Shortly after I began my teaching career in Louisiana, the high school where I taught, as the result of a court order, became comprised of a student population

that was 98 percent black. Never having attended an integrated school myself, I had no personal experiences from which to draw as I began the school year. Although I was initially nervous, both the students and I settled in, and I consider the two years in which I worked with these students as some of the most successful in my teaching career. I am not really sure why my classes worked so well except that my students and I respected each other as human beings. This experience caused me to examine my own values in light of the area and the culture in which I had been raised. Moreover, those two years taught me a great deal about prejudice and racism. From that time on, the issue of racism, subtle or overt, would be of critical concern for me, not only in my personal life, but in the way I teach my classes.

My next teaching experience was quite different. When I lived in Texas, I taught seventh and eighth grade language arts and social studies in a Catholic junior high school. Not only did I have to develop new teaching techniques to deal with students just entering puberty, but I also had to come to terms with both the constraints and the benefits of teaching in a parochial school. In addition, although the students in this school came from middle to upper middle class homes, more than half of them were of Mexican-American descent. Once again, I experienced a culture different from the one in which I

had been reared. I came to appreciate the diversity among cultures, and I also came to realize that adolescent students have specific needs and concerns which differ from those of secondary students. All of this became a part of me as I continued my journey toward critical pedagogy.

My first teaching experience in North Carolina was in a small town, and once again, I assumed a new teaching role. This time I acted as a resource teacher for academically gifted students in grades K-5. Obviously, I had to adapt my teaching techniques to work with very young children. Moreover, as I gained my certification in AG education, I was encouraged to use methods of teaching which emphasized critical thinking and attended to the experiences which the children brought with them to the classroom. This experience made me question the way we teach all students. I asked myself why we emphasized these methods of teaching with only "gifted" children. Could not all students be taught in a similar manner? Moreover, I questioned the whole notion of giftedness. What criteria were used to determine who was gifted and whose interest was being served here? In addition, I wondered about the practice of removing "gifted" children from the regular classroom. Were we not promoting elitism here? These questions and others provided additional impetus as I journeyed toward critical pedagogy.

Another small town in North Carolina became the site of my next teaching assignment. Once again I would teach gifted children, but this time I would act as a classroom teacher of math and science for sixth grade students in a middle school. I could now apply some of my teaching methods in disciplines other than English. Although I was teaching sixth grade, I did not feel quite comfortable with the subject matter. As a result, the students and I learned together, and I depended upon them to bring their experiences to the classroom. In short, I asked them to take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning. Thus, my classroom unintentionally became a forum for critical thinking, creativity and personal inquiry, all of which comprise critical pedagogy.

My most recent teaching experience and the one in which I am currently engaged, began ten years ago in a high school in a rural community outside a small town. The eleventh and twelfth grade students whom I teach come from predominantly white middle class homes. Most of them are the sons and daughters of factory workers and farmers, but a few of them are the children of professionals. Even though my high school is not located in an inner city, we have our share of problems. Indeed, all of the problems of the larger society can be found within my classroom: physical, mental, and sexual abuse, drugs, alcoholism, poverty, and teenage pregnancy, to name a few. These

problems clearly call for a critical pedagogy through which students and teachers can deal with these problems. The discipline of English is of little value to these students if it is taught as a separate entity unto itself. It can be of great value, however, if the literature and the communication aspects can be related to the experiences of the students themselves. And that is what I attempt to do in my classroom.

Like Ulysses, I have been a wanderer, both literally and figuratively. But my wanderings have taken me to a variety of settings and educational experiences which have helped me to establish a critical pedagogy in my classroom. But critical pedagogy does not concern itself only with what transpires in the classroom. It encompasses the intellectual and professional aspects of teaching as well. As a critical educator, I consider myself to be an intellectual, but I have come to realize that many teachers, and in particular, many women teachers, do not consider themselves to be intellectuals. And I wonder why that is. In addition, teachers are constantly reminded that they are professionals and that they should act as professionals? But who is defining <u>professional</u> here -- teachers or administrators? And do these definitions coincide with or contradict each other? If they contradict each other, whose definition should we accept?

Critical pedagogy is also concerned with issues of gender in education. In a profession dominated by women, men still hold most of the positions of power. Does this relationship suggest a patriarchy in which males are dominant and females subordinate? If so, what part, if any, have women played in perpetuating such a relationship? As a woman, I have examined my role and that of other women within the teaching profession in terms of critical pedagogy, and I find that I have as many questions as I do answers. Consequently, my own mental wanderings have led me to the subject of this dissertation: Women English Teachers Engaged in Critical Pedagogy.

In the past ten years, I have come to realize that there are many women English teachers who feel as I do concerning critical pedagogy. They may not refer to what they do as critical pedagogy, but they ask the same questions I do, they have the same concerns and they have the same commitment to their profession. They often feel frustrated and disempowered within the system, yet they continue to speak out and express their opinions concerning education and what affects their students. Still, their voices are often muffled and even silenced by those who dictate educational policy. What they believe and what they have to say are important, and it is their

thoughts and words which give purpose to this dissertation.

Purpose

For many involved in education, the word critical has a negative connotation. I maintain, however, that the word critical has a very positive connotation. When we are critical because we see injustice or inequality or because we can see the necessity for beneficial change, then I say that we as critical English teachers are performing a vital role in education. Not only are we critical in our classrooms, but within our profession as well. Sometimes the struggle becomes very difficult and we wind up feeling like we are merely tilting at windmills. And some teachers do give up. Some physically resign from the profession while others mentally resign within the profession. But I, like Thoreau, am "not willing to practice resignation unless it [is] quite necessary" (1962, p. 74). And there are many others like me who are critical about our profession because we want it to be as good as it possibly can be.

It is for these critical English teachers that this dissertation is written. Too often, their voices become lost in the cacophony of educational jargon, buzzwords, test scores and public criticism. What they have to say is important, and their voices need to be heard above the din of conventional rhetoric. There is an ever-growing

community of critical English teachers who need to feel affirmed in what they are doing, who need to feel that they are not fighting alone, who need to feel that they not merely "beat[ing] on, boats against the current..." (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 182). This dissertation will reflect the feelings and concerns of five such teachers who are strongly committed to their profession, but who are willing to question the system when they see things that ought to be changed. Their individual focuses and approaches may be different, but they share the willingness to become involved in the present debate over educational reform. They are not mere bystanders; they stand at the center of the fray.

The Sample

One might ask why I chose only English teachers to discuss as critical educators. Aren't other teachers concerned with critical pedagogy as well? Of course they are. However, English teachers, by the very nature of the discipline they teach, may be able to establish critical pedagogy within their classrooms more readily than those engaged in other disciplines. The teaching of English is concerned with literature, composition and grammar, and in a critical English classroom, these three components are integrated in such a way that students are encouraged to communicate openly in a variety of written and oral forms. Indeed, discussion is crucial in the critical

English classroom. Moreover, the literature itself provides a text which students and teachers can critically analyze and relate to their own lives.

I chose to include only women in my study because as a woman, gender is a very important issue for me. Although there are many male English teachers, women still dominate high school English departments (Schmuck, 1987). Because they do, they enjoy a unique position in secondary schools where males are actually in a slight majority (Schmuck, 1987). However, women still comprise the majority of teachers in the overall education profession. Over the years, I have come to question my role as a woman within the high school setting and, indeed, within the profession itself. My feelings concerning gender represent an important aspect of my definition of myself as a critical educator. Therefore, it is important to me that other female English teachers have the opportunity to voice their opinions and views concerning this issue. Clearly, there is a need for a feminine discourse in the field of secondary education.

The five women in this study represent two school systems and four different schools in a southern state. One school system is located in a mid-sized city with a student population comprised of 50 percent black students and 50 percent white students. The other school system is located in a rural area with a student population that is

approximately 97 percent white and three percent black. (Other minorities are represented in these two systems, but their percentages are negligible.) These women are all white, and they were all reared in the South. They range in age from 27 to 48. Four of them are married and have children, and one is single. Their teaching experience varies from eight years at the least to 21 years at the most. These particular women were selected for this study because they have reputations as strong, outspoken teachers whose classrooms afford students the opportunity for critical thinking, intellectual inquiry, and relevant discussion.

Methodology

This dissertation represents a qualitative study of five women English teachers. It is concerned not only with what goes on in their classrooms, but also with their lives and the ways teaching impacts upon them as women. It is not intended to generalize to the larger population of female English teachers; rather, it is intended to express the feelings of specific English teachers at specific times in their lives. Shapiro (1983) describes this type of research as:

> . . . a process that emphasizes sensitivity to the situation at hand rather than the capacity to make deductive inferences about what, in a rationally ordered universe, one might expect in any other apparently similar situation. (p. 129)

In keeping with this definition, this dissertation speaks to the lived experiences of "real" teachers who often read literature about teaching and say to themselves, "Why doesn't somebody ask me about teaching? I wish the public could, for once, see what it is really like in my classroom." This study will give voice to these women so that they can indeed tell "what it is really like." According to Shapiro, this type of research "concerns itself with the ways in which people understand, make sense of, and hence, act in the world" (p. 133). And it is the intent of this particular research to describe how these five women "understand, make sense of, and act" in their worlds.

After I contacted these teachers and they agreed to participate in this study, I sent them some background information and some critical issues to consider before I actually interviewed them. Specifically, I sent them my definition of myself as a critical educator. In addition, I sent them a loose framework of questions centered around their teaching roles as intellectuals, as professionals, as women, and as critical educators. The interviews themselves were rather unstructured. Having received the preliminary information I sent them, the women informally discussed these issues as they pertained to their own individual experiences. I asked some follow-up questions, but, for the most part, the teachers themselves

constructed their own interviews. Each interview lasted approximately two and one half hours.

Constructing the Dissertation

In writing this dissertation, I called upon my experiences as an English major both in undergraduate and graduate school. In each instance, I was required to analyze literature using a particular literary work as my primary text. Working from the primary text, I used literary criticism as secondary sources to support my contentions, or I used the primary text to refute arguments offered by particular literary critics. In this dissertation the transcripts of the interviews served as my primary text, and the writings of various educators, particularly those of critical educators, served as my secondary sources. Just as with a work of literature, I critically analyzed the transcripts of these teachers' interviews and used their comments to support or refute contentions made by education writers, giving particular emphasis to literature concerned with critical pedagogy.

In organizing this dissertation, I elected to digress somewhat from the traditional format where the second chapter usually consists of a review of literature. Since I am concerned with the various roles of the female critical educator, I felt that a chapter reviewing the literature on all these roles would lack focus. Therefore, I decided to feature a particular role in each

chapter excluding the first one. The beginning of each succeeding chapter reviews some of the literature concerned with that particular aspect of critical pedagogy. Then the voices of the English teachers express their individual beliefs, concerns and values. Interwoven throughout the remarks of the teachers are additional comments from secondary sources. I conclude each chapter by drawing comparisons between the realities of these teachers' experiences and the theories and arguments presented in the literature. In some cases, I discuss further implications suggested by the teachers' discourse.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II discusses the English teacher as an intellectual. It begins with a survey of literature concerned with teachers as intellectuals (Lightfoot, 1983; Giroux, 1988; Weiler, 1988; Greene, 1988). The teachers in this study then define themselves as intellectuals, and their definitions are compared to one another. They also discuss their administrators' views of them as intellectuals as well as the perceptions of the general public. Additionally, the tension between the English teacher as intellectual and the realities of her work is explored.

Chapter III looks at the English teacher as a professional. I use the writings of the Boston Women's Teachers' Group (1983), Apple (1983), Casey and Apple

(1989), Lortie (1975), Lightfoot (1983), and Goodlad (1984) to establish a critical framework with which these teachers' comments can be compared and contrasted. Once again, the teachers define themselves, but this time, as professionals. They compare their definitions of professionals with those of their administrators, and they express concern that they are not treated as professionals. Inherent in their concepts of professional is the need for more collegiality. Further, they discuss teacher empowerment and shared decision making. Finally, they examine the way their personal lives intertwine with their professional lives.

Chapter IV is concerned with the issue of the English teacher as woman. The writings of Greene (1978) and Grumet (1988) provide a historical perspective of women's roles in education while Schmuck (1987) furnishes statistical data to demonstrate that men still hold the majority of educational administrative positions in the United States. Against this background, the women in this study talk about the fact that teachers act out both explicit and implicit male/female roles in secondary schools, and they agree that female teachers perform the bulk of the menial "work" at their schools. They also discuss women educators in leadership positions, and they delineate what they perceive to be critical issues for women in education.

Chapter V examines the English teacher as a critical educator within the classroom. A brief review of the literature dealing with this issue includes the works of Freire (1970; 1987), Giroux and Simon (1988), and Greene (1978). In this chapter, the teachers discuss the ways they implement critical pedagogy in their classrooms, and they describe the realities of the English classroom in the 1990's. Of significance in this chapter is the fact that these teachers consider nurturance to be an integral part of their definitions of themselves as critical educators.

In concluding, I emphasize those teacher views which appear to add new dimensions to the literature on critical pedagogy. Specifically, I reiterate the nature of intellectualism as perceived by women teachers. In addition, I discuss professionalism as defined in terms of commitment and collegiality. The issue of sexism and inequities in gender in schools is another major concern. Of special significance is the view that nurturance is integral to these teachers' self-concepts as critical educators. Finally, I express the realities of high school classrooms in the 1990's and the difficulties associated with the establishment of critical pedagogy in such classrooms.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH TEACHER AS INTELLECTUAL

Introduction

In Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning, Giroux (1988) speaks of the necessity for teachers to be transformative intellectuals to empower themselves as well as the students they teach. He argues that the category of intellectual is important because it provides a theoretical framework for defining the work of teachers as intellectual labor instead of as technical or instrumental labor. Regarding teachers as intellectuals recognizes the significant concept that "all human activity involves some form of thinking" (p. 125). Giroux remarks:

> This is a crucial issue, because by arguing that the use of the mind is a general part of all human activity we dignify the human capacity for integrating thinking and practice, and in doing so highlight the core of what it means to view teachers as reflective practitioners. (p. 125)

As reflective practitioners, teachers have the responsibility of asking serious questions about what they teach and how they teach it, always cognizant of the larger goals they are striving to reach. In such a capacity, teachers must take an active role in "shaping

the purposes and conditions of schooling" (126). Accordingly, if we believe that teaching should transcend training in technical skills and concern itself primarily with "the education of a class of intellectuals vital to the development of a free society" (p. 126), then the category of intellectual connects "the purpose of teacher education, public schooling and inservice training to the very principles necessary for developing a democratic order and society" (p. 126).

Keeping this perspective in mind, Giroux takes issue with some radical educators who only view schools as "agencies of social reproduction" where teachers "are portrayed" (p. xxxi) as having become completely submerged in the process. In this view, teachers function as technicians to perpetuate the dominant ideology rather than as intellectual agents of change. Giroux calls for radical educators to move beyond these assumptions to develop a "discourse that combines the language of critique with the language of possibility" (p. xxxii). With such a discourse, teachers can reflect, research, and work collegially. And as transformative intellectuals, they can educate their students to view the world critically as a means to effecting change.

Weiler (1988), in Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class and Power, examines more specifically the issue of women teachers as intellectuals. She argues that

female teachers are not "simply parts of some mechanism of social reproduction; nor are their lives dictated by the demands of capital, racism or patriarchy in such a way that they are mere automatons" (p. 148). Instead, teachers are "actors and agents in complex social sites where social forces powerfully shape the limits of what is possible" (p. 148). Weiler notes, however, that it is not always easy for teachers to act as intellectuals within existing school settings. In particular, she acknowledges that critical high school teachers are confronted with such obstacles as curricular constraints, administrative mandates and parental pressures. In addition, high school teachers are not considered to be "scholars or independent authorities" (p. 151). Instead, they are perceived in terms of their functions as teachers in a "technocratic vision of schooling" (p. 151). Of more concern than the consideration of teachers as intellectuals is the concern over their students' test scores and whether these meet the criteria established by state and local educational agencies. In addition, women high school teachers are often seen as the nurturing aspect of a social setting where men provide the "expert guidance" (p. 151). According to Weiler then, high school settings rarely provide the kinds of atmosphere generally conducive to the intellectual growth of teachers.

In "The Lives of Teachers," Lightfoot (1983) finds this non-intellectual atmosphere problematic for teachers in terms of their own personal growth and self-fulfillment. She remarks that the "intellectual and psychic growth" (p. 258) of teachers inevitably impacts upon their self-confidence, their willingness to take risks and their creative approach to classroom teaching. In her own studies, she has determined that teachers' "malaise" results not from overwork, but from "feelings of disconnection from the intellectual and psychic center of the educational process" (p. 258). Greene (1988), in The Dialectic of Freedom, also addresses this sense of disconnectedness. Like Weiler, she talks about state mandates and testing requirements which prevent teachers from realizing their own intellectual potential. According to Greene, the number of teachers whose intellectual growth has been stunted may be greater than we realize. She suggests, "there may be thousands who, in the absence of support systems, have elected to be silent" (p. 14). She challenges these teachers to go in search of their own intellectual freedom because only in doing so can the critical teacher ask her students to do the same. Both Greene and Lightfoot, however, recognize the reality that our present educational systems often silence those critical educators who have the intellectual capacity to become agents of change.

Giroux, Weiler, Lightfoot and Greene clearly delineate some of the issues concerning the role of teacher as intellectual. They admit the barriers to the intellectual growth of teachers inherent in most educational systems, and they recognize that only as intellectuals can teachers take a critically pedagogical approach to their teaching. However, other questions concerning teachers as intellectuals arise in terms of my own research with women English teachers. For example, do English teachers consider themselves to be intellectuals? How do they define the term intellectual, and are their definitions consistent with one another? Are they considered to be intellectuals by their administrators, by the general public? As English teachers, are they more likely to be viewed as intellectuals than are other high school teachers? Finally, what kind of tension exists between the concept of teacher as intellectual and the reality of what English teachers are actually expected to do?

In this chapter I explore these issues because it has been my experience as a high school English teacher that teachers are generally reluctant to define themselves as intellectuals. This reluctance seems somewhat paradoxical to me because by the very nature of the profession, most high school teachers, and especially English teachers, are continuously engaged in those activities usually

associated with intellectualism -- research, analysis, critical thinking and reflection. And yet they still fail to perceive themselves as intellectuals. This paradox begs the question -- why? Using this question as a springboard, I opened the discussion of English teacher as intellectual with the teachers in my study. Their responses were revealing, and the issue was important to them although some admitted that they had not seriously considered it until I asked them to. Nevertheless, their remarks proved to be insightful as well as provocative. What they had to say demonstrates that this kind of discourse is absolutely essential if critical teachers are to think of themselves as transformative intellectuals and act accordingly.

Defining Intellectual

When I opened my discussions with the women in my study, the first question I asked was, "Do you consider yourself to be an intellectual?" Surprisingly, only two of the teachers replied "yes" without hesitation. Two others admitted that their initial reaction to the question was "no," but after thinking about the definition of the word, they concluded that "yes, they must be intellectuals." The fifth teacher was very reluctant to name herself an intellectual. At first she remarked, "I would say that I'm in pursuit of it always. . . . I probably think of myself more as instructional leader and

do not tag [myself] intellectual." After much discussion, she concluded:

> I guess I kind of like that idea [being an intellectual], but that's not the reason I wanted to teach English. I've become more comfortable with it. I shied away from it for a long time.

Clearly, this teacher feels uncomfortable with the label of intellectual, a feeling which seems ironic considering that she holds three degrees, attends workshops, belongs to professional organizations and reads current literature on education and the teaching of English.

If we look at the way this woman defines intellectual along with the other women's definitions, we may gain some insight into their perceptions of themselves as intellectuals. The teacher who was uncomfortable with herself as an intellectual defines the term in this way: "I guess I would define an intellectual as one who is in pursuit of knowledge and skills and ways to enhance the student's ability to learn. I see it as a process." When we look at her perception of herself as intellectual in the context of her definition, we can see that this perception is not as contradictory as it originally seemed. For instance, she speaks of intellectualism as a process. That she sees herself in process is evident when she speaks of being "in pursuit of" and "becoming more comfortable with it." In addition, she regards herself as

an "instructional leader," a self-description which parallels that part of her definition which talks about "ways to enhance the student's ability to learn." Thus, her view of herself as an intellectual aligns itself very closely with her personal definition.

Two teachers were willing to call themselves intellectuals, but only after redefining the term for themselves. One of these teachers describes her initial reaction: "When I thought intellectual, I thought, no, not _____; she is not an intellectual, nobody looks at her as an intellectual." Upon reflection, however, she went to the dictionary and looked up the word:

> . . . and it [the dictionary] says it is a person who is able to reason and understand concepts and can apply that or whatever, and I thought, "well, based on that definition, I guess maybe I am an intellectual to a certain extent" which made me feel good about myself.

The other teacher admitted that she originally assessed herself as a non-intellectual, but instead of turning to the dictionary, she reconsidered the term and defined it for herself.

> I think an intellectual is somebody who thinks beyond the surface, who looks for other options, other solutions, other angles to a problem or anything, thinks critically, reflects, that kind of thing -- they never just accept things for the way they are.

When she examined the idea of intellectual in this context, she realized that she mirrored her own definition.

So why were these women initially reluctant to think of themselves as intellectuals? Their own words indicate that they probably called upon stereotypical concepts of intellectuals to formulate their original assessments. For example, the first teacher explains that she had originally defined intellectual as:

> . . . somebody who has a very high IQ, who is very aware of what's going on in the world, who has studied a particular area. I'm talking about in the science field or some other. . . math field, maybe.

The second teacher similarly remarks:

> When you first asked me to look at this, I didn't consider myself as an intellectual, and I got to thinking about it, and I thought, "well, what does an intellectual do?" and I guess when you first think about an intellectual, you think about a person who's really smart or really book smart or something like that, but that's not what I think an intellectual is after I look beyond it. I guess looking beyond it makes me an intellectual in that sense.

This teacher's reflection indicates that she is now willing to name herself an intellectual according to her own definition instead of comparing herself to some stereotypical image. We sense a very positive feeling in her thinking of herself in this way, a feeling echoed by the other teacher who, upon recognizing that she is indeed

an intellectual, says that thinking of herself in this way makes her feel good about herself.

The remarks of these teachers would seem to suggest that there is something essentially masculine about the notion of being an intellectual. For example, one teacher says that she normally thinks of those who teach math or science as intellectuals. Certainly, there are many women who teach these subjects, but males predominate as teachers of these disciplines (Schmuck, 1987). In addition, science and math presumably require more analytical skills than do the humanities. And the perception is there that analytical attributes tend to be masculine in nature.

The comments of these teachers also suggest that there is an elitism, a connotation of superiority, which accompanies the label of intellectual. One teacher, despite her educational background, had a great deal of difficulty coming to terms with herself as an intellectual, almost as though she felt she were unworthy of such a designation. Another teacher indicated that her initial association with the word <u>intellectual</u> was a "high IQ." The reluctance of these teachers to call themselves intellectuals implies that they have tended to reserve the label of intellectual for those whom they perceive to be intellectually superior to themselves. Their initial perceptions of themselves as non-intellectuals would

also suggest that teachers, in general, need to reconsider their definitions of intellectual. The concept of intellectual for the English teacher, and for all teachers, should be more inclusive and less exclusive.

And what about those teachers who unequivocally consider themselves intellectuals? One of them defines intellectual in terms of her own intellect.

> Well, I like to read, I like to learn, I can assimilate information pretty well and relate it to what else I know and pull it together and I think those are qualities you have to have if you're going to consider yourself an intellectual.

The other teacher presents her definition.

> When I think about being intellectual, I think about somebody who is a thinker, someone who is a reader, a writer, someone who is a growing person, growing intellectually, changing, not staying the same. It's somebody who continues to pursue an interest, maybe different interests, trying different things, someone who wants to stay current on what's going on in their profession or maybe just something that they're interested in or maybe, what's going on in the world and reflects on it and reacts to it -- maybe acts on it sometimes.

When we look at these definitions as compared to those of the other teachers, we see more similarities than dissimilarities, so it seems curious that they immediately termed themselves intellectuals when the others did not. While I am reluctant to make any kind of definitive judgment as to why these teachers clearly perceive themselves as intellectuals, I would note that both of

these women exude self-confidence. Their interviews suggest that they have been outspoken since the beginning of their teaching careers while it appears that the others were more cautious about speaking out as beginning teachers. A distinction between these two teachers, however, is that one of them teaches in a school system where intellectualism is valued. This kind of atmosphere would seem to be a factor in her naming herself an intellectual. A commonality that these women share is that both of them spoke about having to overcome adversity in their lives. One woman was extremely poor growing up; the other was a single parent for a few years, and both described these situations as growing and strengthening experiences. These were also experiences which forced them to rely on themselves, an independence which may have contributed to their self-concepts as intellectual women.

Are all these teachers' definitions consistent with the aims of critical pedagogy? The Brazilian educator, Freire, believes that all men and women are intellectuals. He feels that human beings act intellectually by constantly "interpreting and giving meaning to the world and by participating in a particular conception of the world" (Giroux, 1988, p. 118). Gramsci (1980) writes of the "organic intellectual," a term used to describe the relationship between the teacher and the student. Gramsci believes that this relationship is

"active and reciprocal" because "every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher" (p. 350). Thus, as the students become more critically aware, so does the teacher, and it is through this awareness that the teacher becomes an organic intellectual. The definitions given by the women in this study would certainly be consistent with those offered by Freire and Gramsci. These women speak of process, of reasoning, of assimilation, of growth, of application, of learning, of reflection, of questioning -- all organic processes which one might use to interpret and give meaning to the world. In addition, all of these characteristics would be appropriate in a reciprocal teacher/student relationship. Therefore, within the context of critical pedagogy, these women certainly fulfill the role of intellectual.

Of course, we must also remember that the definitions constructed by Freire and Gramsci differ from the way the term intellectual has come to be understood in America. As I have already mentioned, the label carries with it both masculine and elitest connotations. Those who are labeled intellectuals are often described as dwelling in their ivory towers, oblivious to the concerns and realities of the real world. For the teacher, this translates to the concerns and realities of her classroom. Teachers, and English teachers are no exception, often feel that university professors have no

concept of the difficulties of turning theory into praxis. Consequently, there is a distrust of intellectualism on the basis that it is not grounded in reality. With this distrust comes a reluctance on the part of teachers to define themselves as intellectuals.

What is needed here is a discourse in education which examines the cultural implications of the term intellectual as it is perceived in America. We need to move away from the elitest associations with intellectualism and move toward its organic connotations. If American teachers can begin to see their intellectuality in the context of their relationships with their students, then perhaps they will become more comfortable with the designation.

Others' Perceptions

In coming to the realization that she is an intellectual, one of the teachers asks:

> Where have we gotten this idea that we're not [intellectuals]? It's probably what we've been told. We haven't been looked at as intellectuals.

Another teacher voices a similar sentiment.

> I think we have some teachers at [our school] who do think of themselves that way, but I think that's a weakness in our profession. I think sometimes it's hammered out of us by the way we're treated. . . . teachers are a beaten down group of people, and I guess a lot of them don't think of themselves as intellectuals.

These statements reflect Giroux's (1988) contention that the work of teachers has been increasingly devalued in recent years. He goes on to say that what goes on in schools is determined by "curricular, instructional, and evaluation experts who do the thinking while teachers are reduced to doing the implementing" (p. 124). As a result, teachers are becoming "deskilled" (p. 125) in the sense that they are removed from intellectual activites such as reflection and decision making involved in curriculum development which directly affect them and the students they teach. It is no wonder that teachers feel they are not looked upon as intellectuals.

If teachers are not viewed as intellectuals then, how are they viewed by their administrators and by the public in general? In "Teaching: An Imperilled 'Profession,'" the Boston Women's Teachers' Group (1983) outlines some examples of the main conflicts involving teachers in public education. Although the teachers they write about are elementary teachers, the conflicts they describe are common to high school teachers as well. One conflict specifically concerns itself with administrators' perceptions of teachers.

> Teachers work in an institution which supposedly prepares its clients for adulthood, but which views those entrusted with this task, the teachers themselves, as incapable of mature judgment. (p. 263)

This statement is borne out by the teachers in this study as they discuss their administrators' perceptions of them.

Although generally, the teachers feel they are not regarded as intellectuals within their profession, they offer different opinions on this issue. One teacher uses the metaphor of a chess game to describe the way teachers are regarded by administrators.

> No, they look at us as pieces on a chess board in my view, and we move these around especially when it comes to scheduling. I think there are exceptions, but by and large, over the last ten years, I'd have to say that politics had more to do with assigned teaching assignments than my intellectual gifts or my skills in the classroom. . . .

The feeling that teachers are not rewarded for their intellectualism is evident in this statement, a sentiment echoed by another teacher when asked if teachers are rewarded for their intellectualism:

> On the whole, probably not. If you are conforming, if you do what you're told and you don't throw a lot of ringers in, those are the kinds of people who are rewarded.

She goes on to suggest that teachers are not regarded as intellectuals by their administrators because administrators may be intimidated by intellectualism.

> I think the reason that some administrators are intimidated by intellectual teachers is that they maybe feel insecure because I don't think our

> administrators are trained to be good administrators. I don't think that they're trained to be intellectuals often, and this is stereotyping I know, but often they're ex-coaches -- they're jocks and I'm falling into a thing I try to get my students not to do which is to generalize, but it's the truth in our school system. So many of our principals are ex-coaches who were P.E. teachers or Drivers Ed. teachers, and they haven't been in an intellectual, stimulating setting as far as the reading, the writing, the conversing, the dialogue with other people who are interested in the same things, and then somebody comes along who is, I think they're threatened. I think it taps on their insecurity. I don't know if that's off-base or not.

Far from being off-base, this teacher is probably expressing a reality present in many secondary schools. Both of these teachers may actually be raising the issue of control in competition with intellectualism. If one is threatened intellectually, he/she may seek to exert control through something like scheduling, for example. It is a way of saying that a teacher's talents as an intellectual in the classroom are secondary to the fact that instrumentally, she may fit better in such and such a time slot. In addition, her identity as an intellectual may very well have to be minimized if she is to be thought of as a loyal member of the educational team.

Not all of the teachers in this study reacted in the same way to the question of how they are perceived by administrators, however. One teacher identified with the question very personally and related it to her principal.

> I think my principal must consider me an intellectual or he considers me a person who can get the job done because of the things that he gives me to do, or he'll come to me with a letter . . . "Will you proofread this letter?" which makes me feel real good because I think, "O.K., he must think I'm pretty competent. . . .

This statement demonstrates contradictions in the relationship between administrator and teacher as intellectual. On the one hand, the principal clearly trusts this teacher's intelligence and judgment. He appears to be implicitly stating, "I realize you have an area of expertise here that I don't have," and this is a positive aspect of the relationship. In addition, the teacher feels that her principal values her intellectualism, so she is affirmed in this regard. On the other hand though, she displays some ambivalence when she says that he considers her to be a person who can get the job done, an evaluation which speaks more to her efficiency than to her intellectualism.

In contrast, another teacher feels that she is definitely regarded as an intellectual by her principals and her administrators, but a real difference emerges when we consider her situation. Unlike some of the other teachers, she considers her administrators to be intellectuals themselves.

> We're lucky. Our two principals -- I would consider both of them intellectuals. I would really consider the four superintendents that we have -- they are

> very smart people, and I would consider them intellectuals, every one of them. They have a lot of good ideas; they're able to assimilate their ideas and to put it with what they know and what they know about our system and make things work, so we're lucky in our leadership.

These remarks raise another question. Is the idea of being regarded as an intellectual reciprocal? If teachers view their administrators as intellectuals, are they more likely to regard themselves as intellectuals? The other teachers in this study were not as willing as this teacher to accord their administrators intellectual status. We have already heard one teacher's comments that administrators are often ex-coaches who have not been involved in intellectual dialogue. In subsequent remarks, she indicates that she does not regard many of the administrators she has encountered as intellectuals.

> And I know I'm smarter than any principal I've ever worked for except one, and if you think about -- like I say, I know that sounds cocky, but here they are in a high position, and sometimes they're really stupid. I mean sometimes they're really dumb people! And they're the ones making the decisions, and they're the ones making a lot more money.

Another teacher reveals some of the same sentiments.

> You can look at administration as far as the central office level. I look at them as being role models as far as intellectuals are concerned, but yet evidently, I don't think there's much reasoning and understanding [that] goes into half of what they do. It's just a political system like anything else, and so whatever is popular at that point or whoever is

> popular at that point, then, that's their reasoning behind doing what they do or what they're asking us to do.

These two teachers do not see the overall leadership in their systems as intellectual, and by the same token, they do not feel that their leadership generally considers them to be intellectuals. Contrast their conclusions with those of the teacher who has indicated that in some systems, at least, teachers' intellectualism is being validated. Perhaps the difference in her system is that those on the administrative level are themselves intellectuals who, consequently, respect the intellectualism of their teachers. That teachers in this system view their administrators as intellectuals would also seem to be a significant factor. The teacher in this system is quick to point out, however, that she has not always regarded her administrators as intellectuals and acknowledges that she has "worked for some fools." The realization that she could again is evident in her statement, "But for now, for one brief moment, we've had some really good leadership." She appears here to be holding her breath, fearful that this kind of leadership may be only temporary. Nevertheless, the fact that she feels that her intellectualism as well as that of her colleagues is valued suggests that teaching in this kind of atmosphere encourages teachers to think of themselves as intellectuals and to act accordingly.

As we have seen, with one exception, the teachers in this study do not feel that their intellectualism is valued by their administrators. They use such metaphors as "pawns in a chess game" and "people who can get the job done" to describe their perceptions of how they are often regarded by administrators. In these cases, the administrators are seen as the decision makers while teachers are the implementers, roles which reflect Apple's (1983) and Giroux's (1988) assertions that teacher work has become devalued and deskilled. Giroux notes, in particular, that deskilling has resulted in removing teachers from "the process of deliberation and reflection" (p. 125). Indeed, teachers are seldom encouraged to deliberate and reflect as evidenced by comments that those teachers who are rewarded are those who conform. In addition, some administrators may feel threatened by intellectual teachers whom they feel they cannot control. Fortunately, as one teacher has testified, some school systems do regard and even expect their teachers to act as intellectuals. This attitude is encouraging and may even suggest an emerging trend in the way administrators view teachers. The current movement in education toward site-based management and shared decision making may compel teachers to act as intellectuals and, in turn, force administrators to recognize this intellectualism.

If teachers are not regarded as intellectuals within their profession, how are they regarded outside of it, by the general public? The consensus among these teachers is that they are not regarded as intellectuals by the public. Their responses are remarkably similar. One teacher comments:

> I think they [the public] look at us as hired help, state workers. . . . I don't think we're regarded by the average Joe on the street as intellectual. We're the caretaker of their children. We're the babysitters. "You take care of him. You make the decisions. You straighten out his drug problem. You deal with his temper. I don't know what to do with him." The parents say, "I can't do anything with him at home or with her so you take care of him." So I don't think we're viewed as intellectuals at all. We're viewed more like social workers maybe.

Another teacher voices a similar viewpoint.

> I think they think of us as babysitters. I think they think of us as second mothers. Probably they look at us as people they can threaten into getting the job done when they can't do it at home.

A third teacher says essentially the same thing.

> I think they [the public] think that anybody can be a teacher. Somebody just decides they want to teach, they can do it. I know that there's a very small percentage who do know that we provide a good service, but I don't think service is a good word for it, but some people probably just think that it's glorified babysitting or not that we know a specific area. "You're an English teacher, but I could teach English." So, no, I don't think they see us as intellectuals.

These teachers' remarks substantiate Weiler's view that it is not always easy for teachers to act as intellectuals in high school settings because of parental perceptions. These statements also reflect Lightfoot's contentions about teachers' feelings of disconnectedness from the intellectual center of the educational process. Each of these teachers feels that the public regards her as a babysitter. But more significantly, each voices the frustrations of a teacher in public schools at the end of the twentieth century where teachers are expected to do much more than teach. They are expected to be surrogate parents and solve those problems which many parents have opted not to and which society cannot. One teacher sums up her frustrations.

> I was hired to teach, but yet I know that there are times I have to be a nurse, I have to be a mother, I have to be a person just who'll listen, a psychologist, a guidance counselor, and I don't mind doing that, but I don't have enough hours in the day to be that kind of person.

All of these comments emphasize how imperative it is for teachers to heed Giroux's (1988) exhortation to organize a collective voice to deal not only with their "increasing loss of power around the basic conditions of their work," but also to change public perception "of their role as reflective practitioners" (p. 122). Giroux cites Scheffler who declares that teachers should be

"viewed as free men and women with a special dedication to the values of the intellect and the enhancement of the critical powers of the young" (p. 125). As we have seen, however, the reality of the public's perception of teachers contrasts sharply with the ideal proposed by Scheffler.

In their comments on the public's perceptions of them as babysitters, these women raise another issue in regard to intellectualism and gender. Implicit in their statements is the notion that, somehow, intellectualism is incompatible with caring. Nevertheless, as will be noted in the chapters, "English Teacher as Woman" and "English Teacher as Critical Educator," all these women indicate that caring and nurturance are important aspects of their teaching. Thus, there seems to be a tension in the way they perceive themselves as intellectuals. But, perhaps, the tension is not of their own making. When they say the public regards them as babysitters, they are telling us that the public does not recognize them for their expertise in their subject matter. They are not negating their nurturing characteristics here, but they are stating that they are not respected for their knowledge and their educational background. It may even be this lack of respect which contributes to their reluctance to name themselves as intellectuals.

These teachers have addressed the issue of how teachers are perceived by administrators and by the public, but how are they perceived specifically as English teachers? Does the discipline of English carry with it an association with intellectualism? A majority of these teachers do feel that as English teachers, they are generally perceived as intellectuals by their peers. As one teacher explains:

> English teachers, I think, are probably perceived more intellectually than other academic areas because they know that we read and we write, and that sounds real basic and real stupid, but they know we probably read and write more than anybody else does.

Another teacher takes a different perspective as she talks about herself as an intellectual within the classroom itself.

> I think it's easier to think intellectually as an English teacher because you have so many options with literature. You can go with so many different angles and make kids think so many different ways. . . . You have to force them to, and a lot of times, they don't want to think a different way. So I think as an English teacher, you have more options to get them to think intellectually.

Still another dimension is added by a teacher who feels she is regarded as an intellectual because of the extra activities English teachers are called upon to carry out.

> It seems to me that the English faculty, of all the disciplines, the English faculty emerges as somewhat of the intellectuals, if we have one in high school.

> . . . we're called on to write the letters, to edit newspapers, to do the annual, to arrange awards banquets and all of the extracurricular that has anything to do with writing or speaking so there is some perception -- it could be that we're just the workhorses, I'm not sure.

It is interesting to note that few of these teachers feel they are perceived as intellectuals in their overall role as teacher. But when the distinction is made between being "just a teacher" and being an English teacher, they feel they are more likely than other high school teachers to be perceived by their peers as intellectuals. The perception is that English teachers read and write more than other secondary teachers, a perception which may or may not be accurate. Nevertheless, it does contribute to English teachers' reputation as the intellectuals within a high school setting. In addition, English teachers tend to engage in intellectual activities such as critical thinking, analysis and writing within the classroom, further evidence of their intellectualism. English teachers are also perceived to be intellectuals because they take the responsibility for a disproportionate share of extracurricular duties. But as one teacher suggests, does this mean that English teachers are perceived as intellectuals or does it mean they are merely "workhorses"?

English Teachers: Intellectuals or Workhorses?

One of the dilemmas for the female high school English teacher is the tension which exists between the reflective kind of work associated with intellectualism and the actual kinds of work she is expected to perform. Because of state mandated constraints and extracurricular duties, English teachers find themselves with little time left for intellectual growth. Apple (1983) discusses this issue in "Work, Gender, and Teaching" where he refers to the problem as "intensification" (p. 317) which is essentially a way of diminishing the working benefits of educational workers. To illustrate, teachers are so inundated with work generated by such things as curriculum goals, strategies, testing and record keeping that they hardly have time even to go to the bathroom or have a cup of coffee, let alone the time to "keep up with one's field" (p. 318). Apple finds intensification particularly disturbing because it contributes to the intellectual deskilling of teachers who are forced, from lack of time, to rely "more heavily on ideas and processes provided by experts" (p. 318) instead of turning to their own intellectual resources. In addition, intensification tends to "destroy the sociability of nonmanual workers" to the extent that their sense of community is "redefined around the needs of the labor process" (p. 318). For high school English teachers, the isolation described by Apple

is demonstrated by the lack of time so desperately needed for the collegiality which would afford them the opportunity to discuss critical issues in the teaching of English. In essence, they have little time left to attend to their intellectual needs.

Time, or the lack of it, is one of the themes that pervades the comments of the teachers in this study. They bemoan the fact that there is never enough time to get everything done. We have already heard the lament of one teacher who feels she does not have time left over to teach because of the many other roles she has to fill. Moreover, the nature of the discipline itself requires that English teachers teach writing, a necessity which compels them to spend many hours beyond their regular school day reading and grading writing assignments. Spencer-Hall (1981) confirms this reality in "Teachers as Persons: Case Studies of the Lives of Women Teachers," where she notes that in her study, beginning teachers had many more hours of outside preparation than did experienced teachers with the exception of English teachers who "at all years of experience took home great quantities of paperwork" (p. 25). Teachers in my study validate Spencer's observations.

> There's not enough time. There's just not enough time for an English teacher. There's too many papers; there's too many students; there's -- that is an endless source of frustration. There's too many

> different things to teach. . . . We're all having to teach kids communication skills, literature, the composition, the research, and nobody has really looked at that realistically -- what we're being asked to do in the time period that we're being asked to do it. . . . it's a formula for failure, I think. It's amazing we do what we do.

Another teacher despairs, ". . . sometimes I think we get bogged down in the teaching process and do not feel ourselves growing or having the time to grow intellectually. . . ."

One reason why English teachers often feel they do not have the time to grow intellectually is that in addition to those duties which are a part of a regular school day, they often perform a disproportionate amount of extracurricular duties as compared to other faculty members. Clearly, this disparity is the case with the teachers in this study. Not a single one of them is "only" an English teacher. Two of them are also coaches, positions which require staying after school virtually every afternoon during athletic season for practice and games. Along with their coaching duties, they are required to drive activity buses to transport team members to away games. Those English teachers who do not coach are still responsible for a large number of extracurricular duties. One teacher enumerated the duties assigned to her English department: "We have the newspaper; we have the yearbook; we have the National

Forensic League; we have student council. . . ." The fact that her department is responsible for these major extracurricular activities is not an exception in high schools as indicated by the other teachers who confirm that the same is true in each of their schools. In addition to the duties her department carries out, this teacher explains what activities she is personally responsible for as co-sponsor of the student council at her school.

> You wouldn't believe the amount of time. Every weekend, it's something, either a football game or a basketball game, and one of the two of us has to go every weekend. We're in charge of everything from the prom, a lot of graduation activities -- we do everything. We do three activities minimum a month that are major. And it just about killed the other sponsor and me this year. I appreciate the supplement, I really do. I appreciate it very much, but as far as the time, you know, I think I'd be better off coaching football; it's over quicker.

This litany may sound like an exceptional amount of work in addition to teaching five English classes a day, but she adds:

> In addition to the student council, I'm secretary of the faculty council, I'm PTA liaison person, I work with two or three other groups in the school. I mean student council's not all I do.

Certainly, this teacher's list of duties represents what Apple refers to as intensification.

Why do they do it? Why don't they just say "no"? As

this teacher stated pragmatically, "Let's be realistic. Extra-curriculars are tied to your job." But there are other reasons as well, for certainly, not all high school teachers perform as many extra-curricular duties as English teachers do. Two of the teachers speculate about the reasons English teachers take on so many extra responsibilities. One teacher says:

> There is a disparity there. Now that bothers me. You know, we don't mind doing our share or being part of a committee, but much of the time, and look, what about? -- not just math people, but people in the business [education] professions? Here they have low numbers, few students. They're not asked to do what we're called on to do, probably because we're looked at as the ones who can get the job done and do it well. I think that's an intrinsic concept. You know we may not be called intellectuals, but that's a recognition of that, and I think that by the same token, when we're asked to do it, we feel honored and guilty, honored on the one hand and guilty if we don't. Why do we feel honored or guilty or both? I just think as women, I can speak for myself here, I just think it's easy to feel guilty.

Another teacher conjectures:

> I think English teachers because you are women, you are asked to do more which is a crock because I don't see what that has to do with it. You're given extra activities whether it's this club or that club. You're in charge of graduation, you're in charge of the prom or that type of thing when you have all these people over there who are men who aren't going to be in charge of any of this, and then on the other side of that, I think, if you want anything done right, you ask an English teacher. . . . The thing that bothers me about that sometimes is I think we take it on because we just want it done right. You're a fool if you do it thinking, "Well, this will be a feather in my cap. This is going to help me." No, the fool is the person who takes it because once

> you take that one, "hey, she's easy; I'll give her something to do," and sure enough, they come right around -- he asks you to do something else. Why we don't say no is beyond me, but I like to blame it on being a female, and that's the way the female has been perceived through all these years, so I've just sort of followed along in the footsteps, so I'm not going to change anything. It's going to be like that always. What difference am I going to make? But for some reason, we feel a little bit threatened if we say no.

Some common themes emerge in these statements. First, there is the idea that English teachers will "get the job done," that "they will do it right." Is there something about those of us who study the discipline of English which tends to make us more efficient, more competent, or are we simply perfectionists by nature? Perhaps, the discipline itself requires those who study it to be more meticulous than one might have to be in the study of other disciplines. Whatever the reason, the perception that English teachers can "get the job done right" is evident in most high schools.

Another common theme in these teachers' remarks is the idea that English teachers tend to take on extra duties because most of them are women and as such, are conditioned to the extra workload. One teacher speaks of feeling honored and guilty simultaneously and attributes the guilt to being a woman. The other teacher, however, speaks of being a fool for not saying "no," and in doing so, adds the dimension of somehow feeling threatened if

she says "no." It would seem that many feelings for these women as English teachers are tied into their notions of gender. There is the guilt that women sometimes feel, a guilt which compels them to acquiesce to things they would rather not do. Concomitant with this guilt, however, is the idea of feeling honored, of feeling affirmed because her work is valued and because she is considered to be competent and efficient. Finally, fear may be an underlying spectre in all of these dynamics. Generally, this fear is unspoken, but one teacher was very honest in acknowledging that it may be a subconscious fear within women that prevents them from saying "no" when they are asked to take on extra responsibilities which go far beyond what should be expected of a teacher who already teaches five full classes of English a day.

Because of their excessive workload, the English teachers in this study feel that they do not have time to be colleagues together, to discuss issues important to them in the field of education, to develop themselves intellectually. The extra duties they assume often force them into the isolation described by Apple. One of the teachers speaks about her hunger for collegiality and a sense of community.

> I . . . think we should have more opportunity to be colleagues together, and when I say that, some people look at me funny. But just the fact that we don't have a lounge where we can all be together as human

> beings. You know last week [in a workshop] we got off base sometimes but not much. I mean we had a chance to really talk and say what we thought about things and some really good things came out of it. We're not really given the chance to talk as intellectuals . . . .

The key statement here is that English teachers are not given the chance to talk as intellectuals, an opportunity which is absolutely essential if they are to be regarded as reflective practitioners. In addition, their voices as reflective practitioners need to be heard both within their profession and outside of it.

Implications for the English Teacher as Intellectual

The reflections of these teachers pose several implications for the English teacher as intellectual. First of all, English teachers need to redefine what it means to be an intellectual in light of Freire's belief that we act intellectually when we interpret and give meaning to our world. In addition, we need to take into account Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual. Too often, teachers look outside of themselves for their definitions of <u>intellectual</u> instead of looking within. English teachers also need to perceive themselves as intellectuals and project their images as such. For whatever reason, within education, there have been some negative connotations attached to the idea of intellectual. As one teacher notes, "If you're perceived as an intellectual, there's a certain amount of distrust

there." Another one says that as intellectuals, we are probably considered to be "booklovers that don't know what it's like in the outside world." These observations would suggest that teachers may be reluctant to define themselves as intellectuals because of a kind of elitism associated with the concept. Thus, teachers need to redefine intellectualism in non-elitest, non-masculine terms.

By thinking of themselves as intellectuals and acting as transformative intellectuals both within their classrooms and within their profession, English teachers can change the perceptions which both their administrators and the public have of them. But one or two English teachers here and there will not be able to change these perceptions. The need for collegiality and a collective voice is obvious. This collegiality should work toward eliminating or at least alleviating the problem of intensification described by Apple. Moreover, a collective voice of intellectual English teachers should be concerned with changing their role from implementers of curriculum to that of creators of curriculum. As Lightfoot (1983) advocates:

> Teachers must not be seen as empty vessels or mouthpieces for curriculum developers, but be intimately involved in shaping, developing, and interpreting the curriculum. They have a perspective on children and classroom life that is more subjective, more complex, and more intimate than the

> distant stance of policymakers and academic specialists. (p. 258)

Including teachers in curriculum development means that administrators and teachers would have to work together as critical educators instead of acting as antagonists. To do so, they must work in an atmosphere which respects intellectualism as opposed to one which views it as a threat. Moreover, as Lightfoot indicates, teachers' experience with children in a nurturing environment enhances rather than diminishes their intellectualism. As we have seen in the remarks of one of the teachers in this study, this kind of intellectual atmosphere is already in evidence in some systems. In those systems where it is not, the burden is on the teachers, and more specifically, on the English teachers to work collectively to create an atmosphere conducive to intellectual growth.

The collective voices of English teachers are important in defining their roles as transformative intellectuals within the education profession. It is virtually impossible, however, to separate English teacher as intellectual from English teacher as professional since both roles are integral to the development of the critical educator. Think of the critical educator as a mosaic in which all the pieces must be inlaid to complete the total picture. The picture is incomplete if any of the pieces are missing, but in order for it to be completed, the

individual pieces must complement each other. We have considered intellectualism, but how does it blend with professionalism in the creation of the critical English teacher? Chapter III will consider the role of the female English teacher as professional in the composition of a critical educator.

CHAPTER III

ENGLISH TEACHER AS PROFESSIONAL

Teachers and Professionalism

Autonomy, commitment, expertise -- all these words come to mind when we think about the term professional. Certainly, a professional possesses all these attributes, but when we consider the teacher as a professional, the term becomes problematic. The Boston Women's Teachers' Group (1983) traces the history of teacher as professional. In what it refers to as "the new ideology of professionalism" (p. 279), the group notes that in the 1950's, a different kind of teacher entered the education field. For the first time, the majority of new teachers were graduates of liberal arts programs with a teaching component integrated into their studies. They differed from earlier teachers who had graduated from normal schools where teacher education was seen as "a vocational training ground for a prescribed task" (p. 279). In addition, a large number of married women joined teacher ranks where they would not upset the division of sex roles as had the "Rosie the Riveters" (p. 279) following World War II. Still, married women continued to define their primary roles as wives and mothers rather than as teachers. In the late fifties and early sixties, the

professional status of teachers would undergo a change with the launching of Sputnik and the demand for the civil rights of minorities. School systems sought to recruit teachers who would see their primary roles as teachers and "who would take risks, whose allegiance to their pupils and a belief in their pupils' potential were paramount" (p. 281). What was required then was a new definition of teaching as "women's true profession" (p. 281). The focus would now be placed on the word profession instead of on the word women. According to the Boston group, implicit in the word profession is the notion of "a special expertise based on broad theoretical knowledge and on extended training" (p. 282). The new status of professional, however, did not preclude the nurturing aspect of teaching, but rather combined it with a "new awareness of cognitive development and technique" (p. 282).

So much for the idealized portrait of the teacher as professional, however. The reality would prove to be a contradiction for the teacher. The education literature of the sixties gave teachers hope that they could become forces of change in their profession. In truth, teachers became confused by their designations as professionals because the areas to which "their expertise could be applied became narrower and narrower" (p. 286). Teachers were encouraged to return to school for further degrees

and were invited to serve on curriculum committees, but they soon discovered that their input was rarely valued or acted upon. As their educational levels increased, so did the "disparity between their professional attainment and the inability to translate that new expertise to a strong position with the school" (p. 287). Thus, teachers came to feel increasingly alienated.

This feeling of alienation persists today. The designation of the teacher as professional suggests that one's expert knowledge in a particular field would be highly respected. This assumption would be inaccurate, however. The Boston group feels that the desire of teachers to be called professionals is actually problematic when one term is used to describe all teachers with no distinction between classroom teachers and the so-called specialists. Friction develops when the opinions of the "true professionals" (p. 289), the specialists, are more highly regarded than are those of classroom teachers. Yet, the "greater responsibility for each child is still charged to the classroom teacher" (p. 289). When the classroom teacher bears the primary responsibility for the well-being and instruction of the child while the administrators and specialists largely control the overall educational program, the result is that teachers feel powerless, demoralized and frustrated.

Apple (1983) speaks to the issue of teachers' feelings of powerlessness as they are related to class and gender. As we have seen earlier, Apple believes that teacher work has become increasingly deskilled and intensified, factors which contribute to the "contradictory class location of teachers" (p. 312). To define what he means by class location, Apple contends that teachers actually "share the interests" (p. 312) of two classes, the petty bourgeoisie and the working class. Specifically, he believes that when the economy impacts upon the teaching profession to the extent that teachers are laid off or their salaries are frozen, and when their work is restructured to such a degree that they lose control over it, then their status is more closely aligned with that of the "working class" than with the professional class. Part of the reason for this "proletarianization" (p. 312) of teachers can be attributed to gender since the majority of teachers are women while the majority of their administrators are men. To support this contention, Apple notes that:

> . . . over 90 percent of women's (paid) work falls into four basic categories: (1) employment in "peripheral" manufacturing industries and retail trades, and considerably now in the expanding but low-paid service sector of the economy; (2) clerical work; (3) health and education; and (4) domestic service. (p. 312)

Moreover, most women in the United States find themselves in the "lowest paid positions in these areas or at the bottom of the middle pay grades where there has been some mobility" (p. 312). Discrimination against women in the labor force is apparent, and the "pattern is largely reproduced within education" (p. 312).

Ironically, the proletarianization of teacher work evidenced in deskilling and intensification has led teachers to misinterpret their increased work load as a sign of their "increased professionalism" (p. 320). To implement the objectives mandated by curriculum experts, teachers have been required to master a "wider range of technical skills" (p. 320). The fact that they have employed more technical methods to carry out their work has led teachers to think of themselves as being more professional, a perception which has made the accompanying longer hours more acceptable to them. The paradox in all of this is that as teachers have gained increased responsibility over the technical and management aspects of their jobs, they have conceded to the experts their own teaching autonomy along with the responsibility for curriculum design. Apple does not deride teachers' misperceptions of themselves as professionals in these regards, however. Instead, he notes that the label of professional has been extremely important to teachers and to women in particular as a "powerful barrier against

interference by the state" (p. 321). In addition, women have embraced their roles as professionals in an attempt to "win equal treatment, pay, and control over the day-to-day work of a largely female labor force" (p. 321). Thus, one dilemma for the female teacher as professional seems apparent. How is she to consider herself a professional when her autonomy and decision making powers are being daily eroded?

Another dilemma for the female teacher as professional exists in the establishment of her identity as a professional. In "Gender and the Conditions of Teachers' Work: The Development of Understanding in America," Casey and Apple (1989) suggest that one reason why there is so much confusion surrounding teachers' identity as professionals is that since teaching is largely a female profession, there has been "the notion of female teachers as deficient" (p. 175). Because "professional male career patterns" have been applied to "women's" occupations such as teaching, "teachers are compared to doctors, lawyers, engineers, airline pilots, business executives and military officers," but they do not command the same "prestige" or "autonomy" accorded these professionals (p. 175). Casey and Apple believe this lack of professional status derives from the stereotype that women's work "appeals more to the heart than to the mind" (p. 175). Implicit in this stereotype

is the notion that women are defined primarily in terms of their nurturing abilities while men are defined in terms of their decision making abilities. It would seem then, that for women teachers to be considered as professionals, they must subjugate their nurturing qualities to their decision making abilities since these qualities are viewed as somewhat inferior to the so-called male characteristics of decision making and managing. What we often fail to recognize within the teaching profession, however, is that decision making and nurturing are not incompatible with each other. Nevertheless, as long as the misperception prevails that one attribute is superior to the other, women teachers will continue to have questions concerning their identity as professionals.

In addition to establishing their identities as professionals, women teachers must also deal with the nature of teaching as a career. In Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study, Lortie (1975) refers to teaching as a "front-loaded" career where "one begins at a high level relative to one's ultimate earning potential" (p. 84). As an "unstaged career" (p. 84), teaching offers little room for upward mobility unless the teacher is willing to move out of the classroom. As Lightfoot (1983) notes, the job description of a beginning teacher is essentially the same as that of an experienced teacher. This unstaged aspect of teaching tends to emphasize the sameness of the career

rather than the changes which occur over time. Moreover, teachers are not compensated for excellence except to be "transferred to another school or level" (Lightfoot p. 252). Although their talents within the classroom may be recognized by students and administrators, teachers' achievements are not rewarded with career advancement as are the achievements of professionals in other careers. Therefore, in order to advance in terms of money and prestige, many outstanding teachers elect to leave the classroom to work as administrators. In addition, as Goodlad (1984) remarks in A Place Called School:

> Teaching is perhaps the only "profession" where the preparation recognized as most advanced (the doctorate) almost invariably removes the individual from the central role of teaching in an elementary or secondary school -- and to a higher salary. (p. 194)

Again, we can see why teachers, and women teachers in particular, have trouble with their identities as professionals. There is some perception that teaching is somehow inferior to administration, a viewpoint which may be attributable to gender since 87 percent of elementary teachers and 67 percent of classroom teachers overall are women (Casey and Apple, 1989). As one woman in my study observed, "It's a hierarchy, and it doesn't matter if you are a principal who has your certification in driver's ed., you are still better than any teacher in the classroom."

The women in this study, however, have no desire to climb the hierarchical ladder to administration. For them, teaching represents a fundamental existential identity from which they cannot extricate themselves. As teachers, they all consider themselves to be professionals, and in this chapter, they define themselves in this way. They also talk about their concerns as professionals. In particular, they compare their perceptions of professionals to those of their administrators. Their treatment as professionals is clearly an issue for them as is the need for collegiality within the profession. In addition, they discuss the trend toward shared decision making and its impact upon them as professionals. Finally, they speak of the intertwining of their personal lives with their professional lives.

Defining Themselves as Professionals

Spencer-Hall (1981) says that being a "professional" to many women teachers means "doing your job, not complaining, or making waves, and following line-staff procedures if a problem does arise" (p. 7). This statement does not reflect the views of the teachers in my study, however. In contrast with the hesitancy of some of these women to define themselves as intellectuals, all of them unequivocally define themselves as professionals even though they do not all define <u>professional</u> in the

same way. Three of the teachers interpret professional in terms of commitment. One teacher says:

> I think of a professional as one who cares very deeply about what they do. It's not just a job. It's their life; it's what they do every day, and they have a deep concern and a deep caring for who they're doing it for, and they want something good to come out of it, and they're not afraid of change, and they're willing to experiment, willing to learn something new, not just be stagnant.

Another teacher expresses a similar sense of commitment.

> A profession is different from a job in that you not only have a calling for it, but you have a real commitment to it. One reason that I think of myself as a professional -- I don't really conceive of myself doing anything but teaching. I don't want to leave the classroom, and I feel that's my best place, and it's different from -- my husband employs a lot of job hoppers and there's a big difference. . . . That's mainly what I think the difference is, the commitment.

Still another teacher describes how her commitment to teaching permeates every aspect of her life.

> I see myself as a professional because I'm very serious about what I do. There isn't a day that goes by that I'm not aware of responsibilities that I have -- whether it's morally or ethically or academically or whatever -- in the way that I teach, in the way that I perceive my job or the other people around me, the people with whom I work, even my students, my principal, the way I dress.

The comments of these teachers reflect Casey and Apple's (1989) contention that for many women, teaching represents their existential identities. They argue, "For [some]

women teaching is more than paid employment for classroom work in a specific school; for many it is a fundamental existential identity" (p. 182). Their argument would certainly be applicable to the women in this study.

Contrast their sense of commitment with Lortie's (1975) conclusions about women's commitment to teaching. He contends, for instance, that since entry into teaching is not particularly difficult, people "with low commitment" (p. 88) may go into teaching with the idea that they will not continue in this profession. Lortie specifically singles out women who may expect to work for only a "short time before marriage or childbearing" and who "may or may not plan to return later" (p. 88). Continuing in this vein, Lortie maintains that the "gentle incline of teaching" fits well with the "aspirations which most women bring with them" because it accommodates their "in and out plans" (p. 88). Moreover, he believes that women regard teaching "as supplementary to marriage and motherhood" (p. 88). The commitment expressed by the women in this study clearly refutes Lortie's assertions. Of the three, two of them are married with children, and these two are as committed to their careers as teachers as they are to their marriages and children.

Commitment is not the only way in which these teachers define <u>professional</u>, however. A different approach is expressed in the definition given by one

teacher who considers professional in terms of proficiency. She explains:

> Being in an area of expertise where you're a pro, or at least you're becoming one. You have studied in an area, and you've gotten an education in some field that you find out what's going on and the new things that are going on.

This definition would seem to align itself more closely with the strictest definition of the term which concerns itself with expertise in a particular field.

Another view of professional is expressed by the fifth teacher who defines herself as professional in relationship to the teaching profession as a whole. She sees herself as part of a much larger community:

> Professional -- I feel that I belong to the greatest profession of all, and that is the instruction of young minds, and being a professional for me means being a member of a large group that has a vision for every child in that system.

A solidarity with other educational professionals is obviously important to this woman, and although the other women in this study do not specifically define themselves as professionals in terms of community, some of them express the need for more collegiality within the teaching profession. Their remarks support Grumet's (1988) contention that female teachers need to establish community within the school setting because they tend to isolate themselves within their classrooms.

Professionalism and Collegiality

In Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching, Grumet (1988) argues that "the structure of the school replicates the patriarchal structure of the family" because, as in the family, women are the ones who maintain the daily contact with the children while they, themselves are "trained, supervised, and evaluated by men" (p. 85). At school female teachers often maintain the same isolation in their classrooms as they do in their kitchens at home. Moreover, during the day they see each other only "surreptitiously, during breaks" in the same way they might break up their daily domestic routine through phone calls or "bridge games" (p. 85). What women teachers have failed to do is to establish a professional community within their schools. Part of the reason for this failure lies in the "intensification" of teaching earlier described by Apple. In addition, women often transfer their maternal roles to school where they "sustain the emotional and physical lives of others" (p. 86). Women, for example, may deny themselves time off and sabbaticals in order to defer to the needs of others. Just as women sacrifice for their own children, female teachers (and some male teachers) often turn down in-service and educational opportunities because they do not want to leave their classes. Thus, the isolation of teachers deepens.

Grumet asserts, however:

> We need to re-create safe places, even in schools, where teachers can concentrate, can attend to their experience of children and of the world, and we need to create community spaces where the forms that express that experience are shared. (p. 90)

Like Grumet, the teachers in this study feel a strong need for collegiality, a sense of community and the opportunity to share experiences and ideas.

The teacher who defined herself as professional in terms of the larger teaching community discusses the isolation and individualism often found in the teaching ranks. She attributes some of this isolation to the fact that teachers often fail to view themselves as part of the larger profession. She explains, "I think we isolate ourselves many times and say, 'I am a teacher,' but we do not say, 'I belong to the teaching profession.'" She adds:

> We're isolated individuals in Room 115, 119, and what have you, and we do our little thing, and we look at those guidelines every now and then and make sure that we are addressing scope and sequence and what have you. But when do we get together and hash it out and say, "hey, this is not working or this is working, and this is a good idea?" And I think it's a real problem.

But how do we solve the problem? This teacher, along with the others, indicates that teachers are not

encouraged to establish a professional community, to come together as a group, to share ideas and experiences. She asks:

> When do teachers meet as a group? When do they entitle themselves? Our little departmental meetings? But that's still one department, but as we've said, no professional group.

These comments reflect Grumet's belief that women teachers are often so busy attending to the needs of their students that they fail to attend to their own emotional, intellectual and professional needs. Teaching is a very consuming profession, as one teacher indicates later in this chapter, and the isolation of teachers only contributes to their feelings of frustration and disempowerment. Clearly, these feelings can be alleviated somewhat if teachers have the opportunity to establish community with their colleagues. But teachers, traditionally, have been reluctant to establish such community. It is almost as if, somehow, they feel they are not entitled to take the time to share with each other. Nevertheless, the need is there as evidenced by the remarks of another teacher.

> I think it's very important -- I've probably already said this -- that we are with each other where we can talk about those things, where we can learn about new things together, and I think if we look at those as a group and become a part of a group that feels, that shares our feelings, that we can make more changes. I do think we're going to have to do it in

> numbers. I think in my classroom, I can effect change for my students which certainly is important and has a long-lasting effect, but, overall, changes for our profession, we've got to do these as colleagues. We've got to do some more sharing and discovery and action that way.

These women obviously feel a need for collegiality and community, so what is the stumbling block? What gets in the way of teachers sharing with each other? I have already noted that teachers themselves feel that they simply cannot take time away from their students and their teaching duties to establish community. However, there are other impediments to the development of collegiality. The comments of some of these women indicate that administrators are threatened whenever teachers come together as a group. One teacher speaks about this issue in relationship to the formation of a professional English Teachers association in her school district.

> That's why, when we were talking about getting that professional organization together or whatever, [our supervisor] did not really jump on that idea. I don't think she or the central office -- I don't think they want you to have too much of a voice. That's just like not having a teachers' lounge at your school because the principal doesn't want you to get together. There's always that negative connotation that if you've got a group of teachers together that they must be complaining; they must be trying to start something. It's ridiculous, but I think we all have been so stressed the last ten years that it's a very negative environment that we're having to work with right now because the stress is put on us in the classroom by the parents, by the students, by the media, by the administrators. I think it just goes to different levels, but I don't see it getting any better. But until there is some

> organized group, it's not going to happen, and I think you're going to have a lot of people who are going to be very hesitant to join it because they are afraid to be included in that group. Because it's going to be taken in a very negative sense. "Why do you need to form a group? What is it that you want to accomplish?" Why can't we have a little camaraderie with other schools? I mean, heaven forbid, there's nothing wrong with that. Why do you think? Well, I know the answer to that and you do too. Because they're defensive. They have something to defend.

The remarks of this women demonstrate the need for community simply to deal with the stresses experienced by contemporary educators. She speaks of the last ten years, referring here to state mandated curriculum guidelines, standardized testing and accountability of teachers. Couple these issues with low pay, criticism from the media and the public, and we have teachers who feel frustrated, disempowered and isolated.

Thus, for this woman and the others in this study, professional collegiality is exceptionally important. In their discussions, they particularly emphasize the need for collegiality as English teachers as a way of sharing teaching strategies and discussing trends in the teaching of English. One teacher, for example, ties her identity as intellectual to that of professional in her desire to be collegial.

> I have gotten to be in contact with other professionals and that is something I wish all of us could have . . . . Just being in a situation where you can discuss what people consider to be

> intellectual things like world literature or Carl Jung's theories that implicate on how you teach your students. To me, that helps you remain an intellectual. . . . And what helps is to be in that kind of situation and find out suddenly that these people that you thought were kind of wimpy when it came to their career, when they got the chance to talk about it and be with other colleagues. . . .

For this woman, collegiality allows English teachers to share with each other intellectually, an opportunity that is rare in the day-to-day routine of school. In addition, sharing with other teachers allows them to see each other in a different milieu, away from the classroom. As this teacher notes, some teachers whom she had previously considered to be "wimpy" actually presented a totally different view of themselves when they met in an environment which valued their intellectuality, their professionalism and their ideas.

Professionalism Defined by Others

As we have seen, these teachers define themselves as professionals in terms of commitment, expertise and collegiality. But do their definitions coincide with those of their administrators and supervisors? The remarks of these teachers would seem to indicate otherwise. According to them, administrators and supervisors tend to define professionalism in terms of appearance, loyalty and compliance. In describing the attitude at her school, one teacher says, "The only thing that he [the principal] talks about professionally is,

when you regard yourself as a professional, dress is the number one issue." Another teacher responds similarly: ". . . I think sometimes professional is mixed up with how you look, how you dress or how much money you make. . . ." One teacher in the study, however, does feel that appearance is important in maintaining a professional attitude. She explains:

> I always dress. For some of my kids, I am the only person they will ever see that dresses up to see them, and I always do that for my kids. . . . I think they ought to have somebody teaching them that looks like a teacher, that somewhere in their life, they ought to go somewhere they're safe, that they're warm or cool, and people treat them like people, and that's one of the things that I do.

These comments suggest that this teacher does not dress up merely for the sake of appearance or to strike a professional pose. Instead, she believes that the way she presents herself demonstrates respect for her students. In addition, she indicates that she wants her classroom to be a haven where her students can feel comfortable. Specifically, she alludes here to students whose home lives may be difficult at best.

While this teacher is concerned about the appearance she presents to her students, she distinguishes between her concept of the appearance of professionalism and that of her administrators.

> I think they [administrators] like someone who comes in early, does their work, never complains, does whatever they tell them to do and stays as late as they have to in the afternoon. In fact, I have one friend who, bless her heart, she does nothing but kiss up, and you know, if that's her thing, more power to her. She can do my share too, but I'm not going to do it.

Another teacher expresses a similar view as she discusses the appearance of being a professional:

> The appearance of being professional is looking really busy during your planning period, being at school at least thirty minutes ahead of time, staying a minimum of thirty minutes after you're supposed to leave, wear nice suits and dresses and look the part, so if [a superintendent] comes in, you don't have your tennis shoes on. Or you don't look -- that you look the part, that you support what the administration is doing, you don't bring people to the office, and you volunteer to do shitwork. Now that is the perception of being a professional.

The issue of teacher loyalty raised in these comments is further underscored by one teacher who describes her adminstrators' view of a professional teacher.

> Don't complain. Don't say anything I don't want you to say. Don't think anything I don't want you to think. Buy the party line. Be loyal, be loyal. How many times do we hear that? Don't question the mandates. Or we've always done it that way; therefore, you buy into that. That's what they mean by professional.

The comments of these teachers reveal that their perceptions of professional diverge from those of their administrators. Consequently, they feel that they are not

always treated as professionals by their administrators and supervisors.

Are Teachers Treated as Professionals?

The teachers in this study all indicated that they were constantly admonished to act "professional," to be "professional" and to establish a "professional" demeanor. However, as we have already noted, the teachers feel that their perceptions of professionalism differ from those of many of their administrators and supervisors. Therefore, it is not surprising the teachers feel that, in general, they are not treated as professionals. One feeling expressed by some of the teachers is that they are sometimes treated as naughty children or as one says, "as tall students." Although one woman feels that her present administrators regard her as a professional, she recounts past experiences which have demeaned her professional status.

> I've been treated like a spoiled child, like an idiot, like a fool and . . . . if I did something they didn't like. I can remember one principal in particular who was prone to call teachers in their rooms and tell them to get their butts down to the office right then, not even thinking that you were leaving 34 kids. And he was very high-tempered, and, luckily for me, he never -- he was never after me, but I have had him come to my door before over something that he wanted immediately that was impossible and treated like a spoiled child or a stupid child because I couldn't produce what he wanted immediately when it was unrealistic.

These remarks are similar to those of another teacher who says that teachers are not treated as professionals because "we're not treated as people who have any input into the profession by and large." She elaborates:

> A case in point -- when you question decisions that have been made, and I say have been made, because you're not given the opportunity, most of the time, to make the decisions, but decisions or things are mandated, and you question that, you're given the runaround. You're not given straight answers, or you're given misleading information only to find out later, but what is your recourse? What can you do about it? . . . No, I think basically the power still resides in the administration with teachers almost as puppets for the most part. . . . Big Daddy makes the decisions. We are the children. We're treated as children, not as professionals. We're subserviant -- servants -- that's redundant. . . .

Another teacher speaks of "being punished" if she deviates from the standards established by the administration.

> We're supposed to be professionals, and they ought to accept the way we do things. Sure, they can question us and make us try to become better, but a lot of times, I think it's just like a slap on the hand if we're not doing things the way they should be done. They won't look at us and say, "Well, maybe this is a better way to do things." It's "You didn't do it the way I told you to do it." And I don't think that's being treated as a professional, not being given the freedom to do -- well, we're given a lot of freedom, but not given the freedom to make changes in administration type things if you think they're not done right.

When we examine the metaphors these teachers use to describe their professional status, the relationship with their administrators appears to be one of domination and

subjugation. They see themselves as children, as puppets and as servants, all metaphors which suggest that although they are members of a predominantly female profession, teachers still function in a patriarchal establishment.

In tracing the history of women in education in America, Grumet (1988) discusses the issue of such a patriarchy. She notes that when women began to "flee a suffocating domesticity" to enter the teaching profession, they were "absorbed by the institutional paternalism that substituted the discipline of the state, of the school day, its language, rituals and coercion, for the moral responsibility of the family" (p. 84). However, women were not called upon to establish this "moral leadership" (p. 84) in either the home or the school. Instead, they were to transmit the "laws, rules, language and order of the father, the principal, the employer" (p. 84) to the child. In addition, the "passivity" of women teachers was to provide a "model of obedience for the young to emulate" (p. 84). According to Grumet, this "model" still persists today. As we have already noted, she contends that "the structure of the school replicates the patriarchal structure of the family" in that women who provide a nurturing role for their students are "trained, supervised and evaluated by men" (p. 85). Weiler (1988) agrees that schools are patriarchal institutions. She

quotes Adrienne Rich who describes such patriarchal settings:

> By [patriarchy] I mean to imply not simply the tracing of descent through the father, which anthropologists seem to agree is a relatively late phenomenon, but any kind of group organization in which males hold dominant power and determine what part females shall and shall not play, and in which capabilities assigned to women are relegated generally to the mystical and aesthetic and excluded from the practical and political realms. (p. 25)

Certainly, schools fulfill Rich's definition to the extent that males still predominate the ranks of administration and supervision which determine the roles teachers play in the schools. Clearly, the teachers in this study feel that they are separated from decision making and that they are the implementers of policy rather than the creators. These sentiments support Grumet's and Rich's assertions that in a patriarchy, women are excluded from the practical and political realms.

Another way in which these women feel that they are treated unprofessionally is that they are required to carry out menial tasks and duties which infringe upon the intellectual and instructional aspects of their work. One teacher relates:

> The first thing that comes to mind . . . . when you look at things like [duty rosters] that you have to do, and you think, "This is ridiculous." You know if I was a secretary in a corporate office, I

> wouldn't have to be doing this. Some of the paper work or things that we have to contend with. . . . I look at it more on the duty side of things that we have to do or chaperoning dances or taking up tickets at ballgames, that kind of stuff, you know, working the concession stand. . . .

She continues and describes those requirements which tend to demean her as a professional.

> If you don't sign in or you sign in at 8:01 or 8:02, you get a little asterisk beside your name. Everybody knows this person was late today. That to me is so petty. What are they going to do? Dock your pay? They have no control over that . . . or make me stay? Make me stay an extra minute! Oh, boy, that would infuriate me to death. . . . I think that one thing that we have to do at our school, that I don't know if you have to do anywhere else is being sick or whatever and having to call your own stinking substitute which gripes me.

In this same vein, another teacher recalls the "proletarianization" of teachers described by Apple as she discusses the way she is treated by administrators.

> . . . it's more -- I don't want to degrade it so much as to say like a factory worker, but we're expected to do certain things -- certain requirements have to be met, and so they treat it more like a job, a blue collar job. I mean a teacher has to come in, and they have to fill out this form . . . they have to do this, and they have to do that and there's little room for creative flowing. Everything has to be structured and we have to answer to where we are. The bell system is really . . . I don't know what you would do differently, but it's just having to start and stop all day long, and start and stop, start and stop and all the little teeny-tiny things that happen in between. . . four minutes, class changes, but yet you're expected to start that class as soon as the bell rings, and if you don't, then you're not a good teacher, you're not a professional, you're not on task.

What these teachers have to say supports Casey and Apple's (1989) assertion that teachers are indeed similar to "workers." They note that the "techniques used to control workers" have been "imported from industry into teaching through such devices as 'teacher-proof' curriculum materials" (p. 170). In addition, teachers have become "deskilled, losing the ability to make curriculum, and are reskilled as managers of classroom procedures" (p. 170). As a result, teachers "lose power over their labor" (p. 170).

Another issue of concern is expressed by a teacher who feels that even though she considers herself a professional, and she is told to act as a professional by her administrators, she does not have the professional right to speak openly and freely about her profession. To illustrate, she says:

> When we're told to act professional, that means, "you're not doing what we want you to do." And you're either causing a problem in the press or you're just taking time out of my schedule that I don't have [time] to deal with. Or you're not doing what I think you should be doing because some people think that it's not professional to march to the state capitol to say that we should be paid higher, but I think that's very professional.

At this point, she begins to see herself as professional in community with other teachers, and she expresses frustration with the notion that it is unprofessional to

want higher wages. She continues:

> Why shouldn't we? Why shouldn't we stand up for our profession? I sense a growing unrest in our profession. I don't know if I'm going to live long enough to see it turn around, but in the fourteen years that I have taught -- the first few years that I taught, I used to hear women put down anyone who said that we should have higher wages or that we should demonstrate in any way -- that we thought that we weren't getting what we were supposed to be getting because somehow or another, they equated that with, "you don't love the children" or "you're not in it for the right reasons." And at first, you get taken in by that, especially in our tenure system in our state. You just, for three years, you pretty much keep your mouth shut, and you either absorb some of that or you don't or you react against it. But if you believe in your profession, why can't you fight for it?

The fact that teachers and, particularly women teachers, would consider themselves unprofessional for speaking out about higher wages, as well as about other issues, bespeaks a form of hegemony. In Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education, McLaren (1989) says that hegemony:

> refers to the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family. (p. 173)

As one teacher has already indicated, women teachers have subscribed to the belief that it is unprofessional to want more money because doing so sends the message that

"they do not love the children." Clearly, this is a ludicrous view, but it is one which has been used and is still being used to make teachers feel guilty for desiring higher salaries. As I have mentioned earlier, the "feminine" quality of nurturing is not as valued in our society as are the "masculine" traits of management and decision making, attributes which are often associated with "professionalism" in the minds of the public. Thus, when teachers ask for more money, they are often labeled as "unprofessional" for expecting to be compensated for their nurturing qualities. The presumption prevails that nurturing is a given, not necessarily deserving of the same monetary compensation accorded such "professional" skills as management and decision making. How often, for example, have teachers heard legislators or the general public comment that they ought to be more dedicated, that since they chose this profession, they ought to be willing to work for low wages if they truly love the children?

In The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education, Purpel (1989) addresses this issue. He contends that teachers have come to accept the status quo as reasonable, granting that it may need modifications from time to time, but they have not seriously reflected on its "inadequacies" (p. 107). In addition, teachers have developed a fear of making changes, a fear which has

produced "prodigious docility and passivity" (p. 107). Purpel elaborates:

> What one hears regularly from many professionals in response to the pitiful working conditions for teachers is the belief that "we" should not seriously rock the boat lest "they" react in anger and retribution. This is the employer-employee, master-slave mentality in which we are reminded of our place and our powerlessness, urged to count our blessings, and warned about the consequences of protest. We are a profession which has, to a very large degree, internalized the oppressors' consciousness. (p. 107)

Purpel's assertions are certainly reflected in the remarks of these teachers when they describe "professionalism" as defined by those in positions of power in the educational community. However, as one teacher notes, our newer teachers and an increasing number of veteran teachers are no longer willing to acquiesce to this form of hegemonic control which attempts to define professionalism only in terms of a teacher's dedication and which fails to take into account the multiple aspects of a teacher's role -- nurturing, decision making, authority, management, expertise, and intellectualism, to name a few.

Professionals and Decision Making

A common theme which emerges from these women's comments on their professionalism is the belief that as professionals, they should have more authority and that they should share in the decision making particularly as it directly impacts upon their classrooms. Giroux (1988)

speaks to this issue when he says that teachers should have more "control over the development of curriculum materials" (p. 9) and the way in which they are implemented in the classroom. Moreover, he declares that the structures of most schools "isolate teachers and cut off the possibilities for democratic decision making and positive social relations" (p. 9). The teachers in this study concur with Giroux's sentiments, and because they live in a state where "shared decision making" and "site based management" have become political issues within the education community, they have strong feelings in these areas.

Again and again, the teachers in this study voiced the need to have input into the decisions which affect their teaching. One teacher says:

> I think if we could have more of a voice in what goes on in the classroom whether you talk about the local level or the state level or when you're talking about legislation that comes up that personally affects me, then come in my classroom and talk to me, and that goes back to the media when we're talking about kids not learning this or test scores or whatever, just making a blanket statement about teachers. I resent that. . . . I think that would be the biggest change if the teachers had a voice. . . . We need to be heard. That maybe goes back to being intellectual, being a professional.

Although all the women in this study agree that teachers should share in the decision making in their schools, some of them are skeptical as to whether their

ideas and suggestions will actually be taken seriously. One teacher relates her experience as a member of a committee of teachers who were assigned the responsibility of changing one of the disciplinary policies at her school. She feels that her time and that of her colleagues may very well have been wasted because their suggestions were not taken seriously.

> We want a real say-so, to be taken seriously when we have a suggestion or an idea. I think when we had our little group meetings, we came up with some great ideas, and it seemed like the same problems came up over and over again, but our main concern was, "Where is this going to go? What's going to happen with it outside this meeting?" I mean, I daresay we'll never hear anything about it. You know we were asked to take notes and keep notes and turn them in, but whatever's going to be done about them? Are they ever going to read them? Change has to come from the top, and we can only ask for it for so long. And I don't know what else to do to make a change.

Implicit in this teacher's comment is the view that shared decision making has a long way to go if and when it is ever to become a reality. Her frustration is evident, and in a sense, she and her colleagues were duped into believing that their suggestions would be taken seriously. In truth, they received no feedback on their recommendations, a clear abuse of their time, effort and professionalism.

Another teacher is extremely cynical as she discusses the reality of teachers having a real voice in decision making.

> I don't think that's realistic, and I'm being honest with you. I think that it's the least realistic thing that I can imagine. I think it's just like that poster that says, "There's no such thing as a free lunch," and you have the guppy and the bigger fish and the bigger fish, and it goes on to infinity. And I think that's what we are. I think my kids answer to me, I answer to my principal, he answers or she answers to the administration, they answer to the state department, the state department answers to -- I mean the state education answers to the state department, and then they answer to the voters, and the voters are apathetic. I think somewhere along the chain, something gets lost, but I don't know. I think that most of the changes that we want to make involve money, involve things that we try to do to make us feel better about ourselves because they won't give us money, you know what I'm saying, and I think this whole -- just being honest -- I think this whole idea of site based management is just a sop thrown to people who are not going to get paid what they're worth or what they should get paid to make themselves feel better in another way.

The disillusionment felt by this teacher is evident in her remarks. Yet, she probably speaks for many teachers who have seen trends come and go over the years. Moreover, she voices a distrust of administrators whose espousal of shared decision making may be only nominal.

While all of the teachers in this study express a healthy skepticism regarding shared decision making, some of them see in it some real possibilities for teacher empowerment. One teacher addresses this issue:

> Well, the only way we can be empowered is to be part of the decision making process, and I think it has to start -- I think you have to have administrators who are willing to share that and not just give lip service to it, but really, to teach us how to become involved. I don't think that teachers

> really know that much about shared decision making. It sounds like a nice idea, but here again, you have to be educated to the idea, and it has to be hammered out over a long period of time and not just -- it has to be forged.

For shared decision making to work, administrators must be willing to provide the kind of atmosphere which allows teachers to feel comfortable expressing views which may be contrary to those of the administration. Even more important, though, is the willingness of administrators to relinquish some of their control, something that may be extremely difficult for those who have been in power for so long. One teacher discusses this fear of losing control:

> Site based management, whatever name you want to choose, is making some changes. They [administrators] are having to, at least, -- I tell you what's happening -- they tell you they want site based management, but it's getting out of control for some people so it's scary. I think they would love to just pull that right back into their mouths and forget they ever said it. Really, because they -- "you better be careful what you wish for, you just may get it syndrome" might get some of these people. . . .

That administrators feel threatened by shared decision making is only one of the problems of this issue. At issue as well is the relationship between power and responsibility. While it may be true that administrators fear relinquishing power, some teachers may also fear accepting the responsibilities that accompany the empowerment inherent in shared decision making.

For teachers then, site based management may prove to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they may get to have a real voice in the issues that directly affect them, but on the other hand, shared decision making requires a great deal of time which already overworked teachers simply do not have to spare. One teacher explains:

> I think we speak with a forked tongue. I think, on the one hand, we say we want shared decision making, but hell, if it takes any time, we don't want to do it. And there's no way around it. And making a decision takes time. If you're going to change, any process is going to take time.

Another teacher speaks of the dilemma faced by teachers who do become involved in the decision making process.

> I know that they're doing site based management in my school, and they're really working, changing some things there, but by the same token, I think the more responsibility that you take, in some ways, the more it's taken from the classroom. The person that's in charge of site based management does a lousy job of teaching anymore because they're all tied up in site based. I think if you want to have teachers take over, then their classrooms are going to suffer. What I would prefer to see would be to have a site based team that took teachers' suggestions and filtered them through and gave almost a list of demands to the principal. That's his job. He gets paid a fortune. Let him do that, but let us decide where we're going. The site based team doesn't have to do all the work. Why don't you let them make the decisions and then whoever's paid for it, do it.

Obviously, teacher empowerment in the form of shared decision making is not as simple a process as it appears on the surface. Each of these women has indicated the

necessity for teachers to be involved in the decisions which affect what goes on in their classrooms, in their schools and in their profession. Still, they recognize that teacher empowerment does not come easy and therein lies the quandary. As long as high schools continue to be structured as they presently are, teachers who become involved in shared decision making must find the time for this process outside of teaching their five classes per day. It may be that the process itself is unnecessarily burdensome, a problem which will certainly need to be resolved as shared decision making is implemented. However, at the present time, time is still a major issue. As we have already seen from the schedules described by the women in this study, English teachers have precious little time to give. And if they do become a part of the decision making process, their instruction in the classroom may well suffer. A plausible solution might lie in a genuine restructuring of high schools where teachers would teach fewer classes a day, have more time for planning together and have time set aside for them to be active participants in a decision making team.

Goodlad (1984) suggests such a restructuring. He recommends reducing the amount of instructional time per teacher to fifteen hours a week, the top teaching load at most colleges and universities. He maintains that the reduced teaching load would free teachers to become

involved in "school-based programs of curricular and instructional improvement shared by the entire staff" (p. 194). Another benefit of such a restructuring, according to Goodlad, is that staff development could be built into the work week as it is on the collegiate level. Goodlad's recommendations certainly make sense in terms of helping teachers improve instruction while still allowing them the time and flexibility to be a part of the decision making process at their schools. However, reality tells us that unless the public is willing to support additional funding for schools to allow districts to hire more teachers, the likelihood of such restructuring appears doubtful at best. Still, it is an alternative worth the consideration of teachers, administrators and school districts if they are truly serious about site based management and shared decision making.

Professionalism and English Teachers' Lives

One of the problems teachers often encounter is that of separating their professional lives from their personal lives. This separation seems to be especially problematic for female teachers. Lightfoot (1983) discusses the dilemma of teachers' private lives versus their professional lives where she notes that one issue lies in the way the public perceives teachers. She says that in the public's mind, teachers are seen in dual but

contradictory configurations.

> On the one hand, teachers are seen as all-powerful, central forces who determine the life chances of defenseless children. On the other hand, we see them as helpless, impotent victims, empty vessels who must merely react to the constraints and inhibitions of the social, economic, and political systems of which they are a part. (p. 242)

Clearly, these are rather simplistic views, but still they do have the effect of visualizing teachers only within the context of their classrooms and schools. As Lightfoot notes, "teachers. . . are seen as strangely presentist characters -- without past or future -- and without life beyond the classroom" (p. 242). Because of these images, teachers, and particularly women teachers, often feel constrained in their personal lives.

According to Lightfoot, many of these constraints are imposed upon teachers by a society which "demands" that teachers represent the "adult" world even to the extent that they represent the "conscience" of society (p. 246). As such, the teacher finds herself in a virtually impossible predicament. On the one hand, she represents the conscience of society, but on the other hand, "her competence is judged by her ability to live by, and teach children to believe in, values that other adults cannot or do not actually take too seriously" (p. 246). The result is that teachers are often judged by standards which the rest of society does not impose upon itself. Lightfoot

cites Getzels and Guba who determined in their research that society tends to regard teachers as second class citizens with less than adult status. The restrictions associated with the role of teacher are "transposed to their other adult roles, limiting their freedom and autonomy in other settings and relationships" (p. 248). Since teachers spend so much time with children, society feels that their actions must be monitored just as we monitor those of children. As a result, teachers often feel that their professional lives are inseparable from their personal lives. Consequently, many of them take the standards imposed by society and further impose them on themselves in an effort to be perceived as professionals.

The teachers in this study definitely feel that they cannot extricate their private lives from their professional lives, but they see the issue as more than having to behave in a certain manner although certainly behavior is an issue for them. When I asked them if they were able to separate their personal lives from their professional lives, some of them answered the question in terms of not being able to leave their teaching at school. When asked if she can extricate herself from teaching, one teacher responds:

> Probably no teacher can, totally. The summer is the closest that I get and only for a short period of time, and that's the one thing that bothers me about year-round education is that I think that if I didn't

> have some time in the summer to disassociate myself from school, and you can't do it, even if you went to a nine [week] and three [week], it wouldn't accomplish that for me because it takes me two or three weeks to get out of a routine to get totally away from everything, you know, to read some smut books, to go to some movies in the afternoon, go to the beach. I have to have that type of renewal when I do things, junky type of things to unwind, and then when I do some of that, then I'm ready to -- I kind of empty it all out, so I can go back and pour it all back in if that makes any sense. And I'm afraid that that might change for me if we go to year-round education on the secondary level. But no, I can't [extricate myself], and I also find that my friends are teachers, even beyond teachers at my school. . . . Except for that short time, that period in the summer when I try to not think about it -- you know, you always think about it. Even when you're not at school, you're thinking about school. I think it's really hard. I don't know why, but it is. It's a consuming profession. I can't totally pull myself out of it. I don't know if I want to.

Another teacher also adresses the issue of year-round school in relationship to renewal during the summer vacation.

> I try to remove myself to some extent in the summer, so that I can be fresh enough to go back to it. But we miss it, you know. That's one reason we take classes and do other things to go right back into it. . . . I don't know that I could go for year-round school. I have real problems. I like this time off. . . . It's a time to look at myself a little bit and to gain a distance. I don't think I can do that in three little weeks between four nine week sessions. I just don't think -- you know, and I preface that by saying I hate not to look at change if that's the way we need to go, but I don't think that I could buy into it. To renew -- I love the beginning to school. Ending school is torture for me, but I love the beginning. I think we all like new beginnings. Though we close that chapter, talk about closure, I don't know that we'll ever have closure with the other system. I like this time. It's not that I'm being lazy, but I need time to

> renew and then to gear up for that school year. I also think that's why we went into teaching. We never extricated ourselves from the educational process, that nine months. We never left it. We liked it. Maybe that's why so many women are in it. I mean it's very maternal in that.

Another teacher describes the way teaching dominates her life.

> It spills over all the time. . . . Everything I do is related to teaching. I have a life outside of school, but it seems like everything I do, even in that particular life, I'm thinking in the back of my head -- teaching. I noticed this past weekend I didn't have any term papers to grade, and I couldn't figure out what I was supposed to do. I couldn't figure out what it was. I kept thinking, "there's something I'm supposed to be doing." You know, for the past few weekends, it was grading research papers.

The responses of these teachers indicate that it is virtually impossible for them to leave teaching behind when they leave the school, even in the summer. In terms of professionalism, their attitudes reflect a commitment to teaching, once again refuting Lortie who questions women's commitment to education. In contrast, their commitment supports Casey's assertion that for some women, teaching is a fundamental aspect of their existential identities; it is a way of life.

If commitment is one way in which teaching spills over into teachers' private lives, public appearance is another. Some of the teachers in this study corroborate Lightfoot's findings that teachers must often adhere to a

standard of behavior different from that which the rest of society deems acceptable for itself. Again and again, these teachers describe a lack of privacy imposed upon them by their profession and their gender. One teacher comments:

> I'm careful where I go, what I do. You know I really have to be careful of my privacy because that's something the kids will really impose on, your privacy. And I teach Sunday School, senior high, and it seems like everywhere I turn, there's somebody that I know in a different kind of way. . . . I can't [remove myself from teaching] just like I can't remove the part of me that's the wife or the mother. I can't forget that I have children and do what I want and forget that I'm married, you know. It seems like it's all tied up. Sometimes it's very confining. I feel funny about ever having over one drink in public. I know that sounds foolish, but I would hate to think that kids were seeing me knocking down drinks and think it was okay, you know, or somebody from my Sunday School would see me half high and think it was okay.

These remarks reflect the added burden for teachers of having to serve as role models for their students. Another teacher recounts similar feelings.

> I don't think that a teacher really has much of a private life. And I'm sure that this goes back to the days of old where you had your rules, and you couldn't do this, and you couldn't do that. I think that you're perceived that way today. Because when they [people] see me out there, I don't think that they see me as _____, as the mother of _____ and _____. "She's a teacher at _____." You're watched, your every move. You have to be careful what you say, you have to be careful what you do, but that's probably good. But there are some times when it just infuriates me like if I wanted to go off, and I wanted to do something, why not do it, but we go back to that professionalism. If I'm a role model --

> maybe I'm a little old fashioned. I guess I think I'm a role model in the classroom and out of the classroom. . . . I think that's just one of the things that you have to consider if you go into teaching, that you're going to be under constant attack, that you're going to be under constant observation, and some people can't handle that.

The remarks of these teachers indicate that professionalism, at least in the eyes of the public, is still related to appearance in the wider sense. As this woman notes, it is 1992, but teachers still feel obligated to follow societal guidelines and rules which were established decades ago. Arguably, community standards may dictate what is appropriate teacher behavior in a given area, but in the cases of these two teachers, one of them lives and teaches in a mid-size city while the other lives and teaches in a rural community outside of a small city. Still, their responses are remarkably similar. The fact that both of these women grew up in the South and presently teach in the South may have some bearing on the way they feel about adhering to societal expectations of behavior. However, as Lightfoot has indicated, teacher behavior, whether self-imposed or societally imposed, is a genuine issue for teachers in other parts of the country as well. Clearly though, the dilemma regarding appropriate public behavior is of concern for some of the teachers in this study because it reflects upon their perceptions of themselves as professionals.

Conclusions

The responses of these teachers indicate that, for them, professionalism is tied closely to those attributes our society usually associates with other professions: commitment, expertise and autonomy. However, they go beyond these qualities to add a fourth dimension of collegiality. All of them would agree that within their individual professional lives, commitment and expertise play major roles. Each woman sees herself as committed to her profession to the extent that teaching dominates her life beyond the classroom. In addition, all of these women view themselves as having expertise, not only in the teaching of English but in the profession of teaching itself. As for autonomy, these teachers feel that they exercise authority within the classroom, but as far as being part of the decision making process which impacts directly on their classrooms and their profession, most of them feel somewhat disenfranchised from the process. Nevertheless, despite the skepticism of some of the teachers, site based management and shared decision making in this state may provide the avenue for their empowerment.

The fourth issue of professional concern for these teachers is that of collegiality. All of them feel the need to share with other teachers, particularly English teachers. While they would like for much of the sharing

to be of an intellectual and professional nature to discuss current educational trends, they would like this collegiality to be social in nature as well. They would like to have the opportunity to come together, if for no other reason, than simply to feel affirmed. In general, these teachers believe that administrators frown upon collegiality and camaraderie among teachers because they may fear the power of teachers acting collectively. Nevertheless, the desire for more collegiality is essential to these teachers in defining themselves as professionals. For the teachers in this study, professionalism is of a substantive nature, and as such, it transcends appearances and labels. It is, indeed, a fundamental component of their identities as English teachers and as women. At present, they feel they are not always treated as professionals, at least in terms of their own definitions. Nevertheless, the fact that they are not always regarded as professionals by administrators or by the general public does not diminish their own perceptions of themselves as professionals. Each teacher clearly considers herself a professional.

We have looked at these English teachers as intellectuals and as professionals, but first and foremost, they are women. In Chapter IV, I will examine the English teacher as a woman in relationship to her teaching. How she sees herself both intellectually and

professionally may very well be determined by how she views her role as a woman within the teaching profession.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLISH TEACHER AS WOMAN

"The Separate Sphere"

In Landscapes of Learning, Greene (1978) writes that the history of women in education in America is one of "distinctions made 'on the basis of irrelevant differences'" (p. 225). In essence, it is a history of "unfairness and inequity" (p. 225). Over the years women educators have been denied "equality of consideration" (p. 225), and those who denied them equality felt no moral compunction to justify their actions. According to Greene, those in positions of power determined which factors in education were relevant and then "imposed and internalized official notions of relevance" (p. 225). Most of these factors were applicable to men who held the administrative and power positions in education. Consequently, those in authority were able to maintain their power by perpetuating "the existence of a separate (and subordinate) female sphere" (p. 225).

Greene asserts that today, things have changed for women in education, at least superficially. For example, wage scales for men and women teachers are equal, taboos concerning married female teachers have disappeared, and

women have obtained some positions of leadership. Nevertheless, Greene maintains that the "separate sphere" is still very much in evidence through continued sexism in our schools, a practice which many women teachers have been reluctant to acknowledge. In general, women educators have hesitated to identify their subordination with that of other segments of society. To change all of this, Greene advocates critique. She declares, "There must be ongoing demystification, as there must be an enlarging conversation among those who have the courage to identify themselves as subordinate, as oppressed" (p. 241). Women educators must strip themselves of illusions which deny their subordination within the profession. As Greene says, "Only when we can develop the kind of critique that liberates us from such illusions will there be the possibility of freeing women 'to discover and to choose what they want to become'" (p. 241).

Like Greene, Grumet (1988) speaks to the issue of the subordination of female teachers. She argues that the feminization of teaching has "both promoted and sabotaged the interests of women in our culture" (p. 32). She is referring here, specifically, to the nineteenth century when "teaching school changed from men's work to women's work" (p. 32). As we have already noted, Grument contends that schools replicate the patriarchal structure of the home. She believes that schooling provides "a passage from

domestic and maternal nurturance to public institutions and patriarchal identifications" (p. 33). For the female teacher, contradictions which developed in the nineteenth century are still apparent in schools today. Specifically, Grumet notes those contradictions:

> between the doctrine of maternal love and the practice of a harsh and regimented authority, between women's dominance in numbers and our exclusion from leadership, between the overwhelming presence of women in classrooms and the continuing identification of men as the only persons with the capacity to know. . . . (p. 45)

Grumet interrogates these contradictions and suggests that one of the ironies inherent in the subordination of female teachers is that they themselves unwittingly collaborate in their oppression. She maintains that as teachers, women have "contributed our labor and our children to institutional and social organizations that have extended our own subordination and contradicted our own experiences of nurturance" (p. 45). Consequently, the case has been made that schooling perpetuates male dominance by:

> exaggerating those characteristics that distinguish male from female gender and then by gradually establishing success norms that favor males, linking their achievements and world view to ideologies that dominate both the economy and the state. (p. 45)

Grumet supports this contention by citing recent studies which have shown differential treatment of male and

female students in both elementary and secondary classrooms, stereotypical male and female role depictions in textbooks, and a bias in counseling which encourages male and female students to pursue disciplines which traditionally suit their gender roles. Thus, if teachers are to establish their identities as women, they must analyze their own femininity within the school setting and determine how their views of gender influence "the pedagogy and the curriculum" (p. 46).

What the Data Shows

In general, women comprise the majority of teachers while men represent the majority of administrators. To cite an example, in 1987-88, female teachers represented 70 percent of the overall teaching profession while males held 69 percent of the principalships (National Center for Education Statistics, 1991). On the secondary level, in 1982-83, the percentages of male and female teachers were closer in number with 51 percent males and 49 percent females (Schmuck, 1987). According to Schmuck, more men teachers enter secondary education because of the traditional view that suggests women are more nurturing and, therefore, better suited to elementary education. In addition, secondary teachers specialize in subject areas, specializations which, themselves, are "sex segregated" (p. 80). Typically, men teach math or science while women dominate English departments, comprising almost 65 percent

of secondary English teachers in 1971, for example (Schmuck, 1987). Interviews with the English teachers in this study indicate that this percentage is still representative in 1992. Indeed, at my own school, our English department has no male teachers, and in the past ten years, it has had only five. Thus, it seems safe to assume that women find themselves in the unique position of representing the majority of teachers in English departments while still finding themselves in a slight minority among secondary teachers. As a result, when female English teachers examine their gender roles within a school setting, their perceptions may be different from those of female elementary and middle school teachers who dominate the teaching ranks within their schools.

In considering the English teacher as woman, this study seeks to demystify those inequities which tend to subordinate female teachers within the educational realm. As Greene (1978) writes:

> . . . if women are in touch with themselves and in concrete communication with others, they have a ground against which to consider the mystifications that work on them, the inequities that prevail -- even today in this presumably liberated time. (p. 218)

In keeping with Greene's sentiments, the teachers in this study communicate a number of gender issues of concern to them. In particular, they examine male/female roles within the secondary school setting and the inequities therein,

female leadership, and critical issues for contemporary women educators.

"Keepers of the Hearth"

In considering her role as a woman within a secondary school setting, one of the teachers in this study describes female high school teachers as the "keepers of the hearth." This description suggests that high school teachers assume traditional male/female roles with women primarily responsible for nurturing and housekeeping and men mainly responsible for decision making and discipline. These characterizations recall Greene's "separate sphere" and Grumet's assertion that schools replicate the patriarchal setting of the home. In her introduction to Women's "True" Profession: Voices from the History of Teaching, Hoffman (1981) concurs. She discusses schools at the turn of the century where women were not treated very differently from children by patriarchal administrators and school boards. She claims that instead of helping women "to break away from the traditional behavior of daughter, sister, mother, or wife, . . . teaching tended to institutionalize this behavior" (p. xxii). Indeed, school structures reinforced the belief that women "were capable of teaching the ABC's and the virtues of cleanliness, obedience, and respect, while men taught about ideas, and organized the profession" (p. xxxii). Hoffman adds that the "division of labor has

changed only slightly in recent years" (p. xxxii).

In Women and Schooling (1978), Deem addresses the division of labor in elementary schools. She discusses the way women's work as mothers in the family transfers to their positions as teachers in elementary schools. She contends that the unpaid labor of nurturing and caretaking is not necessarily intrinsic to a woman's nature, but rather it represents the social division of labor in a capitalist society. Moreover, she draws a parallel between the rearing and socialization of children in families where the primary work is performed by women and the socialization that occurs in the early years of schooling with the work done by female teachers.

The division of labor suggested by Deem is not limited to the elementary school, however. The secondary teachers in this study substantiate these assertions to some degree. Not only do they find themselves expected to fulfill certain female roles in relationship to their male administrators. They also find themselves performing "female" duties in contrast with those duties performed by their male co-workers. They feel that female teachers in general perform the bulk of the "work" at their schools, labor which one of them terms "shitwork" and another refers to as "menial" tasks. In addition, these women, as we have seen, believe that as English teachers, they already perform a disproportionate share of extracurricular

duties, so their workload is further compounded with "housekeeping" responsibilities.

Essentially, these teachers say that there is a great disparity between the work males and females perform at their schools, a difference which parallels the male/female roles in many households. One teacher, as we have already noted, sees female teachers as "keepers of the hearth." She elaborates:

> But women are expected to be the ones that keep the home fires going. We are the keepers of the hearth. We really are. It's still a woman's profession and part of that's just historical.

Another teacher voices a similar opinion.

> Well, we're still the nurturers, the caretakers, the babysitters. We're expected to do the bulk of the work, predominantly female, even in high school. I haven't taken a sampling of how many females we have. But if you look around any school setting, who does the work? The women by and large do a tremendous amount of work, both inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

Another woman reinforces these comments as she answers the question of whether women perform most of the menial tasks in a secondary school.

> Yes, and that's because they know that's our subservient attitude. "We'll do it. Okay. What is it you want us to do this time?" and not really complain about it. But I do think whether it's a big job or a little job, they expect us to know how to do it. Maybe that goes back psychologically to their mamas.

The metaphors these teachers use would seem to indicate that if schools are indeed patriarchal settings, female teachers are the matriarchs. They make sure that things are comfortable and run smoothly. They are the nurturers and the caretakers, not only of the students they teach, but as one teacher indicates when she refers to "their mamas," they may also be the caretakers of their male co-workers and administrators.

The idea that female teachers may be the caretakers of their administrators is borne out by teachers who feel that often they are the ones behind the scenes who make their principals look good. One teacher discusses this issue.

> But women willingly, willingly take on all the work. We're guilty of taking all of it on and then feeling guilty if it didn't work and then giving up the credit if it did. If it worked, we did all the work that made it work. We don't really get credit for it. The principal does a lot of times or nobody gets the credit. Nobody says anything about it, but if we screw up, then we can -- you know -- it's okay for us to take the blame for it.

She goes on to discuss the fact that women teachers put in many extra hours on projects for their male principals, time for which they get no recognition or monetary compensation. Moreover, she believes that principals either do not know or choose not to know the extra work women teachers do.

> Do you think they [principals] have any idea -- like do you think my principal has any idea of what it

> takes to make that academic reception go off? Do you think they have any idea how many hours it takes to do AG [academically gifted] folders? But you know, I don't think they want to know. They just want you to do it and not gripe about it too much. . . . And then if you do a good job, then you're asked to do more shit jobs and even more and more and more -- and you know, everything I do, I believe in what I'm doing, but it all makes him [the principal] look good.

In a sense, the work described by this woman parallels the work performed by a "good" wife in a traditional household. The house is automatically cleaned, meals are magically prepared, and social arrangements are made. The husband can then stand back as the patriarch of the household and be proud of what he has achieved. Secondary schools operate in much the same fashion, as Grumet has suggested, in that "domestic and maternal nurturance" have been transmitted to them from the home. Most secondary schools are administered by men, and the women handle, in addition to their teaching duties, such activities as planning and organizing social functions, letter writing, flower funds, and cooking. Men, on the other hand, make schoolwide decisions, coach, delegate duties and handle serious discipline problems. Admittedly, this analogy may be somewhat simplistic, but it appears to be a very realistic one in the secondary schools where these women teach.

One question arises at this point. Why are so many extra responsibilities delegated to women rather than to

men teachers? One woman suggests a plausible answer to this question.

> One of the reasons I think women are asked to do these things, I think we have organizational skills inherent in that nurturing -- well -- balancing family and work. We are forced to organize whether we want to or not. I am not an organizer by nature, but I've had to learn to do it to do things well, and so I think -- balancing. We're like jugglers. We can balance five or six balls in the air at one time.

It may be true that women with families have had to become better organizers of their time, a talent which may very well work to their disadvantage as indicated by the teachers in this study. Instead of being rewarded for their organizational skills and their efficiency, however, women often feel they may actually be punished. The better the job they do, the more they are asked to do. As one teacher laments:

> The more we do, the more we're asked to do. And at some point, you have to draw a line, and you're anxious about where that line is. When are we viewed as professional for saying no? . . . I think even at 48, I'm still asking, "where do I draw the line?" But we tend to take on more and more.

Perhaps the larger issue here lies in our conceptions of "women's work" and "men's work." Men's work is generally understood to refer to paid labor while women's work is typically defined in terms of both unpaid and paid labor. Apple (1986) distinguishes between vertical labor and horizontal labor in relation to women's work. He

maintains that women's paid work, as related to a vertical division of labor, may put women at a disadvantage in terms of pay and labor conditions. In the horizontal division of paid labor, women may find themselves concentrated in particular kinds of work such as teaching. Because teaching is considered to be a women's profession, women teachers, as we have seen, often perform many "female" duties which have traditionally been considered as unpaid labor.

Kelly and Nihlen (1982) argue that the emphasis on paid labor as the only meaningful kind of work relegates women's unpaid work to a lesser status. They also maintain that the assumption that this kind of work is the natural domain of women affects their working lives. Such is the case for women teachers and more specifically, for the women in this study. Their experiences suggest that the nurturing and housekeeping duties they perform are considered to be part of their "natural" roles, and since these duties have traditionally represented unpaid labor, compensation for them in schools is deemed unnecessary.

Another issue to consider when we look at the types of work these women are asked to perform in their schools is that of unions. The state in which these teachers work has very few unions, and its citizens, in general, display a very negative attitude toward them. This attitude can even be found among teachers themselves, but a strong

state teacher organization suggests that attitudes may be changing somewhat. The presence of a teacher union, as evidenced by those in other states, would certainly focus attention on duties performed by teachers. Issues of gender would also be addressed in the delineation of duties and responsibilities. In the absence of unions, however, the state teacher organization may provide a forum where these teachers and their colleagues can address the issue of "male" and "female" duties and responsibilities.

Where Do We Draw the Line?

Earlier, one of the teachers raised the question, "where do we draw the line?" This question speaks to the issues of both professionalism and gender. First of all, she is concerned that a refusal to carry out extra duties will be perceived by her administrator as unprofessional behavior, so she finds herself in a quandary. She considers herself a professional and wants to be perceived that way by her principal, so she says "yes." But drawing the line and saying "no" also raises issues concerning gender. Again and again, the women in this study indicate that men on their faculties frequently refuse to carry out extra duties, but their professionalism is not called into question. So why is it that women feel they do not have the same right? Some of these teachers feel that as women, they have been conditioned to serve. One woman admits that men are listened to when they say "no" whereas women are

"just told to do it." She adds:

> I'm certainly guilty of not saying no. My assistant principal comes down and says, "I need a letter of recommendation written, and I need it in fifteen minutes." I think that just runs through the female from birth to the grave really. And it's in almost everything we do. There's a fear of saying no.

The remarks of this woman may seem somewhat anachronistic in this late twentieth century era of feminism and women's liberation. Nevertheless, the literature suggests her fears are not without foundation, both in education and in the larger society as well. We hear much today about the fact that many men believe when a woman says "no," she really means "yes," an assumption which seems to play itself out in educational settings.

To cite an example, one woman in this study was asked by her principal to be the academically gifted liason person for her school, a job which requires many hours of work beyond the regular school day and for which there is no specific remuneration. Since she already sponsors one club, conducts the school's academic reception, acts as the school's teacher recruiter and serves on various other committees, she told her principal she felt overburdened and suggested he ask a male faculty member with an AG certification to take over this responsibility. The male faculty member has only one extra responsibility; he

sponsors the school's honor society. Nevertheless, he refused the principal's request, whereupon the principal came back to this woman and talked her into assuming the responsibility. True, she could have refused, which she attempted to do, but when her principal came back and pressured her, she gave in. All the male faculty member had to do was say "no," and his answer was accepted as final.

For whatever reasons, there is a certain amount of fear, as has already been noted in Chapter II, when a woman says "no." Certainly, we are not talking about physical fear, but we are not talking about imaginary fears either. The women in this study cited such possible reprisals as poor evaluations, difficult schedules and overloaded classes, to name a few. In addition, there is the added fear that a teacher may be cited for "insubordination" for refusing to carry out reasonable requests, and, of course, "reasonable" is determined by administrators.

In attempting to answer the question, "where do I draw the line?", it would seem that first of all, female teachers must be willing to admit that they are indeed oppressed, as Greene suggests. The women in this study have begun to realize that they are oppressed to some degree, but more importantly, they admit that in some ways they have been complicit in this oppression. One teacher sums up this critical consciousness.

> A lot of it's pure old male/female roles. We are willing to do the work and give away the credit, and it shouldn't be that way. I think we're getting to where we're starting to get a little angry about it, but see, we're starting to get angry about something that we had an active role in because we've gone along with it. At first, you go along with it because probably your principal is a male, probably -- not all the time. And you don't have tenure, so you pretty much do what you're supposed to do, so you keep your mouth shut and you kind of get molded in that role of doing what you're told from the very first time that you come into the profession.

These remarks describe what often happens when women (and men) allow themselves to fall into a pattern of continually fulfilling expected roles. Ferguson (1984) in The Feminist Case against Bureaucracy, argues that "feminine" traits have little to with being "biologically female," but "they have a great deal to do with being politically powerless, and with learning to play the role of subordinate in social relations" (p. 92). She adds that "the political consequences of male dominance are such that women learn the role of the subordinate, and that the role can easily become self-perpetuating" (p. 94). Certainly, the teachers in this study indicate that they often find themselves in "self-perpetuating" roles. One of the ironies in this dilemma, however, is that these women are generally leaders among their faculties, and they are also outspoken regarding issues about which they feel strongly. Thus, there seems to be a tension within them

regarding their subordination. While they admit complicity, they also indicate that they feel a kind of pride in doing a job well, almost a superiority in that perhaps their male counterparts might not do as well. As one woman jokingly said when asked what would happen if men were asked to carry out the same duties as women:

> Oh Lord, it would be just like a man with a cold. They would have invented it. They would have been the first ones it had ever happened to. It would have been the worst thing in the world. Nobody else has ever suffered or would suffer as they had!

Even though these women recognize the part they play in their own subordination, they still say that sometimes "it's just easier" to go ahead and "do it and get it done right." So, what is the solution? One step has already been taken. These and other women teachers have come to the realization that in some ways, they are actually oppressed. The next step, it would seem, would be to find a way to communicate this realization to their male co-workers and administrators and establish a dialogue where inequities can be addressed. However, it is not necessary for female teachers to relinquish such "feminine" traits as compassion, nurturance and generosity in order to eliminate inequities. As Ferguson (1984) writes:

> There is a careful line to be drawn between those aspects of women's traditional experience that possess an integrity of their own and thus provide a base for constructing a feminist discourse, and those

> aspects of women's experience that reflect their accommodation to the power of men. (p. 94)

Neither is it necessary for women to assume masculine traits to ensure their equality. Ferguson argues that the liberation of women does not require that they become like men, but it does require that "the entire system that allocates human potential according to gender" be abolished (p. 94). When male and female teachers can agree on their roles, irrespective of gender, then perhaps inequities for both sexes can be removed.

A Question of Leadership

It would be virtually impossible to discuss inequities for female teachers without addressing the issue of leadership. Although none of these teachers aspires to move into administration at this time, they all believe that more women should hold administrative positions and other positions of leadership. The fact that women administrators are in the minority is borne out nationally as well as in the area where these women teach. In 1981-82 women held only 25 percent of all administrative positions (Schumck, 1987). Only 3.8 percent of superintendencies and assistant superintendencies were filled by women. In 1978, eighteen percent of elementary principals were women, and in 1977, seven percent of secondary principals were women (Schmuck, 1987). Out of those women who do serve as administrators, most are specialists, supervisors or

elementary principals who remain in these positions without further promotion until retirement (McGrath, 1992). In "Here Come the Women!", McGrath notes that women who do reach the highest levels of leadership do so by following career paths similar to those of males: teacher, high school principal, assistant superintendent and, finally, superintendent. However, women need to establish their own career paths, routes which suit their own individual leadership styles. Moreover, those in positions of leadership must become willing to accept the fact that there is not merely one path to leadership positions.

The low percentages of female administrators would also seem to indicate that many qualified women educators are overlooked for positions of leadership particularly if we remember that women comprise the majority of educators. The teachers in this study offer opinions as to why such disparities exist. In describing the situation in her system, one teacher says:

> Like we've been talking about the "good old boy" network, and you asked me what needs to be changed. We need to have more females in administration, competent females -- not just because they're females. It seems like they'll give them a principalship, but only in an elementary school, and they can't handle high school. I think those are the kinds of changes that are going to have to happen, and get somebody in there who can do a good job, but it's the good old boy network. It's who you know and who coached you and who worked with your son here and there. It just doesn't seem fair, the way things are divided up. We get all the dirt jobs, but they get the leadership roles.

Another teacher comments:

> If you look at the percentage of women in education -- just take the education profession in this state or this county or even this school, and you take the percentage of male/female in the whole thing, who should man more of the higher positions? No pun intended! Who should be at the receiving end? How many? Shouldn't there be more women principals? Shouldn't there be more women in these areas? I know in the county where I came from, there's a woman superintendent, but they're very very few. That doesn't make sense to me. Why is that? I mean, the ones who are promoted are the men. The ones who go ahead, and often it's because they were such a good driver's ed. teacher, and that qualifies them to be a principal.

The remarks of these women indicate that they believe many qualified women are overlooked for leadership positions in favor of men who may be less qualified. In the area where these teachers live, most principals are former coaches, and as such, have established a network which women simply have been unable to penetrate. In addition, the realm of teaching experience for most women is quite different from that of men whose teaching careers have consisted mainly of coaching. According to McGrath (1992), this difference may actually be an asset for women in leadership positions. She says, "Administrative women tend to possess more expert information than men because they've had more classroom experience" (p. 65). All of this is not to say that coaches cannot be good principals; certainly many of them are. However, principalships should not be comprised primarily of a fraternity of male

ex-coaches. Indeed, McGrath predicts that "women leaders are coming. They are fresh, determined and ready to work with men to improve our schools" (p. 65).

As we have noted, one of the reasons for men's dominance in educational leadership is that they have established successful networks. However, educational networks are no longer the exclusive domain of men. Although we have noted those networks established by male coaches, other networks do, in fact, exist, and women are now penetrating them. According to McGrath (1992), women have come to understand the importance of being recognized as "a member of the club" (p. 63). Thus, some have gained acceptance through men who have "opened doors for women just as other men have closed them" (McGrath 1992, p. 63). Moreover, as more women educators assume leadership positions, they are establishing their own networks which recognize their talents as educational leaders.

Another issue inherent in the discrepancy between the number of females and males in administration is that of money. As one teacher says:

> They've got to protect male salaries. They've got to protect his salary level. And his salary level would have to be protected more than say, our assistant principal's because she's just the woman. She's just the wife. And so she's got her husband's salary. I think a lot of times when they look out for people, that's part of the reason. But we compensate for not having enough money in our profession for

> males to be the breadwinners by putting them in positions that they're usually not qualifed for. I don't understand why that is.

Despite the fact that many single women have been and still are members of the teaching profession, the consensus among these teachers is that women are still regarded as the "second income" for a family. Therefore, the prevailing sentiment seems to be that since the male is the primary breadwinner, he should be given first consideration for positions of leadership which command higher salaries.

Another teacher offers a different perspective as to why there are not more women in leadership positions.

> By their very nature, males have sought those positions of leadership. They're more aggressive in that. I think women, by our biological nature, we have children; we have demands on us that prohibit our getting the advanced degrees or just physically having the time to pursue. See, we're balancing careers and families. A man doesn't balance those. He has a career. His wife takes care of the family by and large, I think. And so here you have the leadership largely male, and I think how many young women are in administrative positions, married young women with children? And why aren't they? It's not just because they're not capable. It just takes too much time for the family. It's not that they're not skilled.

This opinion suggests that women may have more difficulty moving into positions of leadership because biologically, they are sometimes prevented from doing so. If a woman decides to have a family, she must take maternity leave from her teaching position. Then, in most cases, she is

the primary caretaker of her child or children. Even when she does return to work, she has little time left over after taking care of a child, a home and her teaching duties to pursue additional degrees which may qualify her for administrative positions. Thus, many women with families choose to put off further education until their children are older. And at that point in their careers, they may have enough years in teaching that they decide it is not worth their time or effort to pursue an administrative degree when they will be eligible for retirement in a few years.

In addition to the fact that women administrators are in the minority, women educators also face the dilemma of how to present themselves as leaders. One teacher discusses this problem.

> I don't think that women really have a clear cut way to present themselves. When women first started coming out, they modeled themselves after the male -- the suits, the tailored suits. Just think now, if we were going for an interview on an administrative level, would we wear something with a print, very feminine and a lacy collar or would we wear a business suit that says, "here I am"? Because we don't want to come across as being very feminine. Feminine doesn't get you anywhere.

The implication in these remarks seems to be that in order to achieve a position of leadership, a woman must suppress her femininity, at least in appearance. Indeed, Ferguson (1984) claims that women who enter organizations must

usually set aside the "person-oriented values of women's traditional role" in order to fit into the organization and become "one of the boys" (p. 94).

Although a woman educator may have to downplay her femininity to achieve a leadership position, once in that position, she may find herself in a subservient role in a predominantly male environment. One teacher describes the female administrators in her system as women who, capable though they may be, have had to accommodate themselves to the male leadership.

> But what is the role of the female in this school system? It is not as a leader, but there is no one dominant female. I don't mean domineering. I mean energetic, engaging, intellectual female at that administrative level. Well, we have a problem, don't we? Then you have to say, "how would I fit in?" I mean it's all show -- **Vogue** outfits or whatever -- docile, accommodating, gracious -- intellectual capability? You hide it. It's hidden. If it's there, it's certainaly well-hidden. In most cases, it isn't there, but in some cases, I think it is there. But here again, women are in the position of having to dummy down in the male presence in order to gain acceptance.

Incredible as it seems in 1992, these remarks indicate that in this school system, female administrators must hide their intellectuality because male leaders may be threatened by it. These comments may also suggest that these female administrators may even have been hired because they gave the impression that they would be accommodating and loyal. In fact, when asked if she

sees things improving in the way female administrators are expected to act, this teacher answers:

> I think in some areas. If you're speaking of this particular area, I don't see it. I don't think it's changed in the years that I've been in this system because the women who have become recognized on the administrative level are loyal, loyal followers of the system. I don't see a clear intellectual leader. I don't think they would be allowed to function very long. I think it would be perceived as a threat.

This opinion suggests that just as teachers' professionalism is evaluated in terms of "appearance, loyalty and compliance" as discussed in Chapter III, so too are female administrators judged by the same qualities. This is not to imply that all female administrators fit into this category or even that those in this system are ineffective leaders. Nevertheless, it does suggest that women in positions of leadership still have many obstacles to overcome before they can be accepted for their intellectual, organizational and decision-making abilities as well as for their sensitive, compassionate and nurturing qualities.

Sexual Harrassment in the School Setting

Certainly, many issues in education are critical for both male and female teachers. However, there are some problematic areas which concern women more so than men. One of these concerns is that of sexual harrassment. All of these women acknowledge that sexism does indeed exist

in education, and some of them have been the victims of overt sexual harrassment. As one woman says:

> I certainly have seen sexism, and I think -- I don't know many of us who have not had some experience with sexual harrassment -- principal putting his hands on you, coming up behind you, hugging you, sometimes in a crowded situation, so that it quote "looks innocent." But it makes you very uncomfortable. I'm always on my guard, and I always suspect that maybe I've jumped to the wrong conclusion, too, because of past experiences. I have to balance that and say, "now, what is the intent there?" And it's never been overt enough to do anything about. . . . But you don't want to put yourself in the situation of overreacting either, so I've not had what some people have had. I've certainly not had the fondling, but, on the other hand, I don't generally invite people to embrace me, and that's a conscious decision.

These remarks convey the dilemma that most women face in the workplace, both in and out of the education field: How can I be sure it really is sexual harrassment? Am I just misinterpreting his actions? In the face of such uncertainty, women often remain silent unless the harrassment is blatant. However, two women in this study have spoken out about overt sexual harrassment and have suffered repercussions as a result of their actions.

One woman describes being sexually harrassed by her assistant principal during her first year of teaching. Initially, he made a pass at her which, as she says, "was not received very well at all, and from then on, it was on, and I was not the only one." She says that when women confronted him about his actions, he would say things like,

"I was kidding. Can't you take a joke?" However, far from joking, he used his power to punish those teachers who openly rejected his advances. In the case of this teacher, he documented every time that she sent a student to the office for disciplinary reasons, and he refused to take disciplinary action. Thus, when the student returned to the classroom without any kind of punishment, this teacher's credibility within the classroom was damaged. At the end of the year, the principal of the school gave her a poor evaluation as a result of her disciplinary referrals. She describes what happened:

> . . . . when the principal told me what he had written down and asked me to sign it, I said that I was sending a letter in [to her supervisor], and he said, "What do you mean?"
>
> And I said, "it's my right. You have made some very grave allegations," and I said, "I'm going to respond."
>
> And he said, "Well, I want you to tell me what you think about this evaluation."
>
> And I said, "I think that it is not only slanted, but it is a misuse of power," and I told him that. And I told him what this man had done, and I said, "He will deny it." And I said, "You don't ever have to accept what I'm telling you, but you look at every one of those referrals, and then you look at what he did and then you can see why I was in a mess. No action was ever taken. They [the students] used obscene language in class" (and this was twenty years ago). "These are the things that they did and nothing was done. Yes, I had trouble. I had no backup." I said, "Plus, if you'll look at my class size, I have 40 in every class, and that's against the law on your part, and I'm going to put that in my letter." And I said, "Somebody falsified documents," and I said, "yes, I'm fed up."

> He said, "Well, I think you have an attitude."
>
> And I said, "I sure do."
>
> And he said, "What if I change recommendations?"
>
> I said, "Well, I'll look at it." I said, "you change it and have me back in and I'll look at it, and if I think it's fair, then I'll sign it. I'm not playing games. We're talking about my career." And it's not a good evaluation now, but it's better than it was.

This narrative indicates what can happen when a woman stands up to sexual harrassment. She runs the risk of retaliation, which, in this case, came in the form of a poor evaluation. This teacher was very outspoken and had some leverage with which to defend herself: the fact that records had been falsified to allow 40 students in her classroom. However, other women are not so outspoken and do not have the same leverage. We have no way of knowing how many women may have been driven out of the profession or who may have silently accepted poor evaluations as a result of sexual harrassment. What is remarkable in this case is the path that the offending assistant principal traveled following this incident.

This teacher recounts that he continued to harrass others until one teacher's husband went to the school and tried to beat him up. The incident was reported in the newspaper and the police became involved. The husband threatened a lawsuit when the school attempted to transfer the female teacher to another school. Since the woman

could prove that she had been sexually harrassed, the assistant principal lost his job in that school, but he was promoted to the central office in a "pie job." According to this teacher, he is now running for public office.

Another teacher in a different system was also the victim of blatant sexual harrassment, but this time from a male colleague rather than an administrator. She says that the male teacher's offensive behavior has gone on for years, and she, as well as everyone else, was aware of it. For instance, he would put his hands on women and come up behind them and kiss them. However, he had thirty years' teaching experience in the system and was also from the school community. In this particular teacher's case, the male colleague used offensive and suggestive language to her. Because she was so upset, she went to her principal, and his first recourse was to call in the male teacher. As expected, the man flatly denied the charges whereupon the principal decided to turn the matter over to the assistant principal who was a good friend of the male teacher in question. She describes the incident:

> . . . but the thing about it is, the principal didn't handle it. He sent him to the assistant principal because the assistant principal and this man had started at the school together, so they were much better friends! Which really griped me because I knew right then, my principal was passing the buck. He did not want to deal with it, and he and I -- probably about six months out of this year, we had a very strained relationship because I finally ended up telling him what I thought about it.

Although her principal "passed the buck" onto his assistant principal, he, nevertheless, pressed the female teacher to file a grievance against the man for sexual harrassment. It seems that some previous incidents had been reported, and since the male teacher was close to retirement, the principal saw the grievance as a way of getting him out of teaching and thereby solving the problem. Following much deliberation, the woman agreed to file the grievance. After she filed it, the principal gave it to the man who made copies of it and showed it to other teachers in the school claiming that she had manufactured all the allegations. He then wrote a reply defending himself on the basis of his church work and activities in a local civic club. The woman was justifiably incensed and went to her principal and told him:

> I can't believe you let him do that. When he left this office, you should have told him, "This is confidential. This is just between the three of us."
>
> He said, "I didn't know he was going to go out and do that."
>
> I said, "That doesn't matter. You didn't even reprimand him when he did that."
>
> And he said, "What he did with that letter was his business."
>
> I said, "No it's not because I have to work with these people day in and day out, and you don't. You don't have to face them."

The upshot of the whole incident was that after being pressured to file the grievance, the teacher was encouraged to retract it which she eventually did. She recounts the outcome:

> Of course, it hasn't come up any more, but not to say that it won't. I figure this guy's going to retire this year, and there are many times when I thought about going down and seeing the director of personnel and telling him because then, I had to write a letter asking him to rescind that and take that out of that man's file. And I wanted to go down there and explain to him that I felt like I had been manipulated, that I had been used, that I had been encouraged to do that [file a grievance], but then I didn't. I just left it alone, and I guess this guy's going to retire this year, and I guess everybody's going to be happy.

What happened to this woman is apparently not uncommon if we are to believe all that has recently been discussed, both in print and in the media. She followed the proper procedure which was to file a complaint with her administrator. However, instead of receiving his support or, at the very least, a fair and equitable investigation of the matter, she was further victimized, and the man is still teaching at the school. As she concludes: ". . . the thing that bothers me is my principal had treated me like such a professional up until this incident."

The incidents described by these two women will probably sound familiar to women on virtually every secondary faculty. Even when they follow the proper channels in reporting sexual harrassment, they often find

themselves on "trial," so to speak, much as rape victims have found themselves on trial in courts of law. They find that many times, the male's word is taken over the female's, and even if the male's word is not automatically regarded as truth, women still find themselves in the position of having to defend their allegations. Neither of these women was docile in her particular situation, but each suffered a great deal of emotional turmoil as a consequence of her actions. Still, there is hope on the horizon in this area. The Anita Hill hearings, the recent election of more women to public offices, and national publicity have all focused attention on the issue of sexual harrassment. The school systems in which these teachers work have, likewise, not been immune to all the recent publicity. Both systems have developed and disseminated strict guidelines regarding sexual harrassment and the procedures to be followed when and if it occurs. With the implementation of these guidelines, perhaps other women educators will not be subject to the same harrassment that these women have endured.

Conclusions and Implications for the Future

Although the women in this study are all English teachers, many of their concerns reflect those of female educators in all levels of education including administration. They indicate that teachers on the secondary level fulfill stereotypical female/male roles

which suggest a patriarchy within the school setting. Typically, women carry out those responsibilities which have traditionally represented unpaid labor: nurturing, housekeeping and caretaking. Men, on the other hand, handle those "important" responsibilities associated with paid labor: management, decision making and delegation of authority. Moreover, those "female" duties which women perform are expected to be carried out without additional compensation.

That women perform most of the menial tasks within the secondary school setting clearly presents a dilemma for these teachers. On the one hand, they resent having to carry out "female" responsibilities with little or no recognition and certainly without monetary compensation. On the other hand, they take a certain amount of pride in performing these tasks well. In addition, they feel that sometimes it is just easier to go ahead and do the jobs themselves so they will be done right. But in continuing to perform these tasks, they admit that they are complicit in their own subordination. However, they have begun to question their own complicity, and in so doing, they have taken the first step toward the "demystification" advocated by Greene.

The comments of these women also suggest that female leadership is still not at the level it should be when we consider that the profession is dominated by women. They

would like to see more women in positions of authority, but they admit that female administrators sometimes have difficulty establishing their leadership identities. To attain a position of leadership, for example, women must often downplay their femininity which may be perceived as too nurturing and not appropriately managerial in tone. Once in leadership positions, however, they may have to minimize such "masculine" traits as assertiveness. Thus, a dichotomy exists in the way that women educational leaders must define themselves. One avenue to the establishment of a feminine identity in leadership may be networking. As women continue to attain positions of leadership in education, they will be able to establish female networks which will ensure that even more women can assume leadership roles without sacrificing their female identities.

Another important gender issue for the women in this study is that of sexual harrassment. All of them indicate that they have seen evidence of it in their schools, and some of them have been the direct objects of such harrassment. What their remarks demonstrate is that schools, like other workplaces, are not immune to harrassment. Moreover, they reveal that even when a teacher follows the proper procedure in reporting harrassment, that teacher may end up as the victim, and justice may not prevail. Their experiences are disturbing,

and they demonstrate the necessity for a critical consciousness concerning this issue, not only for men, but for women as well.

As we move into the 21st century, a whole spate of so-called women's issues will move with us, and the impact of these issues will be especially evident in the field of education. I am referring here specifically to child care and elder care. And who better than women to bring these issues to the forefront? One teacher sees female teachers as primary spokespersons concerning these issues.

> But I think that that's a critical issue for women in education, that we've got to start opening our mouths and not being afraid. And I'm just as guilty as the next person, but I've become better at it because I think with getting more self-confidence, and sometimes I think it's just getting older and having enough life experiences to give you some confidence in yourself. But women are going to have to start being more assertive and speaking out if it's going to change. I think they're doing that. I think it's starting.

One area where women need to be more outspoken is that area concerned with the biological natures of women. Casey and Apple (1989) contend that any study of the teacher as female worker would be incomplete without investigating the issue of "control over women's sexuality and reproductive power which, many feminists argue, is the basis for gender domination and exploitation" (p. 180). One woman in this study speaks to this issue:

> You've got to look at women, instead of punishing us for being biologically the one who has children, instead of making that into a problem in the workplace, why can't we not look at it as a problem -- it's just a fact of life -- and deal with what is best for the child, best for the parent, best for the workplace by having -- maybe flex time, working at scheduling differently, providing site-based child care, that type of situation. Often, we're punished because we have children. We're a problem in the nice little scheme of things. We either make them have to find somebody to replace us or -- but if we would just acknowledge that's the way it is. Men aren't going to start having the babies. They never are. We're always going to have the babies, and there's not many men that are going to take maternity leave or family leave and they can. You don't see many of them doing it, and they can take the leave. But since that's the way it is, why can't we just acknowledge it's not a problem, it's just a fact and deal with it from that perspective instead of running people out of the profession because they have children because it's getting to the point where not many women can stay at home with the baby anymore. It's just less of them want to do it for one thing, but fewer of them have that option. I just wish we would look at all our employees as the whole person.

This teacher goes on to speak specifically about the issues of child care and elder care.

> I think another critical issue for a woman educator, for any women educators, is child care. There are lots of businesses that are addressing that issue when they look at how many of their employees are women, how many of their employees are parents, women parents, and so they realize that if that employee is going to do a good job on the job, he or she doesn't need to worry about who's keeping the child or if the child is in a good situation, and business has responded. Many of them have responded by providing site-based day care. Also, women are starting to need support with elder care because a lot of women who are still teaching not only have children who are still at home, but they have parents that have gotten older or that are having problems. There are women in our profession that are not only taking care of children; they're

> taking care of their parents, and with teaching being the kind of job it is, I think that's something that -- you know -- business is addressing that. Why isn't education which is a profession that's supposed to be compassionate and caring, and it's supposed to know about developmental stages and how you treat people? We don't ever look at things like that. If any profession in the world should be the front runner in this, shouldn't it be us?

The comments of this teacher reflect the belief that education has an obligation to reach beyond the narrow confines of individual schools and consider itself as a compassionate profession which addresses the needs of the larger society, in particular, those needs concerned with nurturing and caring. Certainly, the issues raised here ought to be discussed in individual classrooms where students are encouraged to take a critical look at the society in which they live. But in a larger sense, women educators should be in the forefront of the education profession in establishing a discourse to deal with such crucial issues as child care and elder care.

Clearly, the women in this study are concerned about gender issues which reach beyond their classrooms, beyond their schools, beyond their school systems. They are concerned with their mothers, their sisters and their daughters. But what concerns them the most is the issue of equality. They do not want to be treated better than men in education; what they want is to be treated fairly. Perhaps the most appropriate summation of their feelings

can be found in the remarks of the teacher who said, "I just wish we would look at all our employees as the whole person."

Thus far in this dissertation, I have examined the English teacher as intellectual, as professional and as woman, but we must not forget that she is teacher as well. As teacher, her intellectualism, her professionalism and her gender are all integrated within her classroom. Chapter V will examine how all these aspects converge in the English teacher's role as a critical educator.

CHAPTER V

ENGLISH TEACHER AS CRITICAL EDUCATOR

Reviewing Critical Pedagogy

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (1970) distinguished between the banking method of education and problem-posing education. He defined the banking method as the act of depositing in which "students are the depositories and teachers are the depositors" (p. 58). Implicit here is the notion that teachers are the only ones who possess the knowledge which they, in turn, bestow upon those who presumably know nothing. Not only does this method ignore critical thinking, but it also fails to attend to the existential lives of students. In contrast, the problem-posing method or "liberating education" is concerned with reconciliation between teacher and student, a relationship where both simultaneously act as students and learners. In addition, human beings are not separated from their lived worlds in the process. As Freire maintains:

> Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (p. 58)

More recently, in "Letter to North-American Teachers," Freire (1987) discusses critical pedagogy in relation to contemporary American teachers. In particular, he remarks that it is "naive" to asssume that teachers can maintain neutral roles in schools. He argues that instead of attempting to distance themselves from their political views, teachers should admit to and even assume responsibility for them. In the case of progressive teachers, Freire states:

> It is contradictory to proclaim progressive politics and then to practice authoritarianism or opportunism in the classroom. A progressive position requires democratic practice where authority never becomes authoritarianism, and where authority is never so reduced that it disappears in a climate of irresponsibility and licence. (p. 212)

For progressive teachers then, pedagogy means that learners become a part of the teacher's discourse, "appropriating for themselves the deepest significance of the subject being taught" (p. 213). The assumption here, of course, is that the progressive teacher has already appropriated the content to the degree that she has examined it critically for herself. Freire concludes:

> To teach, then, is the form that knowing takes as the teacher searches for the particular way of teaching that will challenge and call forth in students their own act of knowing. Thus,teaching is both creative and critical. It requires inventiveness and curiosity by both teacher and learner in the process. (p. 213)

Giroux and Simon (1988) expand upon Freire's views in "Schooling, Popular Culture, and a Pedagogy of Possibility" where they pose a series of questions for critical educators. They ask what relationship students see between what they learn in school and the lives they live outside of school. They wonder if it is possible to incorporate students' lived culture into the classroom and if it can be done without "trivializing the objects and relationships important to students" (p. 16). Further, they want to know if incorporating student culture into the classroom can be an inclusive act, one which will not single out certain students as "exotic" or "marginal" (p. 16).

To answer their own questions, Giroux and Simon contend that the incorporation of popular culture into the classroom does not necessitate that teachers dismiss what they already know and how they know it. Instead, critical pedagogy encourages teachers and students to find a common ground where no single discourse becomes the only discourse under consideration. It is incumbent upon the critical teacher to foster an atmosphere where many voices can be heard, one in which the underpinnings of the pedagogy dispute racism, sexism and class exploitation. Further, the critical classroom should be one which discourages "practices that disrupt and devalue public life" (p. 16). To this end, student experience should

represent an integral component of the curriculum. In a classroom concerned with critical pedagogy, both teacher and students interrogate "the ways we produce meaning and represent ourselves, our relations to others, and our relation to our environment" (p. 17). In such an investigation, we can determine where we are now and where we would like to be. As Giroux and Simon argue, "We also enable ourselves to recognize, and struggle for, possibilities not yet realized" (p. 17).

In Landscapes of Learning, Greene (1978) speaks to the issue of unrealized possibilities when she calls upon teachers to develop a "wide awakeness" in their own lives, a critical consciousness which they can then integrate into their teaching. She recognizes that teachers often find themselves in difficult positions when they are granted little autonomy and when their own principles and values conflict with those which their school systems espouse. Nevertheless, Greene contends that it is all the more imperative for these teachers to "identify themselves as moral beings, concerned with defining their own life purposes in a way that arouses others to do the same" (p. 51). She argues:

> If teachers are not critically conscious, if they are not awake to their own values and commitments (and to the conditions working upon them), if they are not personally engaged with their subject matter and with the world around, I do not see how

> they can initiate the young into critical questioning or the moral life. (p. 48)

Thus, an important concern for the critical educator is that of helping students to make informed choices in their own lives. In particular, Greene cites some of the dilemmas confronting young people today: sex, drugs, and alcohol. In order to deal with such issues, critical educators must be grounded in their own "values, their own conceptions of the good and the possible" (p. 47). We do not live in a society where we can teach character and assume that our students will take our lessons, assimilate them and grow into moral and just human beings. As Greene says, "We can no longer set ourselves up as founts of wisdom, exemplars of righteousness, and expect to have positive effects" (p. 47). The role of the critical educator is not to tell students what they should do and how they should act, but rather it is to equip them with the resources to make reasoned choices for themselves. To fulfill this role, the critical educator must be able to present herself as a critical thinker, one who cares and who is willing to share her own values and principles as a real person living in the world.

The women teachers in this study certainly fit Greene's description of critical educators. Their definitions of themselves as such reveal them to be caring individuals who share their values and beliefs with their

students. In this chapter they explain how they implement critical pedagogy in their classrooms, and in doing so, they add another dimension to the practice -- nurturance. In fact, their comments indicate that they cannot separate nurturance from critical consciousness in their classrooms. In addition, they feel that developing a critical consciousness can be an extemely difficult task for critical educators who are confronted with the realities of classrooms in the 1990's.

Defining Themselves as Critical Educators

In speaking of the necessity for teachers to become transformative intellectuals, Giroux (1988) states that critical educators are obligated to empower students with the skills and knowledge which will enable them to be critical thinkers within their society. He contends that teachers should not merely be concerned with individual student achievement or career training. Instead, students should be taught to "read the world critically and change it when necessary" (xxxiv). In defining themselves as critical educators, the women in this study reflect Giroux's sentiments. The common thread that weaves through their definitions is that of providing their students with the ability to become lifelong learners and to view their worlds critically. None of them express the belief that the most important aspect of their roles as English teachers involves the mastery of literature,

grammar or composition. Rather, they view the discipline itself as a foundation upon which to build critical thinking, self-evaluation and lifelong learning skills. As one teacher remarks: "Every teacher is more than just a teacher. The subject matter, sometimes, is just a by-product of what we do."

Although they express their feelings in different ways, the comments of these teachers bear remarkable similarities. One teacher draws from her personal experiences in constructing her definition of herself as a critical educator.

> I guess I'd like to be a role model. I know that because my family was poor, that for the poor kids especially, I can tell them this was my situation, and I got through school, and you can too. It's not easy, but you can do it. I think in that respect I can be a role model. . . . I'd like to be a role model for all the groups, and I'd like them to carry away those broad ideas and keep building on them. And that's one thing we try to do. We try to build on ideas the whole year. And I'd like them to get that concept down pat -- that what you've learned in this class, you use it, you build on it, you apply it in your lives. And I'd really like to think that those are the things -- the applications are what are important, not the verb tense.

The chief metaphor expressed by this teacher is that of building. She hopes to provide a foundation of ideas, one which students can carry over into their personal lives. In addition, she sees her role as almost missionary-like in that she hopes to convert those

students who may feel like their situations in life are hopeless due to economic conditions. She is willing to share her own personal background of poverty in order to convince students that there is a way out of their present situation. By acting in this way, she reflects Greene's contention that teachers should be willing to share their values with their students, and she also demonstrates the type of teacher-student relationship described by Freire.

Another teacher describes her role as critical educator in terms of teaching her students to be thinkers.

> To educate them in being thinkers, that that thought process goes into everything that they do whether it's in literature or it's in grammar or it's in social studies. I think it's up to me to do that for them as an educator. And to relate it to their math or their science or their social studies, not just in my class because they're all related to each other. If they can take that with them, that makes me happy. So they'll stop saying, "Why do I have to do this?" When they finally see and become proud "I'm in here," not because, "I love English." That has nothing to do with it. "Because I have the ability to do that." If you can educate them that way, maybe that's something that would help. That would be a plus. I don't know. I think it's a big responsibility sometimes. Sometimes, it's kind of scary to be an educator because, in a sense, that means you are responsible for that particular student or those students at that particular level, so I think that's why you have to look at what it means to educate. You're not going to save them all, that's for sure. You can't go out there -- if you can just save one of them, if you can get one to see that what he's doing is important and the reasons are not, "because I said it was important."

In this teacher's remarks is the belief that it is the educator's role to help students internalize what they are learning. Again, there is almost a missionary zeal in her words. She talks about saving students, and she wants them to feel good about themselves and their ability to learn. In addition, she is concerned about the fact that students do not integrate what they are learning. Consequently, she tries to make her students understand the connections between disciplines and with life itself. Finally, she expresses a sense of deep commitment and personal caring when she acknowledges that it is "scary" to be an educator.

One teacher echoes many of these sentiments, but she also speaks about the moral obligations of the critical educator.

> At the risk of sounding trite, that learning is an exciting venture, a lifelong venture from cradle to the grave, and that you can tap into it at almost any point, but that the earlier you tap into it, the richer the life will be. Now I see that both inside and outside the classroom. I see that as a parent. That's what bothers me about the fragmentation within the structure. It's a little late to learn that at [age] 48 or 45. You know, the earlier you see that, the greater the vistas and the more options you have and especially for those children who have no vision from home. I think we have to be the agents for that and the vehicles for that vision. Who else is going to do it? The church isn't doing it because most of the people aren't going to church. So what other structure within society can provide that education?

This teacher uses some very rich metaphors to define her role as a critical educator: venture, vistas, vision, for example. Embodied in these metaphors is the concept that the critical educator is there to open students' minds to their own potential. She, like the others, extends her teaching beyond the classroom and her individual discipline. In addition, she sees her role of critical educator as a moral imperative, a view which reflects the "possibilities" described by Giroux and Simon.

Another teacher expands on the moral obligations of the critical English teacher.

> To educate the whole being, to get them to see beyond themselves, to care about one another, to appreciate different lifestyles, different -- you know, we were talking about racism and sexism and to get beyond that and to appreciate people if they're different from them, to think for themselves, to be able to -- not just perform in a work society, but to be able to function and to live and to enjoy life as a human being and to find joy in things that they might never have found them in before -- to give them a purpose, to give them a direction.

The remarks of this teacher also speak to Giroux and Simon's "possibilities." Moreover, she sees her classroom as a place where many voices can be heard and where students can learn to make informed decisions as Greene suggests. She adds another dimension to critical pedagogy as well. She speaks of helping students "to find joy" in life. Too often, in classrooms, we concern ourselves primarily with the work ethic, and to some degree, we

are concerned with helping students to become contributing citizens in a democratic society. But how often do we talk about enabling students to find joy, certainly an important element of their existential lives?

The fifth teacher's comments summarize and synthesize those of the other teachers. She describes herself as:

> An ambassador for their learning. To try to promote an attitude for them that it's something important. That they should -- that as a person in society, they should always be a reader, a questioner, a challenger, a doer, be active in their own learning and hopefully be active in their own lives when they get out of school. That they don't just passively sit there. Those are the students that bother me a lot, the ones that just want to have this little agreement -- you know -- they just do what they're told, and that's it. They don't want to dig any deeper. I think we've got to try -- you know the information age, the information changes. I know the good literature, a lot of it stays the same, but basically, information changes and grows so much, we've got to be much more concerned with teaching our students how to learn and to be learners so that they can learn whatever new information is available four years from now when they get out of school or eight years from now when they get out of college than just being so concerned with the subject matter. They've got to be investigators, they've got to be thinkers, they've got to be writers, they've got to be able to put their thoughts down on paper, they've got to look at things really critically and not just accept, just because the television or just because the newspaper says something, that it's true. I think sometimes we're the only ones that tell these kids that type of thing -- I think English teachers more than anybody else.

What this teacher describes is a classroom environment in which students are engaged with what they are learning. She feels frustrated when students refuse to become

engaged, when they want to take the easiest route, the one which requires little reflection, one in which the teacher is active and the student is passive. This kind of relationship suggests Freire's description of the banking method, a method which this teacher decries. In speaking of teaching her students to think critically, she also recalls Freire's description of teaching that challenges and "calls forth in students their own act of knowing."

Implementing Critical Pedagogy in the Classroom

It is one thing to define oneself as a critical educator, but it is quite another to implement critical peadagogy into teaching a specific discipline. While the critical educator wants to help her students develop a critical consciousness, she does not want to do so to the neglect of subject matter. Freire (1987) addresses this dilemma. He says that it would be reprehensible for a teacher to conduct a class without providing "material relevant to the discipline" (p. 212). He distinguishes the progressive teacher from the reactionary teacher in that the progressive teacher "is always endeavoring to reveal reality for her/his students, removing whatever keeps them from seeing clearly and critically" (p. 212). He goes on to say that "such a teacher would never neglect course content simply to politicize students" (p. 212). Thus, the critical educator must strike a balance between teaching subject matter and teaching students to become

critical thinkers. The teachers in this study relate the various methods they employ to strike such a balance in the teaching of English.

Although these teachers must follow a standard course of study as prescribed by their state department of education, they do have a certain amount of flexibility in their teaching methods and, to a lesser degree, in the content of the courses they teach. It is this latitude which allows them to take a critical approach to their teaching. One of the biggest critical concerns for them is the establishment of relevancy within their classrooms. They all speak of the necessity for making the subject matter relevant to their students' lives in some way. One teacher, for example, relates how she begins her school year:

> Well, I try from the very first day, if not from the first day, the first week, I try to talk with my students about -- even though the subject matter that we're covering is important, the first thing is I would like for them to be a learner, a perpetual student, and to try to get across to them that I'm a student as much as they are, as much as any of them in the classroom -- to try to get them to be real researchers, to look into things, to try to get an interest in things because they see a value in it -- to learn something because they really feel like they want to learn it or need to learn it.

These statements reflect Freire's belief that teachers and students should both be learners in the classroom. They also emphasize the need for students to see a value in

what they are asked to learn and to accept the responsibility for their own learning.

Another teacher speaks of the teacher's obligation to make her students aware of why they are studying a particular work of literature.

> Whenever I start a unit, whatever it is, the first thing I do is tell them why we're doing this and not because it says so in the curriculum. What does this have to do with you? Or a kid will ask me a question about something, and it [the answer] won't be "because we have to. . . ." I try to bring in things that are going on, you know, watching the newspapers, relating to what's going on. The biggest thing to relate to a lot of times with them is like in race car driving or even athletics because their heroes are in athletics. They're not your presidents or people that we would normally think of as heroes, and if you can associate with that and do things with them to make it seem relevant to them.

She goes on to describe some specific classroom techniques she uses:

> It would be a lot easier for me to say, "here, read this short story, answer these questions, have a test on it tomorrow." But we need to discuss it, and I ask a lot of questions that require some thought when we discuss some things -- to see what their social values are, their moral values are, that kind of thing and if you were in this situation? What do you think about this character? . . . Another thing about English though, too, is it's so nice to be able to read something and then look at an interpretation and see it different ways. . . . What better way to understand people because that's one thing I try to get them to see -- these people, these are fictitious people, but have you ever met anybody like this or do you know anybody or have you ever gotten into situations, is this the way you would behave? . . . Get some discussions, get some controversy going on, I mean, "big deal." At least they're thinking, and that's what you want them to

> do. You want them to think. I don't want them to be just robots, you know -- that they're trained to do this and spit this out and that's it.

This teacher teaches ninth graders and in attempting to make her subject matter relevant, she relates their interests to what they are studying. Moreover, she goes beyond the literature to get students to see situations and decisions through different lenses. By raising such questions as why a character acted in a certain way or what the character could have done differently, students are forced to reach into their own experiences for answers. In this way, the literature they study becomes meaningful for them.

Another woman, who teaches a chronological study of American Literature, explains how she brings the subject matter to life.

> Everything we do, we relate to them, and we do a lot of "hands on" things. The things that are the dullest in my anthology, we always do "hands on." For instance, the American Revolutionary Period is pretty dull in my book, so we make an Almanac, and it's usually pretty lively, and they write a Declaration of Independence where they declare themselves independent, either from the school or their parents. And we turn things around, and it's fun.

Not only does this teacher attempt to engage her students in what they are studying, but she also tries to make learning enjoyable for them. Although attitudes are changing somewhat, for many years high schools have

stressed the concept that learning must always be equated with work. The notion has prevailed that if students are having fun, they cannot possibly be learning. This teacher's methods belie that attitude.

Another teacher characterizes her classroom as one in which students' experiences are integral to the way she conducts her classes.

> It's dealing with ideas that are always changing. There are some that are -- times are changing -- how we approach that literature is like reading the same work three different times in our lives and finding newness, and too, we're dealing with good literature. We're not reading the dime store novel. We're dealing with literature that is alive, and so each time that we read it, there's a new life. And each time those kids interpret it for themselves, there's new life and growth. That's why we take a totally different bent and you don't chastise yourself and say, "hell, I shouldn't have done that." You say, "God, I wish my third period had thought of this," but they didn't. It might not have been a good issue for them at that point, but that's okay too. Where they were was just as important as the fifth period class. You can't separate the child from his own experience.

From a literary standpoint, this teacher is talking about a reader-response approach to literature. By endorsing such a response, she is attending to the existential lives of her students. She does not have a standard way of teaching each work of literature to each class she teaches, but rather, she adapts the lesson to meet the receptivity, the experiential backgrounds and the responses of her students. In this way, her students can more easily assume ownership of their own learning.

Another teacher explains how she incorporates important moral and social issues into discussions of literature.

> I know from the way the administration sees us, I feel sometimes bound to teach a certain way and to make sure that I have a six step lesson plan, but I don't do that every day. But from the other aspects, I'm willing enough to go away from that and do what I think is right for the kids and try to get them to think on their own. As a woman educator, I try to present role models for them in literature. I mean if we read about a strong woman like Hester Prynne, yes, she committed a sin, but look how she she handled it. Look what she did with her life afterwards or should she have been treated that way? That kind of thing -- make them see women as women and not just someone who can be dumped on or someone who's made to feel subservient to others.

This woman uses literature as a means to develop critical thinking about male/female roles. She goes on to discuss other works of literature in which students are asked to consider important issues of gender and alternative lifestyles.

> When we study someone like Emily Dickinson, the kids just think she's the most bizarre thing that ever walked the face of the earth because she wasn't married and she stayed at home. I mean, I want them to accept, like you said, different roles. I mean, everybody gets to choose what they want to do in their life, and they shouldn't be forced to follow everybody else just because that's what they do. You know, I'm hoping if there are two or three kids out there who feel that way, who feel like they would just rather be by themselves or that they would rather, you know, go off and do -- or we studied that other story, "The Sculptor's Funeral," someone who cares about nature and who cares about intellectual things, they shouldn't be made fun of. They should be allowed to express those feelings.

> Or they automatically assume he's [the sculptor] gay; at least my kids do. They automatically assume that because he's a male and that he likes nature and art, that he's gay, and I don't know how you fight those stereotypes. When one of my students did Tennessee Williams this year for his research paper, in his concluding paragraph, it said something about "despite his personal something or other" in reference to his homosexuality -- "despite this, he became a great writer," and I circled it, and I questioned it, and I put "despite?" I mean did that have something to do [with it]? I said, "Wasn't it because of this that he became a great writer?"

In asking her students to think critically about sex roles and stereotypes, this teacher recalls Giroux and Simon's belief that classrooms should be places where many voices can be heard and where the pedagogy "disputes racism, sexism and class exploitation." Moreover, as Greene suggests, this teacher is clearly awake to her own values and commitments which she incorporates into her teaching as a way of getting her students to question critically.

In examining the ways these teachers implement critical pedagogy in the classroom, we can also see how they act as intellectuals within their classrooms. In Chapter II, they defined themselves as intellectuals in terms of reasoning, reflection, critical thinking, process, assimilation, growth, learning, application and questioning. Their remarks concerning the ways they teach English suggest that these characteristics are the same ones they try to develop in their students. In so doing,

they are acting, as Giroux advocates, as transformative intellectuals to empower themselves as well as the students they teach.

Critical Pedagogy and Nurturance

In defining themselves as critical educators, the women in this study also include nurturance as an important component of their roles as teachers. They all see themselves as nurturing and caring and, in some cases, describe themselves as surrogate mothers within the classroom. For them, nurturance is essential in the way they implement critical pedagogy in their classrooms. However, much of the literature concerned with critical pedagogy and emancipatory education has neglected this concern.

In recent years, some feminist educators have taken issue with critical pedagogy on the basis that its discourse is grounded on rationalist assumptions that create repressive myths. In particular, Ellsworth (1989) addresses this concern in "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy." She argues that:

> . . . key assumptions, goals, and pedagogical practices fundamental to the literature on critical pedagogy -- namely "empowerment," "student voice," "dialogue," and even the term "critical" -- are repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination. (p. 298)

She contends that critical educators have "acknowledged the socially constructed and legitimated authority that teachers/professors hold over students" (p. 306), but they have failed to establish a method for rectifying power imbalances between teachers and students. She argues that as long as the stated assumptions and goals of critical pedagogy remain theoretical and untested in classrooms, then "critical pedagogues" (p. 297) will continue to maintain relationships of domination within the teaching environment. Ellsworth and other feminist educators have interjected some legitimate concerns and tensions into the discussion of critical pedagogy. Perhaps this feminine discourse may eventually include nurturance as one of its issues, but currently, nurturance is not generally considered to be an assumption or goal of critical pedagogy.

There are some exceptions however. Greene touches on the issue tangentially and Grumet, as we have seen, discusses it as well. Another exception is Casey (1990) who addresses nurturance in "Teacher as Mother: curriculum theorizing in the life histories of contemporary women teachers" where she notes the "lack of consensus" among educators concerning the importance of the "maternal" in education (p. 303). Her article deconstructs the narratives of thirty-three female teachers who define themselves as mothers in their

classrooms. Although they do not all interpret "mother" in the same way, they all view themselves in roles which include nurturance. Casey concludes that the "metaphor of teacher-as-mother. . . clearly presents a teacher-student relationship between subjects" (p. 318). This relationship contrasts with the more instrumental view of the teacher-student relationship where the student is considered as "object, product, a means to an end;. . ." (p. 318). A relationship between subjects is not without its problems, however. As Casey points out, a dilemma between nurture and authority exists for female teachers, one which she describes as "severe gender conflict" (p. 318).

For the teachers in this study, nurturance appears to be a given in the way they deal with their students. What dilemma there is for them exists not within themselves but with the false perception that one cannot maintain discipline and authority while still being nurturing. This perception is more common in secondary schools where discipline is emphasized and where the "strict" teacher is often viewed as the model to be emulated. However, the comments of these teachers suggest that nurturance is as natural a part of their teaching as is their expertise in their subject matter. One teacher even uses the metaphor of a gestation period to describe the school year.

> These kids are not machines to be manufactured in a nine month period of time. I tend to think of it, and maybe it's a problem I have, as a gestation period. It takes nine months for them to become seniors if they're juniors, for example. And so I guess that's relating it too heavily to the maternal. You know, I feel that they come to me, almost infants in their thinking and that I must raise that level of thinking throughout and that it is a growing process, and you really are not failing it at any point unless you refuse to think and you refuse to grow, but you're going to see growth in that nine month period of time.

Another teacher explains how she attends to the needs of her students. Adults often tend to minimize the problems of teenagers, but this teacher acknowledges them and helps her students deal with them.

> I think the biggest thing for freshmen is for me to believe that whatever that crisis is for them at that moment, it's a real crisis for them. I don't need to go in there telling them, "you know, ten years from now, this is not going to matter." I don't care what it is, how they relate to it, it's important for them right then, and once they see you feel that way -- you know, when you have kids who'll come to you and talk about their problems.

This teacher is validating the legitimacy of the students' concerns. She is acting in a parental role for students who feel they cannot talk to their own parents. In this case, critical pedagogy takes the form of caring and concern.

In some situations, teachers even find themselves acting as surrogate mothers for certain students. One woman describes such a relationship with a troubled male

student.

> I had one boy that was funny, the biggest boy in our our school, and he just turned out to be black. He was the biggest one, and I had him twice a day. I had him in a basic senior English, and I had him in creative writing/public speaking, and I just adored him. I thought he was wonderful. He was really a good student. He made two A's for me. He did good work, and he was an alcoholic, and I don't know if he's a drug runner or not. I don't know. I've heard rumors that he was. I know that he's an alcoholic. The only reference to race was in creative writing and in public speaking. There were three little white boys in there who thought they were real cute, and sometimes they would aggravate me. You know, they would just keep on and on until I'd get aggravated, and if I'd get aggravated, everybody was uncomfortable. And T.J. would say, "You little skinny white boys better shut up. I'm going to beat the hell out of you."

Obviously, this young man thought enough of this teacher that he was willing to take on his peers to see that she was not treated disrespectfully by other students. She says that she adored him, and he clearly cared about her as well. His willingness to defend her is similar to the protectiveness a young man might feel toward his own mother.

One woman continues in this vein as she talks about how emotionally involved she gets with her students' problems.

> Sometimes our so-called regular kids, even though they are sometimes the hardest ones to teach, they are the ones that I often remember longer, maybe with fonder memories. They really have a way of getting next to you, and it's because you find out things about them that you probably don't find out

> about other kids, like in that one class, I had one who ended up at an unwed mothers' home, another one who had a baby, one that's having tremendous problems because his mother abandoned him. These kids, what they go home to at the end of the day is something that you and I have never experienced, the types of problems. But that is to me a real issue, and it's something I don't know how to fix. Because I can't. Sometimes I would find myself working on social skills and not English at all, just trying to help these kids learn how to get along with each other and not to talk about some of the things that they talk about in public or not to be as ugly to each other. We're with those kids, look at elementary teachers with those kids in their waking hours more than their parents are. We're not because our stupid schedule of changing classes six times a day, we're not with our students very long, but still we're a constant, and I know that for some of them, the most constant female, mother type figure that those kids have during those nine months that they're at school. And when you start finding out some of the abuse and neglect and just deprivation that some of these kids are experiencing and sometimes -- that's why I quit journals several years ago because I found out, number one, that I couldn't change it for these kids. I couldn't make it any better. I couldn't go home with them, and I couldn't bring them home with me, and it was just breaking my heart, and I just got to the point that I couldn't know all those things. It was just too much emotional baggage for me. I don't know how to handle all that.

What this woman describes is the reality of teaching in a secondary school. Her frustrations speak through her comments, but the maternal imagery comes through as well. As she says, for many of these students, she is the only constant female maternal figure in their lives, and as such, she probably has a positive impact on them. But the down side of these experiences lies in the emotional exhaustion which accompanies the care and concern she renders. She realizes, sadly, that no matter how much she

renders. She realizes, sadly, that no matter how much she nurtures these students, they must still leave the school setting to return to homes that may harbor abuse, neglect, deprivation and poverty. As she concludes:

> It bothers me to make a discovery like that or a realization because then, if you can't do anything about it, then it's just another sense of frustration. So sometimes, being a learner and being critical in the aspect that you continue to figure things out can be more frustrating.

The remarks of these teachers suggest that it is virtually impossible to deny their nurturing qualities in their positions as English teachers. They see nurturance as absolutely essential in carrying out their roles as critical educators. Yet, when we examine the literature on secondary teachers, we find, as I have already noted, a dearth of serious consideration of this issue. Indeed, the general literature on secondary education concerns itself primarily with competencies, accountability, student outscomes and test scores.

In addition, the evaluation instrument by which these teachers are annually rated denies the nurturing aspects of their teaching. This instrument consists of the following criteria:

- Management of Instructional Time
- Management of Student Behavior
- Instructional Presentation
- Instructional Monitoring of Student Performance
- Instructional Feedback
- Facilitating Instruction

- Performing Non-Instructional Duties

Within these broad categories, the closest attendance to nurturance and to the affective aspects of teaching can be found in two evaluative guidelines: (1) Teacher treats all students in a fair and equitable manner, and (2) Teacher interacts effectively with students, co-workers, parents and community. Clearly, teachers are not officially recognized or rewarded for such "feminine" characteristics as concern, compassion and nurturance. Instead, they are evaluated on the basis of "masculine" qualities such as management, organization and performance. Thus, defining themselves as nurturing women while being evaluated for management techniques produces in these women the "gender conflict" delineated by Casey.

Areas of Individual Concern

Although there are many common concerns regarding the teaching of English among these teachers, there are individual concerns as well. Certainly, as women in various stages in their teaching careers, in dissimilar teaching environments and at different ages in their lives, they bring diverse perspectives to the discourse. Moreover, as critical educators, they have gone "in search of their own intellectual freedom," and in this quest they have interrogated such issues as the constraints of state guidelines and end-of course tests; race, class and

gender; and the lowering of expectations for "low level" students. Their views on these issues are reflective, provocative and at times, disturbing.

Constraints upon the Critical Educator

As noted earlier in this chapter, these English teachers are required to follow a standard course of study mandated by the state. In addition, ninth and tenth grade English courses culminate in standardized tests developed through the state department of education. Currently, there are plans to implement end-of-course tests in eleventh and twelfth grade English. Indeed, the explicit intent of the state department is eventually to have end-of-course or end-of-grade tests on all twelve grade levels. This concern with accountability produces a dilemma for the classroom teacher and, in particular, for the critical educator. On the one hand, the state tells teachers they must be more concerned with critical thinking and problem solving in their classrooms, but, on the other hand, it administers standardized tests which measure the lowest level of thinking -- factual recall. Consequently, teachers are under a great deal of pressure to cover a large volume of material in a relatively short period of time. For the critical educator, these types of state constraints are especially problematic because there is little time left over to deal with critical concerns.

Greene (1978) acknowledges this dilemma by noting that teachers are often accountable for "teaching predefined competencies and skills or for achieving objectives that are often largely behavioral" (p. 48). Moreover, they may be expected to present in their classrooms the values of the wider culture, the local community or the international community, any of which may be at variance with their own principles. Greene also speaks about the issue of standardized testing, and the fact that classroom teachers sometimes take for granted that there is a "seat of power" (p. 45), and when they participate in the administration of standardized tests, they may be participating in something which is antithetical to their own values and principles. Nevertheless, according to Greene, most of them do not envision alternatives.

The teachers in this study find themselves in this position. However, they have not acquiesced silently to the "seat of power." All of them have been very vocal, not only to local administrators and officials, but to representatives of the state department of education as well. For now though, they see little chance of changing the system, so they try to establish a critical pedagogy within their classrooms as best they can under the prevailing conditions.

These teachers have, nevertheless, given serious consideration to the issue of state mandated guidelines which impede critical thinking in the classroom. One teacher cites the public's demand for teacher accountability as a rationale behind the move to more standardized testing. She comments:

> That's because we, well, not we, somebody wants a quick cure for whatever the problem is in education, and there's no doubt about it, it's a sore subject with everybody, but why? The public is not afraid to criticize, but we are, but I think that goes back to professionals. Do you get to the point where you're too professional to voice your opinion?

She also feels that teachers should have more voice in those decisions which directly affect them and the students they teach. She adds:

> I think if we could have more of a voice in what goes on in the classroom whether you talk about the local level or the state level or when you're talking about legislation that comes up that personally affects me. Then come in my classroom and talk to me, and that goes back to the media when we're talking about kids not learning this or test scores or whatever, just making a blanket statement about teachers. I resent that.

At this point, she talks about the effect of standardized testing on her teaching.

> The problem is we don't have much time to discuss. It's [standardized testing] awful. You don't have time, never have time. I wish we had more time. I wish we had days where I could just say, "Okay, let's put it on the table. What do you want to talk about today? What do you have on your mind?"

> If I could just take one class period a week. This past year, 180 days, we never had a free period.

When we listen to this woman's comments, we realize how difficult it is for teachers to engage in critical pedagogy in their classrooms. In fact, teaching conditions may even thwart teachers' attempts to turn theory into praxis. Often, teachers get excited about engaging their students in meaningful education, but that excitement diminishes when they must confront the realities of such constraints as state mandates and guidelines. What is remarkable is that they find any time at all to engage their students in critical thinking and questioning.

End-of-course tests are not the only administrative methods of restricting critical pedagogy in the classroom, however. I have already described the state evaluation instrument by which these teachers are annually rated by their principals. One teacher describes what happened to her when her principal was more concerned with filling out the form than he was in recognizing the critical thinking that was going on in her classroom. Specifically, she relates how her definition of a good teacher conflicts with that of her administrator.

> I know if you don't cause any problems, you're a good teacher. Well, I don't know because a lot of times administration just -- what? sees end-of-course test scores as a good teacher -- because

> course test scores as a good teacher -- because they're not in our classrooms. I don't even know if they know what a good teacher is anymore. For example, when I have been observed -- I remember one observation a couple of years ago. We were studying "Thanatopsis" and the kids got really sidetracked. Well, it wasn't really even sidetracked -- talking about death and how it affects them and how they feel about it and just really good deep discussion, and I thought that was good, and I was leading them here and leading them there and taking questions, and I feel like that's a good teacher when you can lead and motivate them to discuss. Well, as it turned out, we were so involved in it, we didn't even realize the bell was about to ring, and so I didn't have closure. And so I got marked down for not having closure. You know, it's not on there [the evaluation], "excellent discussion continued out into the hall." I mean, you know, nothing! It was, "teacher did not stop for closure." And so I think, it's even like when they're in here, they don't realize what good teaching is. Does that make sense?

Actually, what this teacher describes does not make sense, and that's part of the paradox of contemporary education. On the one hand, we say we want students to think critically, make decisions and solve problems, but, on the other hand, our teacher evaluation instruments discourage the kind of atmosphere which promotes this kind of learning. Perhaps the larger issue here is that in an effort to be accountable to the public, we are attempting to quantify something which cannot be measured with statistical data. Instead of subjective narrative evaluations which would give us a clearer picture of what actually happens in a teacher's classroom, we use forms which can be checked off and which are alleged to be more objective. Of course, these forms deny a critical

interrogation of what takes place in a classroom. As a result, those teachers who engage in critical pedagogy may do so at the risk of being marked down on their evaluations.

High Expectations

Along with prescribed curricula, end-of-course tests and check-list teacher evaluation instruments, there is also the issue of the quality of pedagogy in the secondary classroom. Some of these teachers express concern with the mediocrity of what goes on in classrooms, with watered down curricula and with lowered expectations. They feel that as critical educators, they often stand alone in having high but realistic expectations for their students. One teacher addresses this issue.

> I would like to see expectations raised for these kids. I think we're letting them get by with mediocre work overall. We know that it's a political game out there. I'm bothered by the lack of work that we're demanding. I think individually we may be demanding a great deal, but kids say that they don't do any other homework. They don't do any other work outside this class. [kids say about other classes] "We didn't do anything and we didn't learn anything." My question is, I don't understand how that teacher survives in that environment. I would be a basket case if I felt nothing was being produced here.

On the surface, these comments may sound rather harsh, but they speak to the realities in contemporary schools. Some teachers have taken the attitude that, for

whatever reasons, "these kids cannot learn much so let's just make them meet the minimum requirements. Let's teach them in such a way that they can be successful. It doesn't really matter if they have learned anything or not as long as we can give them passing grades." Any teacher who takes this attitude is doing her students a serious injustice. As Freire (1987) says:

> To teach content in a way that will make subject matter appropriated by students implies the creation and exercise of serious intellectual discipline. Such discipline began forming long before schooling began. To believe that placing students in a learning mileau automatically creates a situation for critical knowing without this kind of discipline is vain hope. (p. 213)

Thus, a teacher who employs critical pedagogy in her classroom must expect her students to take an active part in their own learning so that they may, as Freire (1987) suggests, appropriate "the content of what is being taught, learning it critically for herself or himself" (p. 213).

Another teacher speaks about watering down course content for "low level" students. Giroux (1988) refers to this practice as the "discourse of cordial relations" (p. 94). What he refers to here is course content that has been oversimplified for those students who might be troublemakers within the school setting. The purpose here is to maintain control and order. He elaborates:

> The classic instance of dealing with students in this discourse is to try to keep them happy by either indulging their personal interests through appropriately developed modes of low status knowledge or by developing good rapport with them. (p. 94)

Often this low status knowledge is derived from "cultural forms identified with class-, race-, and gender-specific interests" (p. 94). However, instead of being emancipatory for the students, this type of content sometimes serves "to appropriate forms of student and popular culture" (p. 94) simply for the purpose of maintaining discipline. In addition, relegating certain students to low status knowledge classes helps to perpetuate tracking.

One teacher in this study is particularly concerned with this practice. She maintains that when we water down course content, we are telling students: "You're stupid and this is for stupid people to babysit you until we graduate you because I don't ever expect you to go on to school." In essence, we are not giving students the opportunity to reach their intellectual potential when we tell them they are capable of doing only low level school work. So how does this teacher deal with the problem? She explains:

> I told them from the beginning, "We don't play games. This is a real group. This is a real class," and they couldn't believe they had to do Macbeth, they had to do a project, they had to do a term paper, they had to do all this other stuff. They had

> hard exams, they had hard compositions, they wrote every day and it just about killed me.

This teacher also expresses the opinion that all students should be exposed to great works of literature. She says:

> I teach some really impoverished kids, and I teach things like Iphigenia and Macbeth and Don Quixote, and they can really -- it seems like the better the literature, the better they can understand it because the problems are universal, and it's just like when we talked about Macbeth, we talked about the first time you do something, it's hard. The second time, it's easy, and they all related that to sex, but anyway, that's beside the point. And Iphigenia, they could really get into these family difficulties -- being with some man you didn't like, and he did something dirty to one of your children, and you took a lover and that kind of thing. I mean they could really get into that. They liked that better than anything we did, but I found that, for the most part, I will not do literature that is not good. I'm not being snobby. I'm going to tell you I'm not going to do it. They don't get anything out of it. It's junk. I think when you do stuff like that, when you get some kind of junky book or get one of those Scope magazines and go through it from page 1 to page 2 and make three days out of it, now that's junk.

Clearly, this teacher is making a value judgement about what kind of literature is appropriate for her students. Some critical educators might disagree with her point of view, but it is important to note that she is, as Greene advocates, grounded in her own values and is willing to share those values with her students. In addition, we see how she relates these works of literature to her students' experiences, thereby engaging them in critical thinking.

Issues of Race, Gender and Class

Some of the teachers in this study spoke directly to the issues of race, gender and class and their relationships to critical pedagogy. We have already noted in this chapter the comments of the teacher who described how she tries to attend to the roles of women in literature and to help her students become more tolerant of alternative lifestyles. She admits that raising the critical consciousness of students in a conservative community can be very frustrating, and when asked what really makes her angry about our profession, she replies:

> A lot of times, actually it's the kids and the stereotypes that we have to fight and the prejudices, the racial prejudices. I think it comes from our little conservative country community. I mean I would hope that it's different elsewhere, but I'm sure that it's probably the same problems. That makes me fighting mad -- having to deal with that.

As angry as she gets over the intolerance displayed by some of her students, she still feels that trying to lessen that intolerance is a primary concern of her teaching. She even goes so far as to define a "good teacher" as:

> Someone who can get students to see beyond themselves to think about things more critically and see that there are other things in the world beyond them and their little circle around them.

For this teacher then, critical pedagogy means opening students' minds to new ways of looking at the world.

Another woman who teaches in a school which is comprised of 50 percent black students and 50 percent white students speaks about the issue of race in her school.

> They don't really put down blacks and whites in my school because it's such a volatile situation. It's a known taboo. If you do that kind of thing, you're going to get jacked up and they know it. They know that's one sure fire ride out of there so we don't have that as much -- we don't. And it's 50-50; there's fifty percent white, fifty percent black, and that's something that's just an unwritten rule between the students, and it's between them. It's not really our rule.

What this woman describes is a school atmosphere in which overt racial discrimination and intolerance are not acceptable. What lies under the surface may be another matter, but the school environment appears to be one in which both races have learned to work together harmoniously. Moreover, we might assume that this kind of atmosphere is genuine because, as she says, the students have established the "unwritten rules."

If issues of race are not generally a problem in this woman's classes, issues of gender sometimes are. She feels very strongly about these issues and makes her feelings known to her students.

> The only thing I'm really belligerent about is if somebody puts down women. . . . I have trouble with putdowns on girls, and I really come down on that. I don't like that. That gets me all stirred up. That's really the only thing that I can see that I normally have to address. And they learn the first month of school that we're not going to play those games, and they don't do it. They know certain -- just like I know certain things are going to pull somebody else's strings, and if you want to get along, you don't do it, and they know pretty quick that that's not what you do.

In making her beliefs clear to her students, this teacher is following Freire's directive that teachers not remain neutral in schools. Not only does she assume ownership of her views, but she makes very clear to her students what those views are. In so doing, she also reflects Greene's belief that teachers have an obligation to share their values with their students.

Another women who teaches in a predominantly white school shares her views on race and class. She contends that the issue may actually have more to do with class than race. She begins by discussing race in her school.

> Of course, this year, with the Los Angeles situation -- there were some racial issues that came up, and I see a lot going on, not just in our school but in our society and in myself about racial issues. I think sometimes we blame things on race that don't have a damn thing to do with it. I think it's just bad behavior both ways. I have had black students who have come in with a chip on their shoulders because I'm white, and that really ticks me off, but I have to work extra hard to make them see that I'm just their teacher. It's not so much an issue at our school because we have what -- only two percent non-white students, a real low percentage, but what's going on out in our world is

> definitely impacting on the way kids interact with each other in the classroom, and when all of these riots out in L.A. took place after the Rodney King trial, there was some real tension in some of my classrooms and some dialogue on it, some that was a little bit disturbing, but even the fact that it was disturbing -- it's still better that it was talked about than not talked about.

This teacher directly confronts issues of race in her classroom. She notes that she sometimes has to work very hard to make her minority students realize that she is "just a teacher," that because she is white, she is not a threat to them. Furthermore, she encourages dialogue in her class concerning racial issues that impact on her students. As she says, some of the dialogue may be disturbing, but the important point is that feelings are not submerged; rather, they are brought to the surface for open discussion.

As she has already mentioned, this woman feels that some issues which are labeled as racial may, in fact, be issues of class. She elaborates:

> I almost think it's not as much an issue of race as it is class. I think most of the things that are going on right now that are causing problems for our politicians are probably more class problems than race problems. Maybe not all of them -- that's probably too broad of a statement. . . . I think if you want to talk about race, talk about it in reverse. There's a lot of poverty, maybe not poverty, maybe that's too strong, but there are a lot of whites who get caught in this in between -- they don't fit in any group. They're not low enough to be in resource, and they're not -- they maybe don't have a learning disability that's being diagnosed, and they're not black and they're not AG and they're

> forgotten. We have a big forgotten element of white children in the lower socioeconomic class in our area where there's not so many black students to pull . . . and because they're not in an identified group, they're overlooked big time, and that's common to this area. Nobody really ever does anything for those students. They're forgotten. I don't know, so how do you change that?

The students this teacher depicts are those that "fall through the cracks." As she says, they are the ones who do not seem to fit into any group; in essence, they are disenfranchised. They are also the students who are most reluctant to get involved in critical discussions, and yet, they are the ones who might benefit the most from them. Sadly, many of them have already become resigned to their roles in society. For the critical educator, these students are, indeed, the most challenging.

All of the issues which concern these teachers -- constraints upon critical pedagogy, the quality of contemporary education, issues of race, gender and class -- indicate that these teachers have spent a great deal of time interrogating their own teaching and their profession as well. Certainly, their remarks take into account all aspects of their roles as teachers. From each teacher come many voices. At times the woman's voice is dominant; other times the intellectual speaks; but the voice of the professional can also be heard. Moreover, the female critical educator shares many common concerns with her colleagues, but, at the same time, she has individual

concerns which arise from her own particular experiences.

Conclusions

The reflections of these teachers demonstrate that, in various degrees, they are committed to the type of critical pedagogy advocated by Freire, Giroux, Simon and Greene. The discipline of English is extremely important to them, and they would never sacrifice its content to politicize their classrooms. Yet, they all agree that teaching English goes far beyond content. The content itself merely provides the text which teachers and students can interrogate and, in turn, appropriate that which is meaningful for them. These teachers do not specifically address the issue of the "canon" in literature, but, informally, they indicate that the English classroom has room for a variety of literary forms. Some teachers express a preference for the classics, but as they demonstrated, they are able to teach them in a way which relates to their students' lives. Certainly, their treatment of literature bears a great similarity to Greene's (1978) suggestions for using literature to engage students in critical thinking. Their comments would seem to suggest that the literature itself is not as important as what the teacher does with it. A novel or story which attends to popular culture will be completely meaningless if the teacher merely presents it with no attempt to read and discuss it critically. In

contrast, a classic such as Romeo and Juliet or Hamlet can come alive in a critical classroom where teachers and students draw parallels to their own lives. The focus in these teachers' classrooms, then, is upon attaching relevancy to whatever they teach.

If relevancy is important, nurturance is equally as important to these teachers. Their comments concerning their maternal roles in the classroom support Casey's contentions. They also represent an aspect of critical pedagogy which has been largely unexplored in the literature. Clearly, these women regard their nurturing qualities in the same way they regard their expertise in their subject matter. What emerges in their remarks is the feeling that no matter how much background and knowledge a teacher may have concerning her discipline, this expertise is virtually worthless if the student's needs are not attended to. As one teacher has indicated, we must realize that whatever the student's problem is, no matter how irrelevent it may seem to us, it is a crisis for that student at that particular time. And until we can validate a student's feelings, we can never hope to reach his/her mind.

That critical educators need to attend to their students' affective concerns underscores another issue raised by these teachers -- the realities of classrooms in the 1990's. Admittedly, these teachers do not face some

of the problems encountered by teachers in inner city schools, but they confront their share. Among some of the problems they mention are poverty; physical, mental and sexual abuse; alcohol and drug abuse; teenage pregnancies; and racism. As they note, sometimes they are so busy trying to take care of these problems and teach subject matter that they have little time left to attend to critical pedagogy. These realities ought to be addressed in more depth in the literature. It is relatively easy to talk about implementing critical pedagogy in the classroom, but actually doing so is another matter. How do you engage students who walk in your room and put their heads on their desks? How do you deal with students who say, "just tell me what I need to know for the test. I don't want to hear all this discussion"? Sadly, those students least willing to become engaged in critically interrogating their worlds are those whose worlds will continue to exploit them. So the dilemma is there for the critical educator: "I agree wholeheartedly with the theory; now tell me how to turn it into praxis." Perhaps the literature may eventually address these realities in more depth, but until that time, critical educators will have to continue to try to establish a critical pedagogy in their classrooms even though many students may resist.

Student resistance is not the only impediment to critical pedagogy in the classroom, however. State mandated testing and teacher evaluation instruments contribute to the constraints upon the critical educator. The call for accountability is largely responsible for both the testing and the evaluation instruments which are deemed "objective" indicators of student and teacher performance. Rather than moving away from standardized testing, however, this state and others nationwide seem to be moving toward even more testing. The issue of accountability will probably not go away for a long time, if ever. However, there are different methods of assessing both teacher and student performance which may be more acceptable. Among these are portfolio assessment, narrative evaluations and process assessments, to name a few. But once again, for the time being, critical educators must continue to engage in critical thinking and questioning in their classrooms regardless of testing and evaluation instruments.

Finally, the teachers in this study express concern over the quality of pedagogy in the contemporary classroom. What concerns them is not the pedagogy taking place in college prep classes and academically gifted programs, however. Instead, they are distressed about the watered down curricula offered to those students who do not plan to attend college. They believe, like Giroux,

that these kinds of classes are simply designed to maintain control. In their own classrooms, they refuse to allow students to disengage themselves from their learning, but they admit it is very difficult when other teachers may not be as interested in critical pedagogy. One teacher describes such a situation:

> I think when I have those kids in there and they decide they want to put their heads on the desk or they don't want to do anything -- I can't stop them because I feel like my kids, when they come into my room, which is really an idealistic attitude to take, but it's my attitude and they know it. I feel like when I give them assignments, they don't have the option not to do it. "You don't have that option" -- now they do, but I tell them they don't. I say, "you don't have the option to do this. You don't have the right to say, "yes, I'm going to do it or no, I'm not going to do it." And I think they believe it.

The key word in this woman's remarks is <u>idealistic</u>, an attitude which describes all the women in this study. It does not matter how long they have taught, nor does it matter that they are often frustrated, exhausted, angry, and burned out. What does matter is that they have maintained their idealism, a quality which seems essential to critical pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

In the first chapter, I stated that the intent of this dissertation was not to generalize to the larger population of high school English teachers. Instead, its intent was to give voice to five specific English teachers at specific times in their lives. Having analyzed and compared their remarks to the literature concerned with critical pedagogy, I realize that what these women have to say may indeed be generalizable to the lives of other female English teachers after all. I would even go a step further to say that, perhaps, all women teachers will find some common ground in the discourse of these secondary teachers.

Clearly, these women are intellectuals, but they were reluctant to define themselves as such. Part of their reluctance stems from the fact that their intellectuality is not valued by the general public or by their administrators. Moreover, their work has become increasingly deskilled over the past few years as they have been expected to comply with state mandated curriculum guidelines. In addition, their input into what they teach has been circumscribed by standardized end-of-course tests. They also find themselves attending to a myriad of technical and clerical duties which detract

from the time they have to explore intellectual concerns.

Another reason for their reluctance to consider themselves as intellectuals is their preconceived and stereotypical notions of intellectualism. Because masculine and elitest associations aften accompany the concept, they had reservations about placing themselves in this category. Once they reconsidered the term and defined it for themselves, however, they had little difficulty in naming themselves as intellectuals. Their reluctance suggests, therefore, that within the education profession, teachers need to redefine intellectualism in terms of the work they do with students rather than in terms of cultural stereotypes. Moreover, when women teachers (and men as well) begin to think of themselves as intellectuals in a collective sense, they can also think in terms of changing the conditions under which they work. If they succeed in effecting change in their working conditions, then they will empower themselves as well as the students they teach.

In contrast with their reluctance to name themselves intellectuals, these women all define themselves as professionals. However, their definitions differ significantly from those of their administrators and supervisors who define professionalism in terms of appearance, loyalty and compliance. In fact, none of these characteristics were evident in these teachers'

definitions. Particularly noteworthy in their definitions of professional are their concerns for commitment and collegiality.

Naming themselves as professionals in terms of commitment refutes much of the literature which suggests that women do not have the same commitment to their work that men do. Because they bear children, women have been regarded as "in and out" employees who teach school only to provide a second income for their families. The statements of these teachers indicate otherwise. That their existential identities are inextricably linked to their teaching is evident in their remarks that they can never separate themselves from their teaching. Indeed, as one of them said, "Even when I'm not teaching, I'm thinking about it."

Another dimension which these teachers add to the discussion of professionalism is that of collegiality. Much has been remarked about the way that teachers have been traditionally isolated in their classrooms. And certainly, school plants and class schedules do leave teachers little time or place to establish community. Moreover, there is, according to these teachers, a fear on the part of administrators of what might happen when teachers get together. Therefore, most community activites in schools are directed by administrators and take the form of such events as faculty meetings.

Nevertheless, as these teachers demonstrate, there is a desire to be thought of as members of the larger profession of teachers.

When teachers see themselves as part of the larger community of educators, they take some initial steps toward empowering themselves. For years, teachers have felt that, as individuals, they could establish personal authority in their classrooms when they closed their doors. And to a certain extent, this has been true. But the teachers in this study recognize that this authority will assume even more power when it is shared with the collective authority of others. Their remarks, therefore, suggest the need for community and collegiality, not only to empower themselves, but also to share intellectual, professional and even emotional concerns.

Another aspect related to community and professionalism is the belief that teachers ought to have more voice in those decisions which affect them in their classrooms, in their schools and in their profession. They speak about site based management and shared decision making as ways to have their voices heard. Yet they acknowledge the difficulties inherent in effecting such policies. It is almost as if those in positions of power have deliberately made shared decision making an unnecessarily burdensome process in hopes that it will fail. Yes, teachers are being given the opportunity to

become involved in policy making in their schools and in their systems, but they are not relieved of other duties, and their class loads are not lightened to accommodate the process. Thus, teachers must spend time and effort beyond their normal working hours to implement a process which is supposed to empower them, and therein lies a paradox. If teachers actually do become empowered, perhaps they can resolve the paradox by restructuring the school day to give themselves the time to meet and act as colleagues together.

As professionals, these women raise another issue of importance, that of sexism. They acknowledge that sexism is still very much in evidence in high schools, subtle though it may be at times. Their working conditions suggest that secondary schools remain patriarchal institutions even in 1992. As noted, there are very few women principals on the high school level. The perception exists that high schools are too "tough" for women, and that they should administer only elementary schools. Moreover, within the high school setting, teachers act out implicit and explicit sex roles. The men, for the most part, handle managerial and decision making duties while women take care of the social, housekeeping, and maternal responsibilities. Furthermore, women often perform the "behind the scenes" tasks while men take "center stage" and receive the accolades.

The larger issue here is why these divisions of labor still persist in light of the feminist movement in this country. These women acknowledge their own subordination, and they suggest some of the reasons for it. First of all, there is a certain amount of fear which accompanies their reluctance to say "no" when they are asked to assume extra responsibilities. This fear is rarely discussed openly, but they realize that retaliation can take place in the form of poor evaluations and undesirable teaching schedules. Moreover, saying "no" can be regarded as insubordination. In addition, when women say "no," administrators often pressure them to change their minds, a pressure which does not appear to extend to male high school teachers. Clearly, this double standard represents sexism. However, these teachers admit that, to some degree, they have allowed it to continue because they have been, and still are, complicit in its perpetuation.

They acknowledge that they are perfectionists and often feel that they can indeed do some jobs better than anyone else. And that is one of the reasons that female English teachers often find themselves in the unenviable position of handling a disproportionate amount of extracurricular activities. Despite the burdens these extra responsibilities entail, there is a certain amount of power that is concomitant here. Thus, another paradox exists; in service lies power. By "serving," these women

often maintain the impression that their services are indispensable, and therein lies a certain amount of power and authority which have they been unwilling to relinquish.

How can these impressions and inequities be changed? These women have already taken one step in the direction toward resolving some of these disparities. They have acknowledged that sexism does indeed exist, and they have admitted their own roles in perpetuating it. The next step lies in open discussion among female and male high school teachers. When teachers of both sexes can come together and establish a dialogue to discuss the issue freely, perhaps they can agree on ways to establish an equitable distribution of duties and responsibilities irrespective of gender.

Another aspect of sexism in secondary schools is the problem of sexual harrassment. To date, little has been written to indicate how widespread it may be throughout secondary schools in the United States. But if these women are typical, it is certainly a relevant issue for all female teachers, not just those in secondary schools. All five of them say they have known of harrassment incidents during their teaching careers, and, though this sample is small, two of them say they have been victims of it. While we cannot generalize with such a small sample, we can probably assume that these women are not

exceptional in their experiences. Clearly, the issue is one which must be discussed openly among both female and male faculty members, and clear guidelines must be established to prevent future occurrences. Moreover, teachers must know that if they are harrassed, their complaints will be taken seriously and acted upon in accordance with the established guidelines.

Although these teachers agree that sexism does exist in secondary schools, there is one "female" role which they willingly assign to themselves, and that is the role of nurturer. That they see themselves as nurturers is evident in the way they define themselves as intellectuals, as professesionals, as women and as teachers. The literature has traditionally viewed the elementary teacher as a nurturer, but high school teachers, even women, have not been typically regarded in this way. Despite the fact that they are not necessarily regarded as intellectuals either within or without their profession, they are still regarded as "specialists" in that they teach a specific discipline. In addition, they teach at least 100 students a day, so the perception exists that high school teachers do not have time to get close to their students. The remarks of these teachers deny this perception.

Again and again, the metaphors they use suggest their nurturing characteristics. They talk in terms of the

maternal, and they describe the nine month school year as a gestation period. They refer to themselves as mothers, as nurses, as counselors, as friends and as psychologists. Despite the numbers of students they teach, despite their frantic schedules and despite the countless hours they spend grading papers, they still find the time to know their students as individuals. The concern they have for the welfare of their students is evident in their remarks, and the fact that nurturance is such an important aspect of their self-concepts as critical educators suggests that there is a place for the consideration of nurturance in that literature concerned with critical pedagogy. Moreover, this consideration should extend to men teachers as well as women.

Nurturance is something which these teachers cannot deny in their definitions of themselves as critical educators. While the discipline of English is important to them, they view it as secondary to what actually transpires in the classroom. What is most important to them is that their students learn to interrogate their worlds, that they learn to think critically about their lives, and that they learn how to learn. They attempt to implement these ideals by sharing with their students, by learning with them and by making their subject matter relevant to their students' lives. They are not afraid of controversy, and they are willing to take risks, but they

acknowledge that teaching in the 1990's can be extremely discouraging and frustrating.

What these teachers describe are the realities of contemporary schools. Even in rural areas, schools are still microcosms of the larger society with all its problems: drugs, alcohol, abuse, teenage pregnancy, racism and sexism. The critical educator cannot insulate her classroom and pretend these problems do not exist. It would be much easier simply to teach literature, grammar and composition without any discussion of relevancy and without any correlation to the world at large. But for the critical educator, teaching in this manner is an impossibility. While she wants her students to be competent readers, writers and communicators, she also wants them to learn to think critically for themselves. She hopes that when her students leave her classroom, they will leave with the skills to educate themselves in a critical manner all their lives. At the same time, she asks, "how do I accomplish this with all the problems I have in the classroom?"

Those who theorize about critical pedagogy have an obligation to teachers like these to consider the issue of converting theory into praxis. The literature itself is very persuasive, but making it work in a contemporary secondary classroom is not a simple task. As I have already mentioned, the problems of the larger society

enter classrooms along with students. In addition, most high school students work after school, so they often come to class exhausted and poorly prepared. As a result, there are times when they resent being asked to think. What some of them actually say is they merely want to be fed the material so they can reproduce it on a test. Clearly, many of them are resistant to critical pedagogy. What is especially disturbing is that even at ages 16, 17, and 18, some students have resigned themselves to a world they feel they can never change. Indeed, some of them have already given up. Thus, the task for the critical educator seems almost insurmountable at times.

Nevertheless, as these teachers have demonstrated through their conversations, they possess an idealism which will not allow them to give up. As one of them said, "if you can save just one, it is worth it." Yes, at times these women feel powerless, discouraged, burned out and even defeated, but there is something in them that will not allow them to relinquish the struggle. They look at the world as it presently exists and ask themselves why it has to be that way. Then they envision the world as it might be, and it is this vision which they attempt to articulate in their classrooms. One teacher speaks for the others when she says:

> I wish I could define what it is that's inherent in most good teachers that makes them want to do what

> they are doing even when they get crapped on and abused and not appreciated. We still come back because we see value in what we're doing. We ultimately believe that what we're doing is important, that it is a noble profession despite what the public thinks or even what some of our own professionals think, but we believe. . . . You've got to like what you're doing. God knows, if I didn't like what I was doing, I wouldn't put myself through this. It's too hard of a job to do it if you don't love it. And I think if you don't love it, and I don't mean like it, but I think if you don't love it, then you should get out. I really don't think that anybody should try to do this hard, difficult, demanding, underpaid job unless you absolutely have a love for it, a zest for it.

Clearly, this woman's statements express her commitment to teaching. She speaks of a love and a zest for teaching and the need to see value in what she is doing. Moreover, she believes that her work is important, that teaching is a "noble" profession because teachers have within them the power to transform, to inspire, and to illuminate the thinking of those whom they teach. Implicit in her remarks is also the awesome responsibility that teachers must assume as children pass through their classrooms, a responsibility which requires vision and commitment if teachers and students are to realize the unlimited possibilities. As visionaries who are committed to their students and their profession, this woman and the others in this study demonstrate that teaching is, indeed, their way of life.

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