

Mentor's Statement

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As Ms. Trudel so eloquently describes below, teaching in Montreal, Quebec, is a complex affair. For historical reasons, we live and work in two languages, French and English, two cultures which have evolved side by side. But recently, this has changed rather dramatically with a large influx of immigrants from many parts of the world coming into the metropolitan area of Montreal. The educational system has been attempting to define what measures are appropriate and needed, to integrate such a wide spectrum of cultures into a mainly French speaking society. One of the main concerns of the Ministry of Education of Quebec (MEQ) is to develop teachers who can fulfill the mandate of the school system and yet be respectful of multi-cultural differences.

The research undertaken is based on the premise that teachers teach art, as any other subject, according to the mental representations they have of culture, theirs and the Others'. While art can be a very important vehicle to reach multi-ethnic populations, unless a teacher is clear about what she is attempting to do and the reasons for it, we will simply continue to pay lip service to the notion of multi-cultural education, making totem poles with toilet paper rolls!

This study will offer a detailed, and in-depth look, at the mental representations of thirty soon-to-be teachers as they negotiate real life situations in multi-cultural schools, deal with their own values and expectations about art, define their notions of culture and accommodate for the cultural expectations of many other ethnic groups. Ultimately this will result in a better understanding of what we need to do in the training of art specialists. Ms Trudel is bringing her own experiences and enthusiasm for multi-cultural education to make universities more sensitive to the needs of student teachers as they progress through their training.