

Immigration, Oppression, and Professional Identity: Death of a Science Teacher

This paper narrates my experience as a white immigrant woman coming to terms with my professional identity as told to a colleague and friend. It investigates issues related to identity "regression". While many researchers have investigated concepts of acculturation, assimilation, and bicultural identity (Berry, 2003; Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987; Magnusson, 2000), I interrogate the process of identity "regression". The narrative moves from my experience of being a science educator to becoming an immigrant white woman struggling for my spiritual survival. Inspired by my educational experience in Canada, my colleague and I engage in a conversational hermeneutic encounter. The encumbrance of my identity is epitomized through three critical events that took place after my arrival to Canada in 1998 inclusive of: loss of credentials and professional status; resistance to rejections; and eventual surrender to the rules, opinions, and authorities of "others".

We present our conversational data in three ways. First, our conversations are recorded and transcribed. Second, we create transcript poems (Richardson, 1993, 1994) reflecting my words in compressed form (Langer & Furman, 2005). This poetic expression of conversational data is utilized as a means to provoke the therapeutic power of poetry (Furman, 2003). Finally, we create an interpretive poem to illuminate the process of data analysis employed in the study and the transformation that takes place. The risks of immigrating and taboos of sharing silenced narratives are explored to further understanding of what it means to be a teacher/not be a teacher.