RELATING EXPERIENCES OF NON-CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS IN PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN KWA-ZULU NATAL FROM A SOCIAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE

By

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DECLARATION

I, Yasmin Harms hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work. Any work done by other persons has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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Abstract

This research study deals with educators' experiences and daily encounters within two diverse school settings. Educators from both schools are from diverse religious, racial and cultural backgrounds. The study focuses on issues of social groups based on religious affiliations and was guided by theories of oppression and social justice.

The following questions were the focus of the study:

1. What have been the experiences of non-Christian educators in a predominantly Christian school around religion?
2. What caused these experiences to be constructed in a way they did?
3. To what extent have the experiences of non-Christians at the school been similar to earlier experiences in relationship to religion in their lives?
4. To what extent are the experiences of non-Christians evidence for describing their situation as one of 'religious oppression'?

A qualitative approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at one school and questionnaires were completed at the second school, as the researcher was unable to interview educators because of time constraints. The results of the research indicated that educator experiences differed from one school to the next. Although it is not possible to make a judgement about religious oppression based on such limited contexts, there is significant evidence of social exclusion based on religion at the one school. At times these issues are caught up in racial and gender issues, or issues between non-Christian religions. However, at the second school educators experienced a high degree of inclusion.

The research raises questions about the ways in which schools in South Africa are addressing the constitutional and policy requirements concerning the acceptance of religious diversity.

Chapter One

Introduction

The transition to democracy and the government's idea to redress the inequalities and injustices of the past brought mixed reactions for many people in South Africa. While some people tried to adjust to the rapidly changing environments others struggled with the practices of democracy and the uncertainties it created in their lives.

This change to a post-apartheid South Africa meant changes in the education system. The four previously, separate education departments (HoA, HoR, HoD and DET) amalgamated to form one education department. South Africans witnessed a 'migration' of non-white learners into previously 'white' schools where it was believed that the education at these schools was superior. This rapid movement of learners between schools meant a revision of the educator/pupil ratio within schools and the discovery of many educators being in excess at many schools. This was soon overcome by the redeploying of educators into various schools by employing the policy of Rationalisation and Redeployment (ELRC, 98:7). Once identified as being in excess, which was a traumatic experience for many educators, they were then forced to move and work with people they did not work with in the past. Schools were suddenly exposed to a rich diversity of cultures and religions of both learners and educators and the challenge was to develop an understanding between individuals to achieve efficient working relationships.

The focus of this study therefore, is to gauge whether after ten years of democracy, educators of diverse religious backgrounds have been accepted into the workplace, and been given equal status. Over the years many people who believed in diversity, social justice and those who valued the worth and dignity of all people worked to pave the way for South Africans to accept a challenge. This challenge was to work towards the future we want – a welcoming future that is

symbolized by fairness, respect and inclusiveness, the democracy of South Africa.

Everyone has a right to be treated with respect and dignity, and to teach, learn and work in an environment free of discrimination. The diversity that is represented by our society is extensive. Race, disability, class, sexuality and religion are but a few inequalities facing us today. While some are struggling to redefine what equity means, others have set themselves on a clear course. In our commitment to equity in the workplace, we need to go beyond words to ensure that it is an active part of our policies, practices and an intrinsic aspect of our culture.

> *"Keeping in mind always the present we are*
> *constructing. It is the future you want (Walker,A.1989)."*

We need to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every person and provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination. Recognising individual and group differences promotes the idea of respectful environments that encourage growth and stability. Creating an equitable work environment involves ongoing efforts that can be likened to a journey. This task does not end, but requires continual advocacy and responsiveness to the ever-changing face of diversity.

This study focuses on workplace experiences of people from diverse religious backgrounds and draws attention to the differences that exist within two school communities. Through close examination this research will highlight the biases that may be found within schools. The topic of this research study is

Relating experiences of non-Christian educators in predominantly Christian schools in KwaZulu-Natal from a social justice perspective.

The key questions relevant to this study are:

1. What have been the experiences of non-Christian educators in a predominantly Christian school around religion?
2. What caused these experiences to be constructed in a way they did?
3. To what extent have the experiences of non-Christians at the school been similar to earlier experiences in relationship to religion in their lives?
4. To what extent are the experiences of non-Christians evidence for describing their situation as one of 'religious oppression'?

Chapter two provides a background to the study. The researcher's reasons and the history of this country, which helped shape individual, institutional and societal circumstances, are highlighted. It also gives the reader a description of the schools and the groups within the structures. Chapter three focuses on the literature that helped inform the study, the theories and models around which the research is based and the limitations of this study. The following chapter gives the reader an idea of the methods and techniques that were used to collect the data and provides profiles of the samples. Chapter five provides the demographics of the research sites and the analyses of the data obtained through interviews, questionnaires and the focus group. Chapter six reviews the data in the light of the research questions and recommendations are made.

Chapter Two

Background to the study

As a non-Christian individual in a predominantly Christian institution I always felt disadvantaged and discriminated against on the grounds of my religion. Through personal experience I have discovered that a simple request like considering one's dietary needs is always considered a problem. Calling an end of year staff get-together a "Christmas" lunch is in my opinion discriminatory. Since 1999/ 2000 the institution appointed seven new staff members from multicultural backgrounds. Through my interaction, as Head of Department, with these new staff members, they have mentioned being excluded by other members of staff when overhearing discussions regarding religion. The following comments made by three Hindu educators prompted me to investigate whether my experiences were only on an individual level or systemic.

> "Don't these people realise that I am vegetarian, have my
> own customs and traditions to follow and am not allowed
> to eat in just any restaurant or hotel."

> "We cannot just decide to celebrate an occasion on any day,
> there needs to be some form of consultation because some
> of us fast on specific days of the week."

> "An effort is needed by teachers to include other religions and
> encourage racial tolerance."

This research explores the relations of individuals of different religious and cultural backgrounds. In trying to understand people's experiences one will have to understand the background and the history that was instrumental in the propagation of such experiences. Therefore, to help place this study into

context, it is necessary for the reader to know and understand the history of South Africa pre and post 1994.

General history of populations in South Africa

To understand how religious differences have been historically treated in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal particularly, it is necessary to trace some of the history from the arrival of the first settlers whose religion differed from those of the indigenous inhabitants.

A colonial relationship is created when one people or government extends its sovereignty and imposes political control over alien people or territory. European colonisation of the Cape began in 1652, when the Dutch established a settlement called the Cape Colony. In 1795, during the French Revolution, British military forces seized the Colony. Motivating factors of European colonialism included the quest for precious metals, the need for new land for agriculture and the search of freedom from religious persecution and the desire to convert the indigenous people to Christianity. The Cape formally became a British Colony in 1814. Although the British abolished slavery in the Cape, British rule was marked by a series of wars with the Xhosa and other Bantu-speaking people. There was also growing antagonism between the Dutch (or Boers) and the British section of the population. This conflict marked the beginning of the Boers' trek to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State (Microsoft 2002).

Colonisation had harmful effects on the people. Traditional lifestyles were disrupted and cultures were destroyed. Groups such as the Griquas emerged as a result of the union of European and Khoisan people. This group of 'Coloured' people became an integral part of the Cape Colony, but any group of people not White was identified as Coloured. This included the Malays, a group of people from the Malay archipelago, who were Muslims. (But any person of Muslim faith in the 19th Century in the Cape was called Malay, regardless of skin colour or their origin (Ebrahim Vally, 2001:43).

Three main sub-groups contributed to the genesis of the Natal "Coloureds", namely, Euro-Africans, St. Helenas and Mauritians. The Euro-Africans are descendants of the earlier British settlers who arrived under Lieut. Farewell in 1824. They established themselves in the country districts on the borders of Zululand. During 1850 approximately fifty immigrants from the island of Mauritius settled in Natal. They were drawn here by the sugar industry. The majority were Roman Catholic and spoke French. The St Helenans arrived after 1865. They all spoke English and were members of the Anglican Church (Rankin, 1982).

In 1860, South Africa's first group of Indians, mainly Hindus from Madras, were imported to work as indentured labourers on the sugar cane plantations in Natal. Five percent of this group was made up of Muslims and Christians. Between 1869 an 1875 a group of Indian traders (known as passenger Indians), from Gujarat and Mauritius, settled in Natal. This group was made up of Muslims and Hindus (Ebrahim Vally: 80). Also, within this time, according to Kuppusami (1983), Indian Christians of different denominations came as labourers. Some Indian Christians arrived in the Colony with White Missionaries from India. Their purpose was to impart elementary education to all the children of the Indians on the plantations. The education of Indian children therefore became a self-appointed responsibility of the Christian Missions.

In 1911 after the indentured labour system came to an end, a small number of Indians returned to their mother country whilst the majority elected to make South Africa their land of adoption. They moved into the interior and settled in the Transvaal where they supplied essentials to the White and African communities. The Whites with dismay noted their progress in the direction of commercial activity. This resulted in the Indians being subjected to laws enacted by parliament, over a period of ten years, which were discriminatory and hurtful. According to Kuppusami (1983:140), some economically backward Hindu people felt 'marginal' or 'alienated' from the larger Hindu community and turned to the

church for individual recognition and security. According to Kuppusami those who sought conversions were illiterate (in their home language) and consequently lacked basic information about Hindu religion. The Gujurati-speaking Hindu group who were better informed about religion are not known to have converted to Christianity (p140).

The Africans were more advanced than either the San or the Khoi. They were farmers growing crops but kept mainly animals. They worked metals, lived in large communities and were organised, under chiefs, in clans and tribes. They were a serious obstacle to the trekking habits of the Boer (Addison, 1981:11). The discovery of diamonds led to many Africans being employed as cheap, unskilled labourers in the mines, often doing dangerous tasks. They were housed in strictly controlled closed barracks and were only allowed out to work the mines (Connolly, 2001:15). Poor Whites who lived close to the Africans (servants, farm labourers or neighbours), engaged in interracial relations which led to the birth of illegitimate children, a mixed race called Coloured. Miscegenation was seen as a serious threat to White supremacy. In 1927, the Immorality Act was introduced, which prohibited any form of sexual relations between Africans and Whites. This condemnation was in line with the position of the Dutch Reformed Church. The purpose of the law was to prohibit relations between Christians and non-Christians but its limitations was soon evident since the vast majority of Coloured people were Christian (Marks, 2002).

The Mixed Marriages Act in 1949 prohibited Whites from marrying non-Whites. The Population Registration Act of 1950 was amended on several occasions to create a clear distinction between White and Coloured because many 'fair' Coloured people were passing as White. At this time the Indians were classified as Coloured. The Group Areas Act of 1950 determined and controlled the space in which each population group as defined by the Population Registration Act was to be re-located and lived. This law guaranteed the physical separation of

African, Coloureds, Indians and Whites, by confining each group to different geographic areas (Marks, 2002).

In 1959, African and Coloured populations were subdivided into 'ethnic and other groups'. The Coloureds included Cape Coloured, Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Indian, Other Indian and Other Asiatic. The Indians only became a permanent population group in 1961 (Ebrahim-Vally, 2001:44). Although the residential segregation of races brought the Indian groups together, the Hindus, Muslims and Indian Christians were still able to observe their individual traditional customs. (Kuppusami,1983).

The history of religion in South Africa

While the earliest forms of African religion remain unknown, art, particularly rock paintings, provide a glimpse of the rituals of certain African societies prior to the beginnings of Christianity. The rock paintings of Southern Africa indicate that the indigenous peoples of that region, the pastoralist Khoikhoi and San, practised shamanic rites. The paintings suggest that the early ancestors of the Khoikhoi and San staged ceremonial dances in which the leader would experience the presence of a sacred power in his body, one that certain animals, among them the eland, were also believed to experience. He would then fall into a deep trance during which he would be empowered both to embody and control cosmic powers (Clark, 2002).

The African people settled in clans. The head of the clan (the male) carried full chiefly powers, including authority in the spheres of religion, economy and social relations. His authority was derived from his genealogical seniority, and the status of the other males in the homestead depended on their rank. Almost all Southern Africans believed in a High God, who created the world and meant men to be happy and live in plenty. Men looked to their ancestors for aid and protection against evil and supernatural forces. The head of the clan was

considered to be close to the ancestors and addressed them through sacrificial offerings (Peires1986: 45).

According to Villa-Vicencio (1995:45), when the Dutch settled at the Cape, they were required to promote and protect 'public religion'. They engaged in missionary work, attempting to convert the indigenous people to Christianity. The missionaries and their churches were an integral part of the socio-economic and political structures of the time. Kiernan (1995:72-80) states that organized attempts to extend Christianity into the African communities by the missionaries were made easier because in some cases the long-established African social organisation was in disarray. In the early stages only a handful of refugees, outcasts and the discontented of African societies went over to Christianity. Unwilling to accept the Christian God, the converts were attracted to literacy. While over time missionary Christianity put education within the grasp of Africans and introduced useful innovations in agriculture and construction, the cost was the inevitable erosion of customary economic and political relationships. As they gained a secure foothold, the missionaries, true to their 'civilising' impulse, set out deliberately to destroy essential institutions of African society such as polygamy, bridewealth, circumcision, sorcery, rain-making, drinking and even festive dancing. The cumulative result of these combined missionary and colonial interventions in African life was to demolish the political, social and moral foundations of African society and to propel its occupants into a way of life not recognisably their own, patterned on categories and values embedded in Christianity.

Christianity in 20th Century South Africa

According to de Gruchy (1995), the transformation of Christianity from a white, European dominated settler religion with expatriate missionaries engaged in evangelising the indigenous people of the country, to a black-majority religion rooted in African culture and engaged in the struggle against white social, political and ecclesial domination, was undoubtedly the most significant development of 20th Century Christianity in South Africa.

From Anglo-Boer War to Union

Between 1904 and 1906 when the 'Native Churches had established their own schools, the missionary churches believed that education should not be suppressed but rather that the best education for the majority of Africans was that which equipped them for manual labour. The English-speaking churches saw their task as three-fold. Firstly they sought to consolidate their denominational structures, with control firmly in the hands of white membership. Secondly, though segregated at the local level, they adopted a more liberal, paternalistic stance with regard to the 'native question' and sought to speak on behalf of the Africans, especially those who were civilized as a result of missionary education. Thirdly, they attempted to engender a spirit of reconciliation and unity between English and Afrikaner. From here on the Africans were not only excluded from the political process, but racially discriminatory legislation became the order of the day (de Gruchy 1995:83-87).

From Union to Apartheid

The government census in 1911 revealed that more than a quarter of the African population was now Christian. The English speaking churches adopted an ambiguous role as opposed to the Afrikaans dominated Nederlandse Gerefomeerde Kerk (NGK) churches in that they tried to serve the interest of their White congregations while trying to adopt a liberal approach as regards the 'native question'. The Afrikaner Broedebond, which was established in 1918 became a secret society in 1921. It was committed to ensuring that Afrikaner nationalism achieved total control of the country and exerted Afrikaner influence in every sphere of society. The Great Trek that took place between 1836 and 1840 was the Afrikaner dream of fulfilling a divine mandate to remain separate from and rule over the heathen nations in the interest of Christian civilisation.

In 1927 a conference was held in the churches in Cape Town to discuss African representation in parliament. No consensus was possible and from this period

onwards the Afrikaans Reformed Churches and particularly the NGK provided the theological rationale for what was to become the policy of apartheid. The English churches could not be Christian and be divided by race. They subsequently then moved in a multi-racial direction (1995:87-92).

Apartheid and the Church struggle

The National Party introduced Apartheid as part of its campaign in the 1948 elections. With its victory, Apartheid became the governing political policy for South Africa until the early 1990's. The policy of Apartheid is built on a long history of racial segregation and discriminatory laws intended to ensure white supremacy (Marks, 2002). According to de Gruchy (1995:92-93), the NGK was staunchly supportive of government policy. Archbishops Owen McCann of Cape Town and Denis Hurley of Durban, who were both of the Roman Catholic Church, condemned apartheid from the beginning. The English- speaking Protestant churches, with a larger African membership, were more outspoken against the state's apartheid policies even though their leadership was virtually all white. An African resistance movement of the Bantu Presbyterian Church gained momentum in 1952 and they advocated a policy of passive resistance as a way to change. Christians were called to take sides in the African struggle for liberation by joining forces with the African National Congress (ANC). The Youth League was an organization formed in 1943 by the more younger, militant members in anticipation of the struggle. Some of its members were Peter Mdu, Jordan Ngubane, William Nkomo, Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu.

de Gruchy (1995) states that when the Bantu Education Bill came before parliament in the 1950's, unless the churches handed over their schools to the state, they would lose their subsidy and be forced to close. Bantu education was designed to keep Africans subservient to white interests. The Roman Catholic Church found ways to keep their schools operative. Other churches lost control of some of the finest educational institutions and also their influence in education.

In 1957 the government passed the 'church clause' of the Native Laws Amendment Bill, thereby making it difficult for African people to attend worship in White residential areas. This was an attempt to force apartheid on the churches whether they liked it or not. Around this time many conferences and meetings were held between and amongst the different churches to try to find a way forward (p 92-99).

Black consciousness, theology and resistance

White leaders within the English-speaking and Roman Catholic Churches and the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the Christian Institute of South Africa (CISA) initiated the first phase in the church struggle against apartheid, the next phase came as a result of African political renaissance in the form of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). The movement emerged on the campuses of the African university colleges established by the government to further its Bantu Education apartheid policies. SASO (South African Students Organisation) was born in 1969 with Steve Biko as its first president (de Gruchy, 1995:99).

New African theological voices began to articulate a theology of protest against apartheid that was different from that of the liberal message of their churches. Steve Biko delivered a scathing attack on the white-dominated multi-racial churches agreeing that despite their criticism of apartheid, they had accepted the status quo and adapted themselves to the South African way of life. According to de Gruchy (1995:100-101), in 1972 there developed an awakening of awareness amongst Africans within the churches to determine policy and claim positions of leadership. With opposition in the churches against apartheid growing, whereby combating racism, the neo-Pentecostal or 'charismatic' movement started to gain ground.

A watershed in the struggle against apartheid was reached with the student uprising in 1976. This began in Soweto, strongly influenced by the BCM and

SASO, and spread rapidly throughout the country. As casualties mounted, funeral services became religio-political events in which the churches and community organizations cooperated. The majority of Christians in South Africa were African and victims of the apartheid era. De Gruchy (1995:105) writes that Manas Buthelezi, a bishop within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa, argued that a stage had been reached where the church had to reject apartheid not only as sinful but also as a heresy, which undermined Christian faith at its core. There could be no compromise or cooperation with apartheid, least of all in the structures of the church. In the meantime the SACC under the leadership of Desmond Tutu, fully identified with the African struggle for liberation.

In February 1980, the SACC convened a Consultation at Hammanskraal. An ultimatum was issued to 'all white Christians to demonstrate' their willingness to purge the church of racism. If after 12 months their request were not heeded to then the church would become a 'confessing church', where white Christians were allowed to confess their guilt for apartheid and assist with black liberation and social unity. Tensions within Afrikanerdom and the NGK signalled the beginning of the end of Afrikaner unity in church and state. P.W. Botha tried to regain power by introducing the tri-cameral parliament. His plan misfired and in 1983 the United Democratic Front was launched.

End of old order, beginning of new
There was an escalation of resistance to the government's new constitution. The church struggle now became focused on the struggle for the liberation of South Africa. Church debates centred on participation in the armed struggle. This was a decisive moment in the church struggle. The SACC had publicly declared the state to be a 'tyrannical regime' and prayed for its removal. Frank Chikane and Fr Albert Nolan of the ICT (Institute for Contextual Theology) helped publish the Kairos Document. The document was a radical rejection of 'state theology' and also a more liberal response to apartheid that had characterized the English-

speaking churches through the years. Government cracked down on all those responsible for and associated with the document. However, government reached a stage where it could not resist internal and international pressure. President Botha resigned in 1989 and was replaced by F.W. De Klerk. The ANC, PAC and Communist Party were unbanned and Nelson Mandela was set free. The Rustenberg Declaration of 1990 brought leaders together from all churches. They sought to reach a common mind on the role of the church in the shaping of a new South Africa (1995:99-110).

End Of Apartheid

In 1990, President F W de Klerk proclaimed a formal end to Apartheid. In May 1996, South Africa adopted a new post-Apartheid constitution that embodied a unique set of fundamental human rights. Racial, religions, and gender discrimination are prohibited; education, health, housing, food and water are fundamental human rights; and freedom of expression and other political rights are protected.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up by parliament in 1995 "to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation." This set a precedent for a country coping with the injustices of its past. The outcome was a critical report of all the country's main political parties during the Apartheid era. The National Party was strongly criticised for its implementation and enforcement of the Apartheid system, which was described as a crime against humanity (Marks, 2002).

The history is one in which religion, while not the central issue, was always relevant to the broader socio-political struggles. Thus the relationships between religious groups had to be seen against the history of oppression and liberation.

Legacy of Apartheid

Despite the declared end of Apartheid, the long years of state-enforced discrimination and deprivation have left a difficult legacy. It has been easier to dismantle the political organisations of Apartheid than address the economic and social inequalities it entrenched. Whites still hold economic power despite the growth of a small African middle class, while black Africans suffer the brunt of extremely high unemployment, poor education, appalling housing and impoverished living conditions. In the context of severe economic constraints imposed by the international market, the redistribution necessary for social stability is difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, the ending of Apartheid and the establishment of democratic non-racial rule in South Africa remains one of the major achievements of the 20th century (Marks, 2002).

Demography and religion in South Africa today

According to the South Africa Statistics (Census, 2001) about 79,8% of the people of South Africa are Christians. Approximately one third of the total population indicate that they belonged to mainline Christian churches. The mainline churches include Reformed churches (6,7%), Anglican (3,8%), Methodist (7,4%), Presbyterian, Lutheran, Roman Catholic (7,1%), Orthodox churches and the United Congregational Church of South Africa. A further one third indicate that they belonged to one of the independent churches. This group includes Zionist churches (11,1%), iBandla lama Nazaretha (0,6%) and Ethiopian-type churches (2,0%). The minority religions include Judaism (0,2%), Hinduism (1,2%) and Islam (1,5%). Of a total of approximately 44 819 778 people in South Africa, 35 766 251 belong to Christian churches.

The provincial context: KwaZulu-Natal

The province of KwaZulu-Natal was formed in 1994 by the merger of Natal, one of the four former South African provinces, and KwaZulu-Natal, a former Bantustan (or African homeland) created for Zulu-speaking people as part of the governments system of Apartheid. KwaZulu-Natal is the most populous province

of South Africa with a population of 9,426,015 (2001 estimate). The majority are Zulu, but the province has the largest share of the country's Asian population. The main languages are Zulu (79%), English (16%), Afrikaans (2%) and Xhosa (1%) (Marks, 2002).

When one compares religious statistics of 1996 and 2001, you can see a substantial increase with regards to Christian followers. The 1996 statistics shows the province with a Christian following of 5 597 992 people while in 2001 the Christian count totalled 6 810 037. This count includes Black African, Coloured, Indian and White groups. It is therefore evident that Christianity is the mainstream religion of the province, and its influence is felt by the other religious denominations whose numbers are comparatively very small (Census 2001).

Policy developments on religion in schools

The South African Bill of Rights as highlighted in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996:7) protects all citizens from religious discrimination. Since we are examining educator experiences it is therefore also appropriate to refer to the National Policy on Religion and Education (2003). It should also be noted that educators rely on policy, not only to implement the curriculum but also as a tool to guide individual actions and reactions in the day-to-day functioning of the school. Positive human relations between educators and learners and educators and educators develop because of effective policy. Although the objective of the policy is to shape the relationship between religion and education in the school curriculum, it also addresses the question of relations between people of different beliefs in the school community.

Before the legislation of the National Policy on religion and Education, objections were voiced by various Christian organisations. Although the South African Council of Churches (SACC) (2003:1-4) supported the Draft Policy on Religion in Education, it voiced its reservation about stated aims of the policy. Areas that the SACC felt required further clarity included:

- The didactic approach to religion education;
- The location of religion education within the curriculum and within extra-curricular time;
- The scope for religious observances at Assembly; and
- The role of religion education in the teaching of responsible citizenship.

The Christian News (2003:2) published by Christians for Truth reiterated that the multi-religious syllabus was unacceptable and served to confuse children. A 'Religious freedom in schools petition', which was circulated, stated that the Minister of Education was to allow school governing bodies to decide the religious ethos of the schools. They saw the policy as being intolerant and insensitive, was ill advised, and would cause more problems than it would solve.

The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) (2003:1-2) who said that the policy undermined the role of parents and reduced religion to nothing more than a state-prescribed subject with little relevance felt a similar sentiment. These and other objections were duly noted before the final draft of the policy was implemented.

Together both documents recognise the rich and diverse religious heritage of our country. Therefore through the implementation of the Religion and Education policy no one should impose any narrow prescriptions or ideological views regarding the relationship between religion and education. Furthermore, the policy on religion is neither negative nor hostile towards any religion or faith and does not discriminate against anyone. Rather it displays a profound respect towards religious faith and affirms the importance of the study of religion and religious observances. This is as stated in the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal's foreword (p2) of the policy document.

"As a democratic society with a diverse population of different cultures, languages and religions we are duty bound to ensure that through our diversity

we develop a unity of purpose and spirit that recognizes and celebrates diversity. This should be particularly evident in our public schools where no particular religious ethos should be dominant over and suppress others (Asmal 2003:2)".

Description of schools used in this study

The area, in which the sample sites are placed, falls within the unicity of Durban and the community of the area is predominantly Christian. In the maps overleaf, Figure1 is a map of the greater Durban area. The schools used in this research are located within Sparks Estate. At both schools, almost half of the learner populations reside outside the aforementioned area. Figure 2 shows how the land was allocated to the different race groups and the size of Sparks Estate in comparison to other suburbs. Figure 3 is an indication of the dominant religions within the demarcated Indian areas. This further highlights the fact that many non-Whites, more noticeably Indians, are Christian.
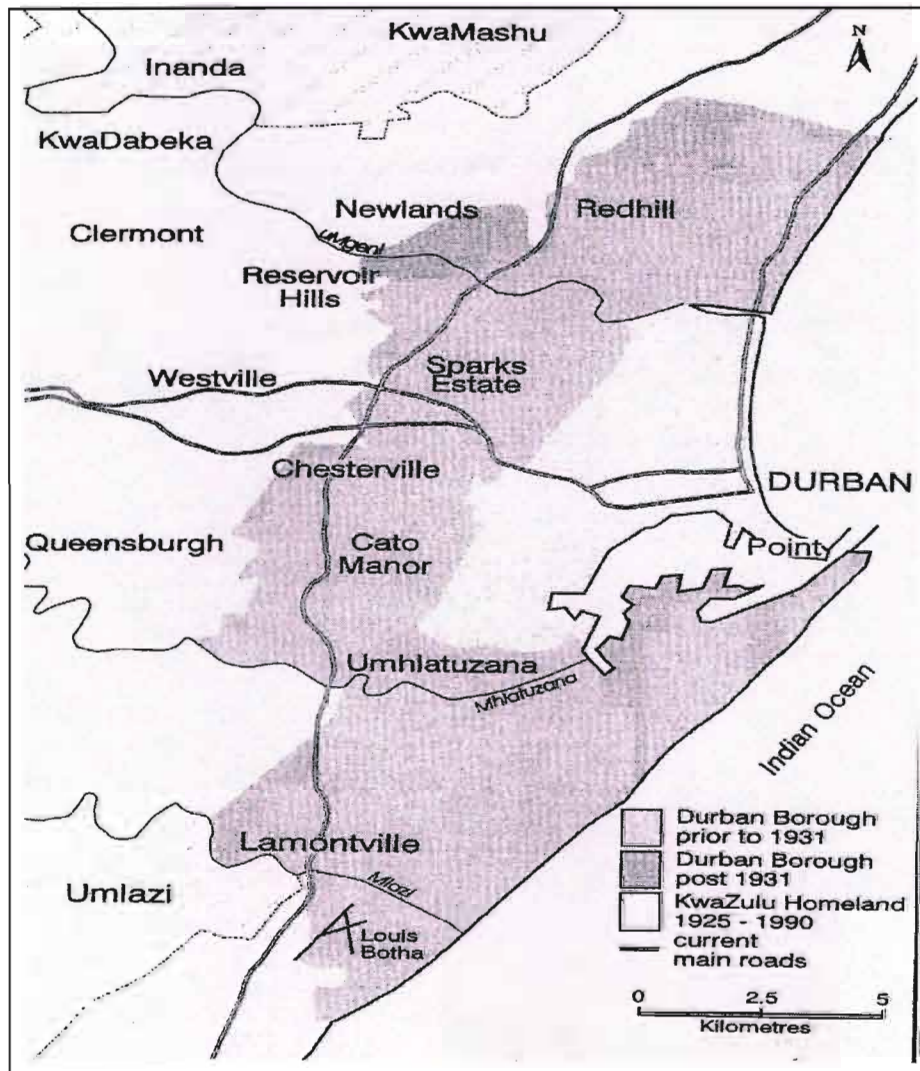
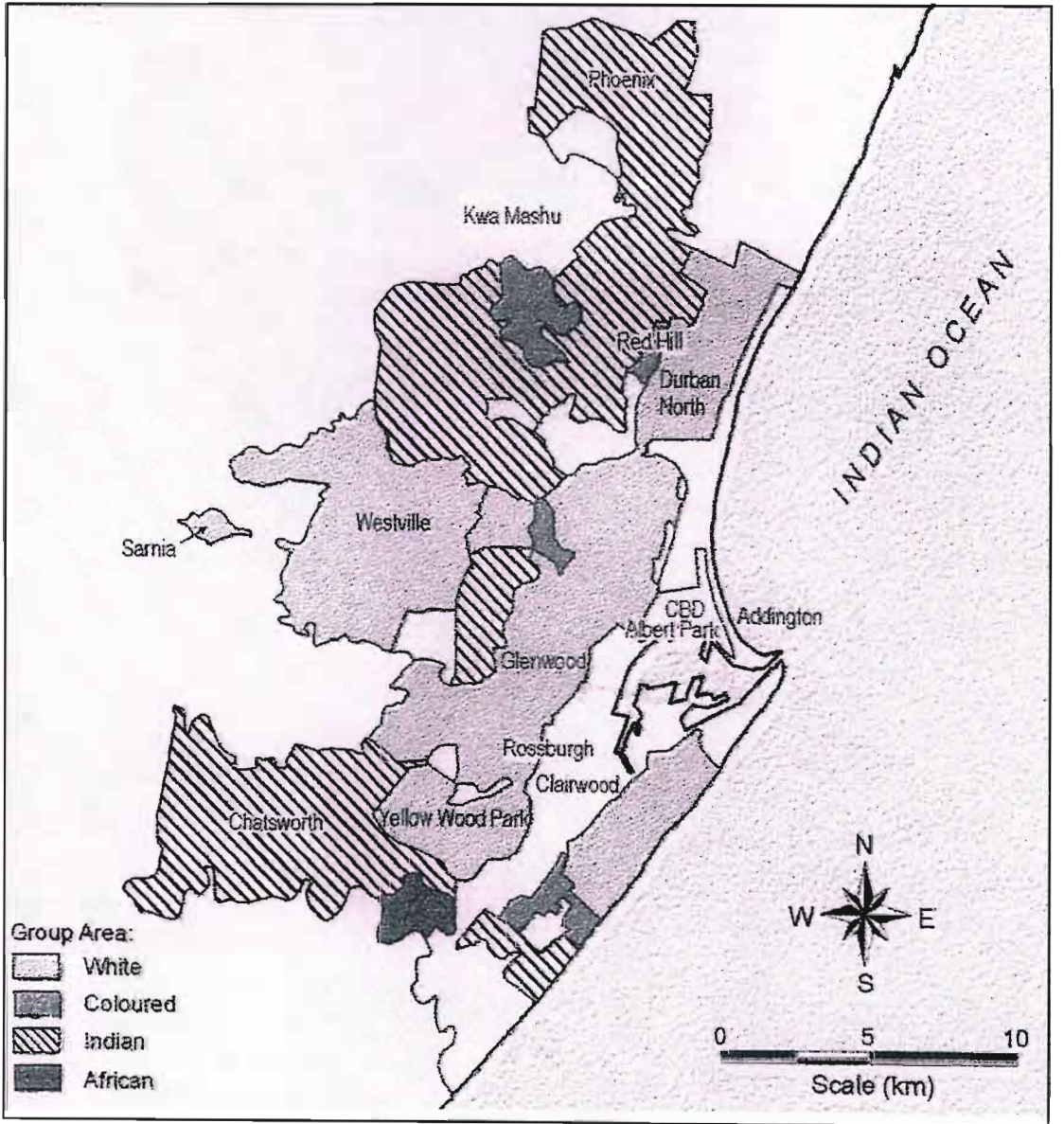Figure 1:The greater Durban area

Source:Maylam&Edwards 1996
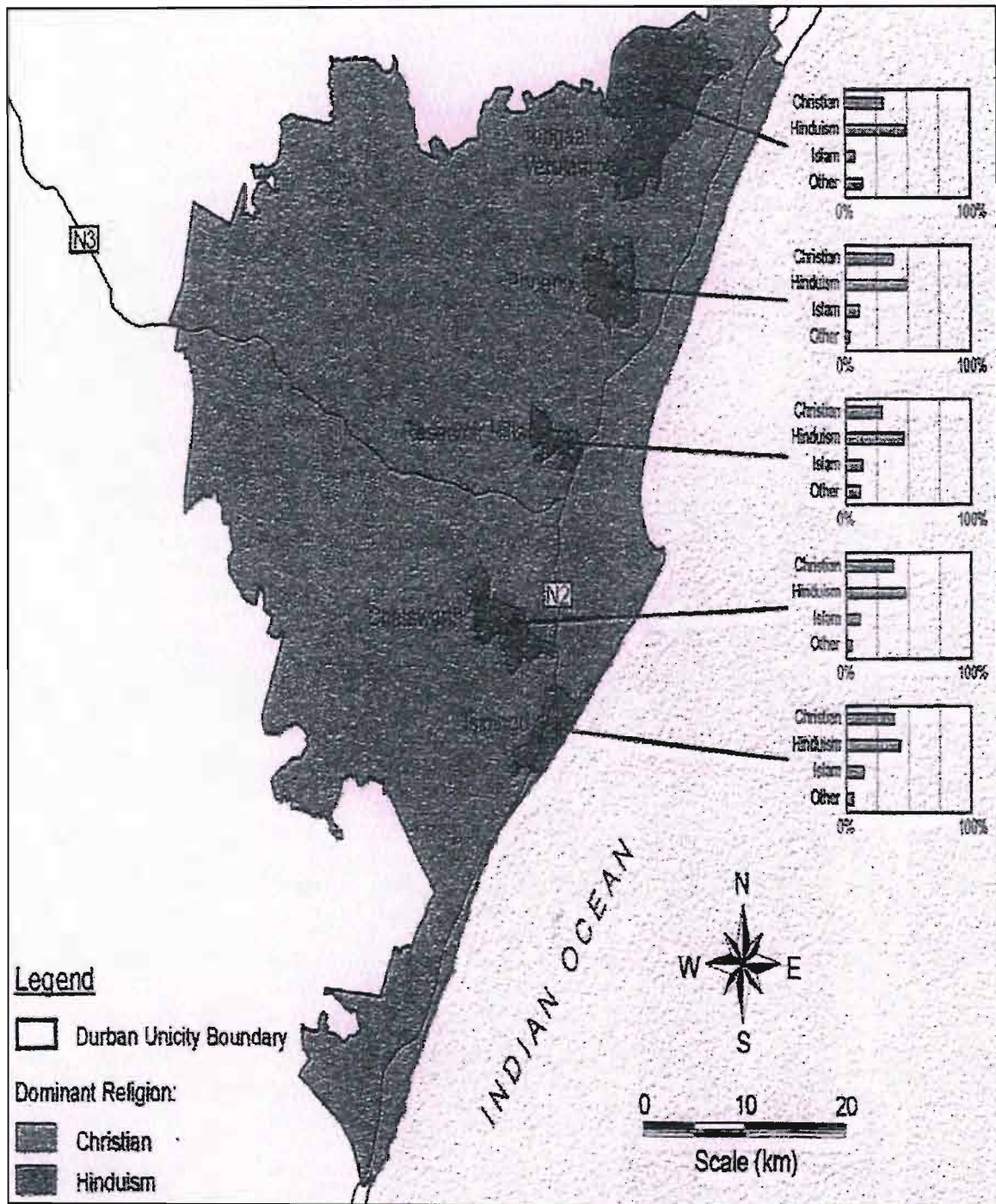
Figure 2: Group Areas

Source: Francis,D 2005

Figure 3: Dominant Religion of demarcated Indian Areas
Source: Francis,D 2005

Two former 'Coloured ' schools were used as case studies in this research, a primary school and a high school within close proximity. Both sites are urban schools in KwaZulu Natal, less than a kilometre from each other. The educator and learner composition is similar at both schools. The suburb within which the schools are located is Sydenham, within Sparks Estate (previously a predominantly Coloured area pre-1994). The main road, Sparks Road, links Sydenham to two other suburbs, Overport (previously inhabited by Indians) and Sherwood, (previously inhabited by Whites). Therefore, within a kilometre radius of Sparks Road are five ex-House of Representative (Coloured) schools, five ex-House of Delegate (Indian) schools, and a former Indian Teacher Training College.

Sydenham is a well-developed, highly populated, middle-class residential area, and due to the relaxing of zoning laws, a well-developed business area. Businesses within the area include retail and food outlets, four pharmacies, professional services such as medical and dental practitioners, a medical centre, four hospitals, orphanages, old age homes, ten churches, four temples and five mosques.

Both schools have excellent academic records and are highly sought after by both learners and educators, but the intake of 'Coloured' learners at both schools is low, more so at the primary school. Where the local parents have failed in supporting the local schools, opportunity was created for other race groups. Middle-class Coloured parents have opted to place their children in ex-Model C (formerly white) schools where although the fees are exorbitant, the schools are well structured, well resourced and learners per class are much fewer.

A well-developed transport system links the suburb to the CBD, only seven kilometres away. Since both schools are on a bus route connecting Sydenham (Sparks Estate) to the African areas of Chesterville, Inanda, Umlazi, and within walking distance from the informal settlement of Cato Manor (refer to figure 1),

African learners from these areas form the majority of both school populations. Although it is not possible to determine the actual religious affiliations in detail, the majority of the learner populations at both schools is Coloured and African who are Christian. A significant number of non-Christian learners reside primarily within the areas of Sydenham, Overport and Sherwood. Hindu and Muslim educators and learners at both schools constitute the non-Christian denominations.

Although the area in which the two schools are located is predominantly "Coloured", many "non-Coloured" families live within close proximity of the school. The low school fee structure makes it highly affordable, even to the very low-income groups. The total learner population at School A (Primary School) is 872 of which 627 are African learners, whose religious affiliations include African Traditional religions, Islam and Christianity, 44 Indian learners which could include Christian Indians, Muslims and Hindus; and 201 Coloured learners, which includes Malays, a race classified under apartheid, according to South African Registration Act as 'Coloured'. The religious affiliation of the Malay group is Islam. The religious affiliation of the educators at the primary school, (information provided by each educator), is 18 Christian, 2 Muslim (Islamic) and 4 Hindu. School B (High School) has an African learner population of 537, a Coloured population of 645 and an Indian population of 12 learners. The small number of Indian learners at both schools may be attributed to the many former 'Indian' schools within the area. The religious affiliations of the learners include African Traditional religions, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. The religious affiliation of the educators, as provided by the educators, is 24 Christian, 11 Muslim and 6 Hindu.

Demographics of research sites

Learner Composition (Racial)
Primary School (872 learners)

201
627
44
- Coloured
- Indian
- African

Learner Composition (Racial)
High School (1 194 learners)

537
645
12
- Coloured
- Indian
- African
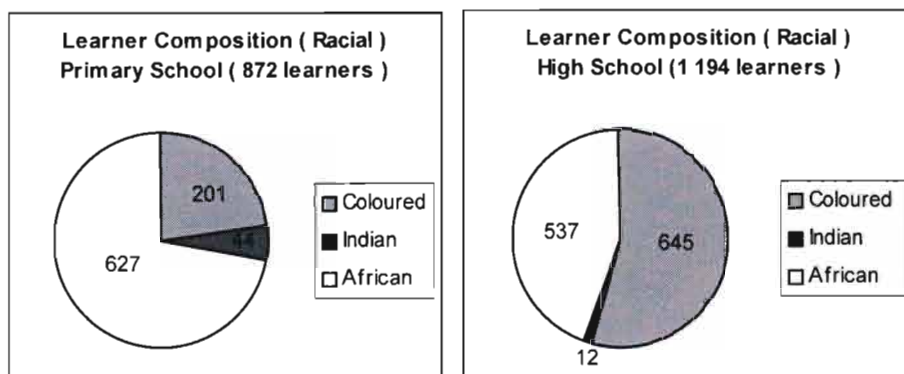
Source: Department of Education EMIS statistics 2004.

Note: It was not possible to provide religious denominations of learners, as there are no religious denomination statistics available at the schools. The religious affiliation of the Black African community includes Christianity, African Traditional Religions, Shembe, Zionist and Islam. The Coloured community includes Christianity and Islam (Malays classified as Coloured and those Coloureds who have converted to Islam). The religious affiliations of the Indian learner population at the schools comprise Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. It should also be noted that the information provided by educators is mere perceptions of what educators think learner affiliation might be.

The educator racial composition is as follows:

Primary School:	24	High School:	42
Coloured:	18	Coloured:	32
Indian:	6	Indian:	8
		Black African	1
		White	1

In both schools 'Coloureds' include Christians and Muslims (made up of Malays classified as Coloured and those Coloureds who have converted to Islam) and Indians include Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The White educator is Muslim and the Black African is Christian.

Educator Composition
(Religious Denominations)
Primary School

Christian
Muslim
Hindu

4
18

Educator Composition
(Religious Denominations)
Secondary School

Christian
Muslim
Hindu

6
26
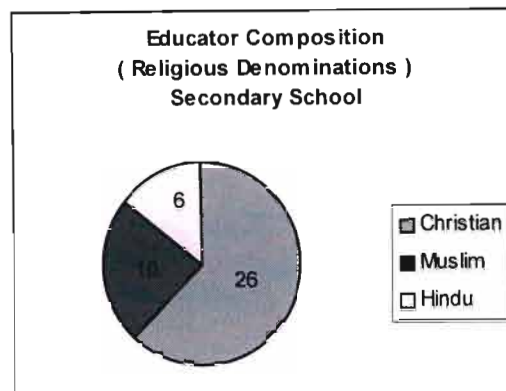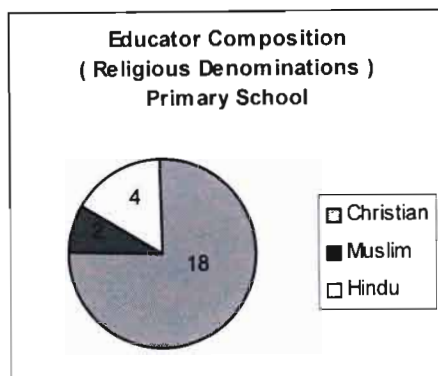
Source: Information supplied by Individual educators.

This information highlights the fact that Christians are numerically dominant and this study explores whether they are also dominant in terms of social power. An important point to consider is whether the higher proportion of non-Christian educators at the high school will be a factor in determining the less threatening position in comparison to the primary school

The main purpose in both schools was to investigate educator relationships and experiences regarding diversity with special emphasis on their religious affiliations. Practice in the schools was compared to Education Policy on Religion (2003) and the South African Constitution, specifically the Bill of Rights (1996), since the goal of democracy, non-discrimination on the grounds of language, race, religion, culture gender, etc are taken very seriously in government educational policy. I will be exploring the relationship between the different religious groups amongst staff of these two schools.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

My research questions are:

1. What have been the experiences of non-Christian educators in a predominantly Christian school around religion?
2. What caused these experiences to be constructed in a way they did?
3. To what extent have the experiences of non-Christians at the school been similar to earlier experiences in relationship to religion in their lives?
4. To what extent are the experiences of non-Christians evidence for describing the situation as one of 'religious oppression'?

To answer these questions I will be using a Social Justice Education Framework. In this chapter, I will review the literature around social groups, the concept of oppression and inclusion and exclusion to explore how these relate to the research questions in this context.

Social Justice Education

The Social Justice Education framework follows such writers as Young (1990), Hardiman and Jackson (1997), and Adams, Bell and Griffin (1997). Bell (1997:3) defines social justice education as both a process and a goal.

> "The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure."

Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedom. In post Apartheid South Africa education is used as a tool to combat the injustices of the past. Non-Christian religions look to education as a threshold and a key site where they would enjoy the freedom of their religions and not be denied the right by the dominance of Christianity. It is hoped that the dominant and subordinate

groups of our society work together to bring about social change that is much needed in our divided world.

Social Groups

As has been shown in the preceding chapter, 'Non-Christian educators' is likely to include Hindus, Muslims, Tamils and members of African Traditional religions. According to Young (2000:90) a social group is a collective of persons differentiated from others by cultural forms, practices, special needs or capacities, structures of power or privilege. Non-Christians in South Africa form such a 'social group' whether or not they are in personal contact with each other.

Applebaum (2001) cites Young (1990) who says that the existence of one social group is always dependent upon the meaning and existence of another group. The relationship between these groups is always one of hierarchy, one group is dominant while the other is subordinate. More specifically, one group is considered the "norm" and thus, the other group is defined as "other" or "deviant."

Central to a Social Justice Education framework is the issue of imbalances of power. The relationship between two or more social groups is often one of power imbalances. Hardiman and Jackson (1997:16) use the term 'agents' to describe members of the dominant social group who are privileged by birth or acquisition, and who knowingly or unknowingly exploit members of the 'target' or subordinate group.

Thus for there to be oppression, the study would need to demonstrate that Christians or non-Christians not only each form a social group, but that each social group has the characteristics either of an agent group or of a target group.

During the apartheid years in South Africa, Christianity was the cornerstone of both government and government departments, more especially in education departments. Downing (2004:19) writes about the Institute of Christian-

Nationalist Education and the ideas expressed by the National Party as their justification for setting up a two-tier education system in which almost all the available resources were set aside for white education, and almost none for the education of non-whites. The ideas were:

- 'that the education of Coloureds and the native (Black) was to be seen as a subordinate part of the Afrikaner's task of Christianizing the non-White races of the fatherland
- to help the native culturally
- Native education was based on the principles of looking after others, non-equality and segregation
- The aim was to teach the white man's views of life
- Coloured and Native education was not to be financed at the expense of white education.'

Previously, under apartheid, Christians in South African schools enjoyed a freedom of religious expression while their non-Christian counterparts were less privileged in this regard. Schools maintained a Christian ethos in the form of school prayers, assemblies, etc. Today, despite a world class Constitution, which demands freedom of expression and equality for all religions, I do not believe that this sentiment has been adopted by all schools, or by all educators.

Soudien (2000:89-112) writes that education is failing to transform issues of racism and classism. He addresses the issue of race and class and the effects they have had on school integration. According to him, although the dominant practices of Apartheid South Africa have adjusted to include subordinated groups, they remain somewhat unchanged. Soudien indicates that education has used an assimilationist approach to integrate previously excluded groups into more affluent schools. This approach means that 'values, traditions and customs of the dominant group (the schools into which the Blacks have moved) frame the cultural context of the school.'

Through integration there has been a strong movement of Black learners to former Indian, Coloured and White schools. Some Indian and Coloured learners have also moved into former White schools. In moving, these groups were forced to leave behind their identities, cultures, traditions and beliefs and to adopt policies of the new environment that may not have been inclusive. The schools into which these groups have moved seemed to have retained the racial profiles of educators, that is, former White schools retained White educators and former Coloured and Indian schools retained Coloured and Indian educators. The socio-economic status of families played an important role in determining who went where. The previously excluded groups whose racial identities, race and cultural backgrounds differed, but who could afford the 'high school fee structure' set by the former White schools, used this opportunity for what they termed 'a good education.'

Assimilation for this study therefore means that learners and teachers of non-Christian faiths are welcomed into schools that follow a Christian ethos, are allowed to perform in their native guises for special occasions, but operate under the dominant culture, Christianity.

This study aims to determine whether the policies of these two schools serve to include or exclude educators or various religious groups. Soudien (2004:95) cites Naidoo (1996:11) who states that integration 'requires fundamental changes in… personal attitudes and behaviour patterns. It requires major changes of deep-seated attitudes and behaviour patterns among learners and teachers of minority and majority groups.' Soudien writes that in post apartheid South Africa where unity, respect and tolerance of difference are expected, we are urged to use the 'new spaces' in which we find ourselves (workplace, religious, educational institutions, living spaces, etc) as starting points "where individuals can make positive consensual meaning of their new reality (2000:93)."

The following section deals with oppressive structures that we will use to help identify whether or not inequalities and injustices exist in the area of religion in these two schools.

Oppression

In a systematic way, power relations may lead to a situation of oppression. Oppression has the following features:

- A relationship between an agent group and target group that keeps the system of domination in place.
- The agent group has the power to define and name reality and determine what is "normal," "real," or "correct."
- Harassment, discrimination, exploitation, marginalisation, and other forms of differential and unequal treatment are institutionalised and systematic.
- The target group's culture, language, religion, and history is misrepresented, discounted or eradicated and the dominant group's culture is imposed (Hardiman and Jackson 1997:16-17).

Young (2000:35-48) identifies a number of criteria which she refers to as "the five faces of oppression", that allows us to evaluate whether or not a group is oppressed. These criteria can be summarised in the following way. Firstly, a group is oppressed if it suffers systematic *violence*, in which members of the group are targeted and experience violence because they belong to that group. Second, a group is oppressed when its members experience *exploitation* due to the transfer of the result of their labour to another social group. Third, a group is oppressed when it experiences *marginalisation*, such as when its members are either excluded or expelled from useful participation in the economic, political, cultural and institutional life of a society. Fourth, a group is oppressed if it lacks power over its own ability to control participation in economic or political activity *(powerlessness)*. Fifth, a group is oppressed if it experiences *cultural alienation*.

To demonstrate that oppression exists in this context, we need to show that at least one of Young's criteria applies consistently in the two schools.

Katz (1978:55) developed a diagram on the levels and types of oppression. This diagram addresses three levels, the individual, cultural (societal) and institutional. In either case, positive or negative attitudes and behaviours occur either consciously or unconsciously across the three levels and are linked to each other. Her view that oppression is based on negative stereotypes of targeted groups operating on multiple levels is consistent with Hardiman and Jackson's (1997:18) "oppression model" which also operates on the same three levels. According to them the levels are interactive and cannot be understood in isolation. The oppression on one level serves and supports the maintenance of oppression on the other two levels.

A key difficulty that arises from this analysis of the literature is that the study may not be able to demonstrate the presence of oppression purely because it will not address the societal level in depth. This limitation will be referred to again in the chapter on Methodology. However, as the study will explore educators' earlier experiences concerning religion the societal is not excluded entirely.

I will use Harro (1982) to show that through learning oppressive ideas are formed and to demonstrate how social identities dictate the outcome of one's existence. Harro (1982:15-18) writes that during an individual's socialisation process we become integrated into a social group by adopting its values and attitudes. Our attitudes shape our behaviours and are either positive or negative reactions towards people or objects. We learn to accept dominant thinking about social differences. We are born without prejudice into a world that has systematically taught us to accept an oppressive system. What we learnt from our parents was reinforced in schools and other institutions. The world we live in is based on history, habit, tradition, and patterns of belief, prejudice and stereotypes, which were put into place long before we existed. There exists the dominant or agent

groups who have more social power, and are considered privileged. Harro (1982:17) writes that "other identity groups about which little or nothing is known, because they are not considered important, are the subordinate or target groups. This group is identified by misinformation, are exploited, and victimised by prejudice and discrimination." In demonstrating the relevance of the above piece of writing to this study, it is important to understand that the continuation of oppression requires learning.

Because of my own experiences of the Christian ethos at the primary school, my expectations had been that the study would show that :-

- the Christian majority impose their thinking on the non-Christian minority.
- Negative stereotyping of religious groups are visible
- Patterns of domination and subordination exist around religious affiliation
- Non-Christians see themselves in negative terms.

The data will demonstrate whether or not my expectations were correct.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

My research questions are:

1. What have been the experiences of non-Christian educators in a predominantly Christian school around religion?
2. What constructed these experiences in a way they did?
3. To what extent have their experiences at the school been similar to earlier experiences in relationship to religion in their lives?
4. To what extent are these experiences evidence for describing the situation as one of 'religious oppression'?

Walsh (2001:4) writes that researchers generally aim to produce knowledge that is useful and which extends human understanding. Research findings can lead to new theories or can influence and help policy-makers working in the field of education.

The type of data sought for this study was both quantitative and qualitative. Babbie (1998:37) indicates that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data is the distinction between numerical and non-numerical data. Every observation is qualitative at the outset but it is useful to convert them to numerical form. Quantification often makes observations more explicit; it also makes it easier to summarise data.

Neuman (2000: 127) on the other hand writes that while qualitative research emphasis the human factor and the intimate first hand knowledge of the research setting, quantitative research eliminates the human factor. Reports of quantitative research, according to Neuman (2000:148), usually include charts with numbers while the visual presentation of qualitative reports may be maps or diagrams. The interpretation of qualitative data is done by giving the data meaning, translating it or making it understandable. Interpreting how

respondents see the world and define the situation or what it means for them does this.

Since the focus of my research was primarily on the experiences of educators, I used more of the qualitative approach, as it is an inquiry process that explores social or human problems. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand human experience, and how the educators construct meaning about their worlds. According to Cresswell (1998:1) qualitative research is an 'inquiry' process of understanding that explores a social or human problem. In using this method the researcher builds a holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of information, and conducts the study in a natural setting. Creswell cites Hull (1997:14) who confirms, "the purpose of qualitative research is to understand human experience, to reveal processes by which people construct meaning about their worlds and to report what those meanings are." The characteristics most often used to describe qualitative research includes:

- An inquiry that occurs in natural settings, examining a small number of sites, situations or people.
- It has an interpretive character
- Reporting is rich in quotation, narration and detail
- Researchers are instruments for data collection and analysis through observing, participating and interviewing
- Typical techniques are interviews, notes and questionnaires

The quantitative approach was used once all the data was collected and condensed into numbers. In this way respondents' social lives were also measured.

Since I had personal experience related to the 'religious issues', I wanted to gain a better understanding of the experiences of people of different religious affiliations. By looking at multiple perspectives on the same situation I hoped that I would be able to make some generalisation of "what something was like" from

the inside. According to Cresswell (1998:2) researchers are themselves the instrument for data collection and analysis through observing, participating and interviewing. As an educator and researcher at the primary school I was able to acknowledge my own biases, which at times coloured my interpretation of the data. As an outsider at the high school I could not influence how people had conceptualised their experiences. Therefore, in interpreting the data at the high school I was an outsider and was obliged to place the respondents' responses in its context.

Two previously Coloured schools were used as case studies in this research. According to Neuman (2000:33) case studies help researchers connect the actions of individual people to large-scale social structures and processes. Case studies demonstrate how social forces shape and produce results in particular settings. The main purpose was to investigate educators' relationships and experiences in both schools, regarding diversity with special emphasis on their religious affiliations. Practice in the schools was compared to the National Policy on Education and Religion (2003) and the South African Constitution, specifically the Bill of Rights (1996).

Different methods were used to gather data from the two schools. At the primary school the method used to conduct the research included semi-structured interviews with eight educators. This method was chosen because interviews provide an interchange of views between people on a topic of mutual interest, and offers each a chance to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. The sample composition included four Christian educators, a Muslim educator and three Hindu educators. The sample was taken from a primary school in the Sydenham area in KwaZulu-Natal. By including Christian educators I hoped to access different perspectives.

This method allowed me to listen closely as participants described their everyday experiences. Since the interviews were tape-recorded I had to be alert for subtle

yet meaningful cues in the interviewee expressions and for occasional sidetracking in their responses. Most of the interviews seemed more like an informal conversation where the interviewees did most of the talking and I did a lot of listening. This I found was necessary because in order to gain an understanding of their experiences and for me not to influence what I had heard I had to suspend all preconceived notions and personal experience.

The data from the primary school was insufficient because of the small number of non-Christian educators at the school. This impelled me to include a second school, which was a high school within the same region. Out of a total of 42 staff members at the high school, 16 are non-Christian. (A senior educator from the high school supplied this information). Nine educators responded to the questionnaire. This sample included five Muslim educators, two Hindu educators and two Christian educators. The data collected was done through questionnaires which asked the same questions as those asked at the interviews. This method was employed because of time constraints and since I did not know all respondents personally, I assumed that a questionnaire would be less intimidating or threatening. People are more willing to writing information rather than face-to-face communication. According to Walsh (2001:64) questionnaires are likely to be less structured and less restrictive in terms of responses. Questionnaires with open-ended questions allow for a variety of individual responses and fit better with the aim of getting an 'insider view' of a situation. Questionnaires are relatively reliable and can collect a large amount of data relatively quickly. The biggest advantage is that a comparison of respondents' answers is possible. This method also made transcribing of responses less tedious.

Collecting data
In order to get the information I was looking for, it was necessary for me to start off each interview very low key. I also needed to put the respondents at ease, as my aim was not to push for responses but rather to allow them to volunteer the

information. Many questions asked were therefore open-ended (leading). A copy of the questions asked is provided. (Appendix 1)

Interviews conducted at the primary school

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents from the primary school. Two of the eight interviews were conducted at the school, during educator/learner non-contact time (with the principal's permission). The first interview was conducted on Thursday 12 August 2004 at 11h40 with a Christian educator on the school grounds. This respondent was eager to answer my questions and did not at any time attempt to avoid a direct response. This Christian educator was quite analytical in her responses, and her perspectives on oppression were very different to the other Christian educators. The educator has completed a course on 'Teacher Education in a Diverse Society' and may be described as a change agent (a willing member of the dominant group who has the ability to improve or alter the situation of the target group and bring about positive change for the target group). There was constant eye contact between the interviewer and respondent, and the responses were definite.

The second interview was conducted on Friday 13 August at 9h05, in a vacant room, on the school premises. This interview did not last too long. The respondent's responses were very short and she often had to be coaxed into responding. Although the respondent was reassured that her identity would not be revealed, she still seemed to be withholding information. This was unnerving since this research was conducted partly due to this respondent's daily comments on feelings of being excluded within the school setting.

The third respondent was interviewed at the interviewer's home on the afternoon of Friday 13 August at 15h35. The interview went well. The respondent's attitude was positive. This was evident in her responses as she did not allow herself to be threatened by people who are regarded as 'different' from herself.

The fourth respondent invited me to interview her at her home. This was conducted in the evening of Friday 13 August at 19h25. There was a lot of information that the respondent needed to get off her chest. It was evident that her temporary status at the school was the cause of the bitterness, anger and frustration she felt towards the principal. This outspoken non-Christian individual is not prepared to have anything come between her and her religion. She believes that her 'temporary position' at the school is a result of prejudice against her religion.

The fifth interview was conducted at the interviewer's home, on the afternoon of Saturday 14 August at 14h00. This non-Christians was redeployed to the school and has found much difficulty in settling down. Her lack of trust stems from her previous place of employment where she believed she had a good relationship with the principal and didn't think that she would be dismissed. She now reads all situations as power related and is very much on her guard. This respondent generally believes that because of her race learners and educators at the school disregard her.

The last three interviews were conducted on the school premises, on Friday 26 November 2004. Three Christian educators were interviewed because a judgement on the research questions required data from more than one social group.

Focus Group

After analysing the data and clustering it into themes, I found it necessary to invite a focus group to clarify findings from the previous interviews. According to Cohen and Manion (2000:287), in a focus group the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer. It is from this interaction that the data emerges. Focus groups bring together chosen individuals to discuss a particular theme or topic. The setting is unnatural yet focused on a particular issue that will yield insight that might not otherwise be available in a straight-forward interview.

The group comprised the four non-Christian educators who had previously been interviewed. These were the only non-Christians at the primary school. Grouping non-Christians only was an important criterion because the researcher needed to clarity on issues raised at the individual interviews. The focus group was different to the individual interview in that a group discussing a topic of focus stimulates the thinking of others in the group and so the out put can be very diverse and not the viewpoint of any one particular person (Vorster,2003:66). The focus group helped since as the researcher I could gauge how well my interpretation fitted in with the informants' understandings and I allowed them to explain both expected and unexpected findings and to clarify details. The focus group discussion took place at the interviewer's home on Saturday 9 October 2004. It appeared that the respondents were comfortable in the surroundings as they shared in idle chatter. I immediately ceased the opportunity and served refreshments that encouraged a more relaxed atmosphere. Once achieved, the non-threatening environment allowed the respondents to voice their opinions without fear of being victimised.

Profile of Interviewees from the Primary School

ed	gender	Age	Religious denomination
PC1	Female	31	Christian
P2	Female	36	Hindu
P3	Female	34	Hindu
P4	Female	31	Islam
P5	Female	51	Hindu
PC6	Female	39	Jehovah's Witness
PC7	Female	54	Christian
PC8	Female	41	Christian

Respondents 2 to 5 were used in the focus group.

Profile of respondents from the High School

ed	gender	age	Religious denomination
H1	Female	41	Hindu
H2	Male	30	Islam
H3	Female	35	Islam
H4	Female	50+	Islam
H5	Female	32	Islam
H6	Female	33	Hindu
H7	Male	52	Islam
HC8	Female	48	Catholic
HC9	Female	63	Catholic

The questionnaire (Appendix one, same as the interview questions)

The necessary procedure was followed, i.e. permission was obtained and two individuals on the staff offered to distribute the questionnaires to respective respondents. 14 questionnaires were distributed to non-Christian educators only, and after a period of 10 days, 50% were returned. Questions asked were similar to those asked at the interviews. With such a minimal response and rather than getting caught up in the views of only one group of respondents, I decided to approach Christian educators on their views.

In this chapter I addressed the key questions asked in the study, methods employed in the collection of the data and the instruments used to gather the data. The next chapter presents and analyses the data.
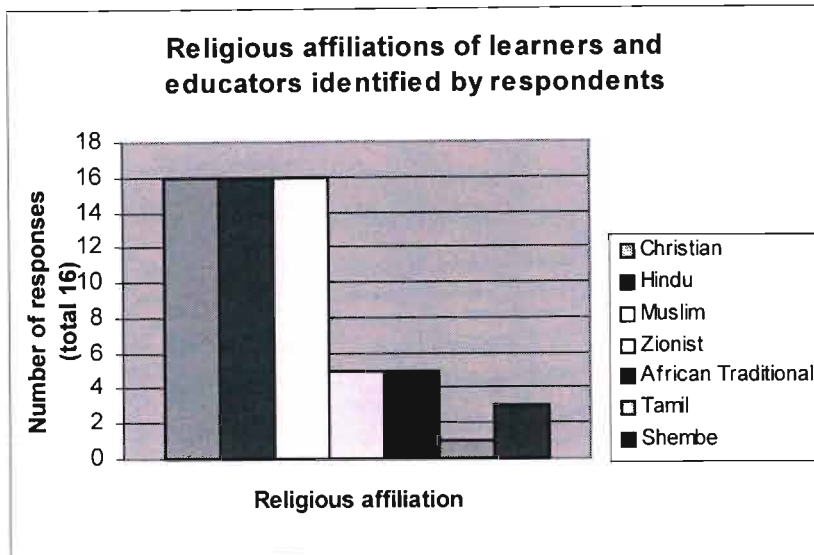
Chapter Five

Data Presentation, Analysis and Findings

In this chapter I will present each question and the responses will be from a selection of the interviews and questionnaires. The responses of the interviews were tape-recorded and therefore had to be transcribed, in some cases either verbatim or a summary thereof given. The same procedure was adopted for the responses to the questionnaires. In both cases where the responses were too lengthy, they were summarised and only the salient points noted. In most instances a synopsis of the data is provided after each question but before the responses. The data is then analysed, followed by a summary of the findings.

To highlight responses to the questions that follow, I will provide the questions together with individual responses. To distinguish between the two schools, I will use P for the responses received from the non-Christian educators from the Primary school and H for responses received from the non-Christian educators from the High school. A 'C ' after the P or H informs the reader that the respondent is a Christian educator.

Question 1:

What are the different religions represented amongst the learners and educators?

Religious affiliations of learners and educators identified by respondents

Legend:
- Christian
- Hindu
- Muslim
- Zionist
- African Traditional
- Tamil
- Shembe

Y-axis: Number of responses (total 16)

X-axis: Religious affiliation

Responses to question one:

The responses were from both schools. The two schools in this research study do not keep documented information regarding the religious affiliations of its learners and educators. Since there is no evidence of official statistics at the schools to show educator and learner religious affiliations, the above information was received from sixteen of the seventeen educators that were interviewed. From the data it is evident that 16 respondents volunteered three or more religions. This question was not intended to establish the religions of the learners and educators, but rather the perceptions of educators as to the different religions.

The response of one educator not shown on the graph as she referred to race rather than religion, showed how people read religion as race. This educator named the religions as 'Indian', 'Coloured' and 'Black'. Since the responses

were educator perceptions, it may be assumed that educators identify religious categories by merely looking at an individual.

Question 2:

How does religion fit into the school curriculum?

From the data there are two views on this question. The first view is that attempts are being made to address the different religions in the curriculum.

> *P3: "In the Foundation phase it is taught as a theme"*

> *PC8: "Under the Revised National Curriculum Statement there is no mainstream religion. All South African religions are treated equally, therefore, one religion cannot be taught to the learners. Instruction includes all cultures, beliefs and worldviews within which the unity of South Africa is manifested."*

These two responses are from educators within the Foundation Phase. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) was implemented in this phase in 2004 and will progress to the other phases from 2005. Therefore, these educators' responses reflect that progress is being made towards religious diversity within teaching at this school.

The following responses are from educators from the intermediate and senior phases.

> *P5: " Well, I don't see any evidence of it. Except for assembly prayers and a few spattings of culture."*

> *PC1: " Right now I don't think it has a set place."*

H7: "*We participate in cultural awareness on cultural*
days and the grade 8 functions always has a cultural
theme to it."

These three respondents took the position that very little attention is given to religion education or religious diversity. The response of the Christian educator PC1 gives the impression that religion has no substantial place in the curriculum and educators are therefore not forced to tread where they do not feel comfortable. Two respondents (P3 and PC8) took the position that once all grades are introduced to the RNCS, more attention will be given to religion with regards to its place in the school curriculum.

Question 3:
In what ways, if any, does your teaching take into account the different religious beliefs of the learners?

From the data it is evident that not all educators teach 'Life Orientation' which encompasses religion in education. Nevertheless, the educators who are responsible for religious education do address the diverse cultures in their lesson preparation. At times research is done on religions that educators are not familiar with. Learners are also encouraged to research religions and their views are then shared in the lessons. From the responses received there appears to be respect and tolerance on the part of the educators towards the different religions

> *PC1: "I personally create respect for other religions and tolerance*
> *of others in my own classroom. I bring all religions to the fore and*
> *have each different group in my class come forward and tell us*
> *more about these religions."*

P5: "I teach my children to greet in all languages. In my teaching there is always a merging of cultures and I teach them to respect each other's space."

H4: "... pupils are always encouraged to voice their opinions, show their knowledge and search for knowledge from elders and priests."

H2: "Pupils have special requests on a regular basis to take leave of absence for religious occasions, e.g. sacrifice an animal on their grandparent's farm, or to participate in their cultural festivities, e.g. the Reed Festival."

HC8: "Religious tolerance is essential in my teaching. I often use texts or articles that expose my learners to different religions."

P7: "Learners are encouraged to speak openly about their beliefs without being made to feel that they are strange, unaccepted or wrong. Children are encouraged to attain the best that their religion has to offer."

P4: "Well, in every possible way. Whenever we talk about life issues, morals and values, I always try to look at it in terms of a global religious kind of perspective, rather than just an Islamic perspective or a Christian perspective because all people from all types of religions believe in a God, no matter who or what they call the God. That is how I influence my teaching."

There seems to be an openness and encouragement of discussion at both schools between both teachers and learners. The discussion as indicated by the above response, is not restricted to the subject of religion education. The

responses seem to suggest that people place more emphasis on culture than on religion. This suggests that people do not see religion as an area separate from culture.

Question 4:
I'm interested in the way the school handles gatherings such as assembly. Have you any comments on that?

The responses from the primary school were very similar in that all eight educators indicated that when Christian educators conducted assemblies, the readings were very Christian based, accompanied by the singing of hymns. One of the Christian educator's said that although she was part of the "accepted norm" of the school, she felt that much was needed to be done to change the routine.

> *PC 1: " Since no real religious policy is in place,*
> *one religion will stand out."*

According to her, although management was responsible for the religious ethos at the school, she also felt that everybody, including herself, was responsible for change. In her opinion change should not take a top-down approach.

> *PC 1: " ... more can be done to give equality to all religions."*

In my own experience of assembly gatherings at the primary school, although readings from different religious scriptures, and discussions of different religious festivals are included, a Christian hymn is also always sung. This may be attributed to the fact that learners in the intermediate and senior phase at the primary school are only taught Biblical hymns and are not exposed to songs of praise from other religions.

Responses from the high school differed in that four educators suggested that the assemblies were Christian- based, four said that prayers were led by learners of different faiths and the readings were representative of all religions while one merely indicated that assemblies were dignified and formal.

Question 5:
In your opinion does assembly play a role in formulating attitudes about religion?

The data indicates the view that assembly does play a role in formulating attitudes about religion. Christian and non-Christian educators at the primary school expressed the opinion that Christianity is being promoted or highlighted especially at assemblies and that other religions are only mentioned when significant festivals appear on the calendar.

> *PC1: "If I was an outsider looking in I would say that the attitude would be that one religion is more important than the other. In this way you would be promoting one and ignoring the others. In this day and age this is not necessarily a good thing."*

This statement highlights the fact that although South Africa is a democratic country where equal status is presumably given to all religions, Christianity at the primary school is still the mainstream religion.

At the high school one educator referred to prayer addressed at assembly as a "mere formality", meaning that all assemblies begin with a prayer which is an expected thing. From this comment it may be presumed that a prayer from any religion is acceptable for this educator. Eight Christian and non-Christian educators together say that different religions are given an equal platform and the gatherings also convey messages of respect for all cultures and religions.

HC 8: "Our assemblies are representative of all religions and cultures. Learners and educators can learn from each other by allowing all religions to be exposed. Ignorance often causes friction."

Question 6:

Have you attempted to do anything that might change the regular format or provide readings which would address the diverse needs to ensure that all religions are catered for?

The data from the high school revealed no attempt made by the educators to change the regular format of the assemblies. All nine high school educators said no, one of the nine indicated that the question has given her food for thought and another provided a response.

H7: "Prayers at assembly are read by pupils. Christians read from the Bible or from books of Prayers. Muslims read from the Koran, the Sura Fateha. The 'Lord's Prayer' is always recited by the pupils."

This is an indication that the educators at the high school are satisfied with learners of the various faiths leading the school in prayer.

While five educators at the primary school said no, a Christian educator gave an affirmative response and two non-Christians provided the following comments.

P 5: " I feel overpowered and almost afraid to express myself at school. I don't want my religion to be ridiculed by ignorant people and back chattered about. I would love to change things, though, when the time is right."

P2:   "Well I've thought about it but never actually got
down to it. Now that you have asked the question,
I will get on with it."

These educators feel intimidated and inhibited by Christianity, which to them is seen to be the mainstream religion at the school. Educator P5 says she feels overpowered, which makes one believe that she is powerless to do anything. This powerlessness and anger allows her to believe that she cannot make a real difference.

In support of the above data, it should be noted that within the last three years I approached these two non-Christian educators at the primary school on numerous occasions, by myself, for readings from their Holy books. The aim was to use the readings to create a diverse understanding and appreciation of other religions. To date no literature from these educators has been received creating the impression that the non-Christian educators are still apprehensive of their positions at the school.

The Christian educator on the other hand felt that she could probably do more.

PC 1: "…You know you think you're a lone voice and what
difference can one person make. But, one can make
a big difference. So it's probably a challenge for me
in the future to try and do something. I could offer a
prayer that is more universal. I can give each religious
group an opportunity to express themselves the way
they feel it is necessary for their religion."

A short while after the interviews, the Christian educator provided a Hindi prayer, acknowledged a Hindi festival "Raksha Bhanda" and encouraged an Islamic

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recitation at an assembly gathering. The Christian educator may be seen here as an *agent of change*. She is a member of the agent social group who has taken a stand against the social injustice directed at the target group (non-Christians).

Question7:

Who do you think is/ or should be responsible for encouraging religious diversity?

The data shows only four educators who see the parents (who are the primary care givers) as the initial persons responsible for encouraging religious diversity. This is important in that during early socialization, according to Popenoe (1998), 'it is first the family then peers and associates who are responsible for shaping the infant's self image. If the image that the infant sees is favourable then his/her self-concept is heightened and his/her behaviour is reinforced.'

One of the comments was:

> *PC8: "Parents as primary care givers should teach religious diversity. Teachers are also responsible, but it is difficult if it is not encouraged in the home."*

Thirteen educators on the other hand feel that the school, especially the principal as the head, followed by learner representative (high school), the education department and the state as stakeholders are responsible for encouraging religious diversity.

> *PC1: "We all are responsible for it but at the same time we've got to realise that it comes from the head and filters down. So if you look at the head of any school, if their attitude is such that it is not tolerant of diversity, it's gonna filter to your subordinates. Somehow that does*

although, we are all responsible for the act.

*P4: "I think all those kinds of issues definitely need to start
at the top because being the authority you have to
show people the way forward. The person in charge
of the school should do that because that is the person
who enforces policy. And obviously from there to the
staff and then filtered down to the children, which makes
it easier that way."*

*P5: "Well I think it must come from the top. A well –structured
 programme should be constructively introduced."*

*P6: "Parents need to enforce religious diversity at home.
Educators need to embrace it at school, as this is where the
diversity exists."*

*H 3: "Parents, educators, community leaders, religious leaders,
the community as a whole."*

H5: "Both home and school."

*PC7: "A wise teacher should use religion to build and unite
and never to divide people."*

The data indicates the view that various people are responsible for encouraging religious diversity.

Question 8:

*What have been your experiences as a (Christian) non-Christian educator
around religion?*

The intention of the question was to address the relationships between the different religious groups amongst the educators. Some educators read this question in terms of religious teachings.

I will deal with the Christian educators responses first.

> *PC1: "Religion has always been part of my daily experience as an educator. The school day begins with a prayer during morning assemblies and sometimes a song of praise to God. Both the prayer and song are Christian. I believe this is so, because before 1994, the Christian religions were advocated at public schools. Also, the majority of learners and educators are of the Christian faith. However, post 1994, freedom of religion has been advocated but not fully embraced at our school. I've always been free to express my beliefs without fear of repercussions from my non-Christian friends. In fact we listen to and appreciate each other's religious teachings. Also, I have been exposed to other religions due to the diverse nature of both educators and learners at our school."*

> *HC8: " As a practising Christian I strive to live by what I believe in. I am not threatened by another religion and believe that all mainstream religions advocate good values, therefore I respect them."*

> *PC7: Most young children do not understand the dogmas of religion, but they do understand the language of love and caring. Children from all religions in our school trust and love me as I do them. You see, children watch you walk more than they listen to you talk."*

PC8: "I used to teach Religious Instruction (Bible Ed) on a regular basis, but since the New Curriculum Statement, I don't."

This Christian educator sees the National Curriculum Statement as something that limits her teaching of Religious education. Perhaps it may be that the educator is unfamiliar with religions other than her own.

Of the eleven non-Christian educators two did not wish to respond to the question. Four of these educators felt that the Christian educators either lacked tolerance and respect for non-Christian religions or were ignorant of other religions. One educator indicated that religion was a sensitive issue and she did not encourage religious debate. Two said that they respected and were tolerant of other religions while two educators spoke of religion being the basis of social exclusion.

P2: "Most Christian educators are not accommodating to other religions. Things are forced upon you. One is expected to accept things the way they are."

P4: "I've only worked at Christian/ Catholic schools yet I have never been offered a permanent position. For one of the staff gatherings, as a Muslim, I was expected to have lunch at a casino. We live and work within a diverse society yet we never celebrate all religions. Every function at the school is always commenced with a prayer taken from the Bible.

H1: "I respect and acknowledge that most people I am working with are Christian and I have no qualms about them practising their religion. It is important that to be happy in the place you are

working you have to respect, accept, learn and tolerate other religions."

H3: "I have found students and to a lesser degree educators ignorant of my religion."

H4 "For staff functions, I mention beforehand that 'halaal' (permissible) meals should be served and when school meetings clash with my prayer times, I am forced to leave earlier."

H5: "Pupils more often are tolerant and embrace my religion more so than adults I have relationships with."

H6: " I have been very tolerant and respectful of other religions even to the extent of conducting assemblies of a Christian orientation involving the readings of scriptures from the Bible and preparing talks and values to be learnt from a particular scripture. Have also been involved with choir groups who perform religious (Christian) songs."

P5: "...personally I want to be happy and vibrant and to contribute to the goings-on at the school, but I feel stifled. Anything associated with me is 'funny'. They say that Indians 'talk funny'. One even goes to the extent of calling me "funny face". People barely greet you, even the learners and student teachers view you differently."

This non-Christian educator also links her feelings about rejection specifically to race, perhaps, because in her experience, race has been the greater focus of her exclusion.

Question 9:

What helped these experiences to be formed in this way?

A non-Christian educator commented that religion is a sensitive topic, which people preferred to steer away from. This comment might suggest that the educator avoided any reference to religion and therefore chose to exclude herself from certain social interactions. Other responses obtained from educators included lack of school policy, individual ignorance relating to diversity and individual upbringing. Some respondents however, see learners as being inquisitive and more open-minded to change. Christian educators from both schools attribute the forming of their experiences to the old education system as well as respect and tolerance toward other religions.

> *P2: "Being an outsider, I was just expected to fit in and tow the line."*

> *P4: "I am Muslim and I choose the places I will attend. I do not go to places where liquor is served or gambling takes place. Being from an Islamic background I always have to mind my p's and q's and not to say anything that may force, or may seem to force my religious influence on the children or have a religious effect on them. Whenever we talk about life issues, morals and values, I always try to look at it in terms of a global kind of perspective rather than just an Islamic perspective or a Christian perspective. Because people from all types of religions believe in God, no matter who or what they call God."*

> *H3: "Upbringing and ignorance."*

H5: "I think pupils are more inquisitive and open to change than adults."

H6: "The policies of the school, I would think. To an extent, my own curiosity to learn about another religion.

HC8: "As an experienced educator, I believe that mutual respect leads to a more harmonious working environment."

PC7: "Ignorance, lack of understanding, superior attitudes and lack of attributes of love, empathy and compassion have always prevented different religious groups from trusting each other. This lack of trust has led to fear that has caused religions to rise against each other. To avoid this, I always affirm in each child the common thread that interacts in most religions, love. I try to make them understand that this breeds mutual trust and respect."

PC8: "The old system of education allowed Bible lessons to be conducted."

Question:10

In your career have you ever felt discriminated against or less powerful because of your religious affiliation?

The responses indicate that only two non-Christian educators from the primary school felt discriminated against or less powerful because of their religious affiliation. Fourteen others did not report any negative experience while one Christian educator on the other hand said no but commented on when she thought one would encounter discrimination, although she herself has never been discriminated against.

> PC7: *"Wherever there are people of different cultures there will be some form of discrimination, but as a Christian I do not allow anyone to affect my psyche because I believe that the One that I trust in is all powerful."*

The two non-Christian educators who did feel discriminated against or less powerful because of their religious affiliation provided reasons for feeling this way.

> P4: *"...I could have returned to my previous school as a permanent teacher but I wasn't recommended on the basis that I wasn't Catholic...."*

> P5: *"Only now, the past 4 years, when your input at staff meetings is never entertained. When colleagues bring you down in the presence of learners. When children don't give you the same attention because they see that you're not the 'same'... When empowerment is so easy for those of the same denomination as the dominant group."*

The dominant group refers to the Christian educators. These comments highlight the exclusion of educators who do not belong to the dominant religion. With reference to 'they see that you're not the same', educator P5 raises the issue of racial difference noted by learners. Once again this educator sees religion through a racial lens. It is my perception that these educators are affected by their socialisation as children. The following text is used as a guide for describing the Cycle of Socialisation.

"We are born without racist attitudes, values or beliefs. Though we are born into social identity groups, we have no information about ourselves or about others. It

is through the socialisation process that we acquire the set of attitudes, values and beliefs that support racism (Griffin, et. al 1997:91)."

Question 11:

To what extent have your experiences at the school been similar to earlier experiences in relationship to religion in your life?

The data reveals various reasons/explanations why present experiences may or may not be similar to earlier experiences.

> *H3:   "Pre-conceived ideas have been the order*
> *of the day generally throughout one's life; though*
> *not to such an extent that it has affected my*
> *tolerance towards other religions or how I perform*
> *my duties."*

This non-Christian educator refers vaguely to 'pre-conceived ideas' generally, rather than specifically in terms of religion. However, she distinguishes these from her own practices in which she stresses her own agency.

> *H4:   "Not much. Most people now know more about*
> *other religions than before. Islam is very much the news*
> *these days but more importantly Christians and Muslims*
> *live side-by-side. In the former years when Black/ Coloured/*
> *Indians lived and worked together, fine friendships have been*
> *formed. Intermarriage or rather conversion to Islam has made*
> *Islam more familiar than foreign."*

This elderly non-Christian educator has many years of experience living and working with Christians. She has not experienced much conflict regarding religion. Her comments suggest that being around people of different racial,

cultural or religious backgrounds is and has always been part of her everyday
life.

> *H5: "I think that a major issue with Christians is food,*
> *simply because they have no idea of the concept/*
> *religious practices of Islam."*

Educator H5 expresses the view that if Christians were familiar with the rules and
practices in Islam then the issue of permissible food will not be a problem. It
appears that this educator encounters 'food' as a major negative experience
regarding religion.

> *P4: "Being excluded from activities, and also you kind of*
> *sense that people are not comfortable around you.*
> *I remember this from when I was growing up, and*
> *even now as an adult. But I've gotten use to it."*

This educator creates the impression of being isolated or alienated. She claims
that she has always been excluded because of her religion.

> *P5: "I've never really had to deal with religious differences*
> *blatantly because no one around me created this barrier.*
> *In Indian schools however, there is a tendency towards*
> *'who you know' and nepotism is rife. Language differences*
> *is what we had to deal with, more than religion."*

In the last response the educator sees language issues as being more important
than religion. This therefore suggests that people do not make sharp distinctions
between religious group relationships and relationships of culture, race,
language, etc.

Question 12:

In your opinion, would you say that all religions are given equal status at your school, if not to what extent is one religion more dominant?

Fifteen educators, both Christian and non-Christian, did not see the different religions as having equal status.

The following responses describe the extent to which one religion is more dominant.

> *PC 1: "...giving equal status meant equality in all spheres of school life. Prayers from other religions and languages are not included. At assembly we tend to concentrate more on one particular religion and not the others. We're trying to make it universal, but it's still not."*

> *P4: "...From as early as grade one you get some teachers who train the children to sing hymns in their classes, especially the teacher who teaches Bible study after school hours. All singing at assembly is Biblical."*

> *PC7: " We try but we have not reached the stage where this is truly possible.'*

> *P5: "Oh no, definitely not."*

> *P3: "Not really."*

> *H1: "Most pupils are Christian, therefore the school*

Is more inclined toward the Christian religion."

H2: "Not equal, but the respect for one's beliefs are shared amongst most on the staff."

H6: "No, more than 90% of the learners are Christian."

HC9: "No, because of the Christian majority."

H4: "No, Christianity is the dominator. It is a continuation of the old Christian National Education Policy, and that most educators are Christian and similarly the pupils.

Only two educators said that all religions were given equal status. These educators are of the Christian faith.

HC8: "Our Muslim teachers go off on a Friday, we have a day off for Ascension Thursday and Diwali and Eid."

PC6: "There are more Christian educators and learners in the school, but I believe that they are given equal status. Should I say, that is what we strive to do."

On a personal level this Christian educator (PC6) from the primary school is aware of the diversity of the learner and staff population at her school. She indicated earlier that her Bible lessons have stopped so as not to favour one religion over the others. The comment refers more to what she is striving to do, showing that it is her way of handling individuals of different religious beliefs.

Question 13:

Do you have reason to believe that other schools operate differently to this one with regards to religious tolerance? If so comment.

Two non-Christian educators from the high school felt that other schools operated in the same manner as did these two schools. Fifteen educators suggested that other schools operate differently from the two schools in the sample. The responses varied from a simple yes/no, to yes with lots of reason, or yes, with possibly more dominance than intolerance from the Christian educators. It was also suggested that non-Christian schools, more specifically Muslim schools, do not easily accept non-Muslim individuals into their schools.

PC1:"...I have proof in that I have a daughter in a school where they are much more tolerant than my school. They have multicultural programmes in place. Parents are invited to assembly mornings and opportunities are provided for all religions to be exposed. If there is a Hindu festival, a show is performed that portrays the festival.... The amazing part is, that most of the kids taking part are not necessarily Hindu themselves. A lesson is learnt in that you show children how to be more tolerant."

P3: "Possibly, but I think it's more a domination of one religion rather than religious intolerance. I think that schools are attempting to retain what they had during the apartheid era."

P4: "Yes, I know in quite a few schools any person of any religious stature can conduct an assembly and use prayers from whatever book. At functions and gatherings anybody may lead the prayer, not just one person from the same

faith all the time."

PC7: "I'm sure that every school has its own policy in trying to address religious diversity."

H6: "Yes, if the schools are culturally or religiously diverse opportunities are created for them to create cultural awareness of the different groups. Christian or Hindu Student Movements or affiliations with Church groups are formed."

HC8: "Catholic schools have educators and learners from other denominations. Muslim schools never appoint non-Muslim staff and are inclined to be very sectional with regard to learner intake. Why when we are all equal in the eyes of the Lord?"

FOR NON-CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Question 14:

To what extent would you describe your situation as one of 'religious oppression'?

Of the eleven non-Christian educators, two educators responded on the extent of their experiences by saying ' to a small extent' and 'to a large extent'. One educator did not respond at all while the others supplied comments.

P2: "Being in the minority, being non-Christian things are just pushed down our throats, my religion is never considered when we have a staff function. For the past four years the end of year lunch has been held on a day that I have been fasting, when meat cannot be consumed on such days. When I mention this to the people in charge, they "instruct" me to eat salads. I mean, it's ridiculous, while you're having a five-course meal you expect me to eat a

salad. Also all meals are commenced with the "Christian" manner of blessing the food, called, "Grace." As a Hindu I am never asked to bless a meal. So yes, if you look closely, oppression does exist here. It is definitely here."

P5: "Feeling stifled and oppressed, where I cannot share a table without some care, where the music you hear around you is never what everyone enjoys and that the food you eat never costs the same as that which your colleague eats. The places we go to are always restricted to the decision of the majority. This is religious oppression."

The comments suggest that these non-Christian educators are angry and upset because they are forced to do things that they do not agree with and are never catered for.

H3: "people are often excluded because of religious beliefs and practices."

H10: "One is often excluded because of religious beliefs and practices."

H6: "To a large extent since only the dominant religion (Christianity) is given preference."

These comments give the impression that non-Christian educators are never accommodated.

H4: "Religious oppression is more global than specific- fear by the West or people who embrace Western ideologies."

> *P4: "Sometimes out of anger people say something and*
> *they don't realise that they are getting themselves*
> *into a situation that they cannot easily get out of.*
> *I find that many times people would talk about things*
> *on the media that they have no knowledge of, so*
> *instead of inquiring about it or ask someone who is*
> *Muslim what do they think about this, that and the other,*
> *they just go off and shoot off what the news and media has*
> *portrayed. They get themselves in a knot, because once*
> *I explain clearly if they give me the opportunity then they*
> *feel quite embarrassed."*

These responses refer to how Muslims are portrayed by the media. Worldviews on Islam and its followers have been negative, more so after the September 11 attack on America. All Muslims have since been painted with the same brush.

> *P3: " My experiences at the school are pleasant and religion has*
> *never come between my colleagues and I, therefore I cannot*
> *describe the situation as being oppressive."*

Young names five ways in which individuals are oppressed; namely marginalisation, exploitation, violence, cultural imperialism and powerlessness. Some comments above may lend itself to a judgement that there is a situation of oppression, an issue I return to later.

On comparing these responses to earlier responses where only a minority of non-Christians reported experiences of discrimination I sense some contradiction on the part of these educators. My perception is that these respondents were initially apprehensive and felt intimidated to divulge too much information but suddenly realised that treatment against them was more severe.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Question 15:

To what extent do you think that the non-Christian educators at your school can describe their situation as one of 'religious oppression'?

The data revealed contrasting points of view from educators. Five of the six Christian educators felt that non-Christians educators at their schools were in some way or the other being oppressed. Two of the five educators included dress and language as elements of oppression.

> *PC 1: The dictionary meaning of "oppression"- oppress means to govern/dictate/treat someone cruelly or unjustly. With this in mind I feel that the non-Christian educators have been oppressed at my school. Firstly, they don't enjoy the freedom of religious expression and secondly, they are subject to verbal abuse or ridicule by those objecting to their beliefs. Often, their dress code for religious observance days has met with snide remarks. They are not considered when it comes to staff catering eg. Halaal & vegetarian persons are often overlooked and considered a 'nuisance' to catering decisions and never catered for fully. I too only eat 'halaal' meats, and many of my colleagues do not understand this. Therefore my feeling is that non-Christian educators can describe their situation as one of definite 'religious oppression' as they appear to have been 'tolerated' rather than fully accepted."*

This Christian educator does not seem to agree with the behaviour of others in her social group. This educator views the dominant group's behaviour as

inappropriate towards other groups values and belief, and this allows her to distance herself from the dominant group. Hardiman and Jackson (1997:26) would refer to this educator as an 'agent in resistance.' This Christian educator seems to reject the position of the dominant group (Christians). She is aware of and disapproves of the unjust treatment toward non-Christian educators.

> *HC8: "The non-Christian educators at our school have no grounds on which to make any such claims! We are a tolerant and educated group of people. Our principal who is a devout Hindu leads by example. Our time-table is drawn up to ensure that they can go to pray. No celebration or festivities are planned during their holy months. All our meals and menus are chosen to suit all groups. We are a democratic country, the rights and religious affiliation of all groups must be respected."*

> *PC6: "I would think with regard to their religious holidays. Departmental regulations presently stipulate that leave be granted to Christian celebrations. Non-Christian educators are entitled to fill in leave forms when they need to celebrate religious festivities."*

> *PC7: "Yes, some educators could feel oppressed, but if we did we should remember that religion is about serving and not being served."*

In analysing the above comment the educator seems to be saying that other religions are there to serve. This educator's attitude and actions are supported by a belief in the inferiority of non-Christian religions and the superiority of Christianity.

> *PC8: "I think they might be hindered by the language barrier, but under the Constitution of our country and the South African School*

Act of 1996, they are protected from religious oppression. The oppression might perhaps be from fear of ridicule."

HC9: "I suppose to an extent, where we would describe other religions as being "stifled" or "left out" in favour of Christianity which still is the dominant religion.

This educator seems to be saying that it is difficult to unlearn Christianity as the dominant religion.

Focus Group Report

Of the primary school educators who were interviewed, four non-Christian educators participated in a focus group discussion. Although the questions pertinent to the study dealt with religion, it must be noted that race, language and culture formed the basis of most arguments. These themes were picked up from the individual interviews. Through the focus group I hoped that more light would be thrown on the subject.

Interviewer: I picked up from the interviews that other than religion, some of you have to contend with issues of race and language. What are your comments on this?

P 5: "I would just like to say that I feel very uncomfortable when suddenly someone in the staffroom says ' ever since these Indians have come to this school the problems are endless'. "

P 2: "What about this one. ' Because of you Indians our own kind can't get permanent jobs'."

Interviewer: How did you respond to such comments?

> *P 5: "Frankly, I couldn't be bothered. These people don't think when they speak. At times I think that things are deliberately said to get under my skin."*

I got the impression that the respondents were feeling threatened by the comments of other staff. The fact that they do not challenge these comments means that they have learned to accept a definition of themselves that is hurting. Bell (1997:12) in the literature refers to this as 'internalised subordination', referring to targets colluding with their own oppression.

Interviewer: Did you challenge these comments to help resolve your differences?

> *P 5: "You see, the only time to resolve such an issue would be at a forum. But then if you say something out of turn, then, boy, you'll be blacklisted for days to come'.*

> *P 3: (Responds sarcastically)"speak about democracy and freedom of speech."*

This prompted me to ask about power relations at the school and whether it had anything to do with religion.

Interviewer: Would I be wrong in saying that certain people have more power over others?

> *P4: "Definitely yes, firstly I'd like to say that the males have a lot more clout than the females.*

There is very little respect, if any, for the oldest
female teachers. Also what's been happening
is that discussions do not follow the correct
channels. 'Buddies' are first informed, and these
are 'low ranked' people. If that's not 'power' then
you tell me what is. Then they walk around with
this superior arrogant smirk on their faces.
You know the one where the cat got to the milk first."

The data suggests that issues of power may be more closely related to gender than to religion. Internalised domination is evident in that, men are treated better than women. This mistreatment is a sign of disrespect, especially towards the older female educators. In the same token, educator P4's comment about 'buddies' is reference to Christian males and females. From this comment we are able to deduce that members of the privileged group (Christians) see their situation as 'natural'.

Findings/ Analysis

I am using the model of oppression and the concepts of agent and target groups together with social exclusion to get a view of educators' experiences and daily encounters within two diverse school settings. If we look at the data, we would notice that certain patterns emerge. These patterns reveal major differences between the two schools.

Two different instruments were used to collect data. The researcher is located at the primary school and found it convenient to conduct personal interviews with both Christian and non-Christian members of staff. On the other hand, at the high school where accessibility to information proved more difficult because of time constraints and the heavy workloads carried by those educators, questionnaires seemed an appropriate tool to use. These different methods of

data collection therefore results in the difficultly of making clear-cut comparisons between the two schools.

The high school for most part provides substantial evidence of good relationships that exist between the Christian and non-Christian educators. There seems to be a balance of power relationship between these groups. This is typified by the comments made by the educators at the high school. School assemblies favour all religious denominations. Both Christian and non-Christian educators noted their tolerance and respect towards other religions. One non-Christian educator in particular has no objections in conducting assemblies in which her readings are sometimes scriptures taken from the Holy Bible.

Educators at this school believe that mutual respect leads to a more harmonious working environment. According to a Christian educator all religious holy days are celebrated. School closes even when numbers are in the minority. It is therefore true to say that the school is closed on every religious holiday, with the exception of Jewish Holy days.

On the other hand, at the primary school we see the following patterns. Educators who celebrate non-Christian holy festivals within teaching time are obliged to submit leave forms to the Department of Education. The non-Christians have indicated that decisions concerning the functioning of the school and personal interests always favour the Christian educators and learners of the school. The ethos of the school is Christian orientated, as indicated by a Christian educator, who said that if she were an outsider looking in, she would think that Christianity is the mainstream religion of the school. These comments suggest that the Christians (agent group) who are in the majority have social power over the non-Christians (target group) at the school.

From the interviews conducted, Christian educators who have internalised their dominant status. They accept prejudices against the non-Christians and accept

the status quo of the primary school as being normal and correct. However, one Christian educator at the primary school who was interviewed does not seem to agree with her social group's behaviour. She does not want to be associated with the exclusionary behaviour of her Christian colleagues. She views the dominant group's behaviour as inappropriate towards other group's values and beliefs. In demonstrating her active commitment towards change whereby giving equal status to individuals of diverse religious beliefs, this educator may be referred to as a change agent (a willing member of the dominant group who has the ability to improve or alter the situation of the target group and bring about positive change for the target group).

At this school the non-Christian educators have internalised their subordinated positions and accepted the Christians as the dominant group. This is evident by the responses of the non-Christian educators during the focus group discussion. Although they resent the hurtful comments made by the Christian educators they do not challenge their Christian colleagues. They accept the negative images of themselves, including feelings of inferiority.

There also seems to be a gap between policy directives and the way practice takes place in the primary school, though not at the high school. National policy dictates that all schools should have in place vision and mission statements, policies on HIV / AIDS, bullying, etc. As a member of the senior management team at the primary school I requested a copy of the mission statement only to discover that such a statement did not exist. An attempt was made by appointed members of staff approximately fifteen months ago to provide a mission statement. This was then duly handed to a printer who has not returned the same. The recent policy document on Religion and education, which highlights the differences between religious instruction and religion education has never been available to the educators since its inception. This policy provides guidelines and direction for educators who teach multi-religious groups. Although this study concerned itself with social groups based on religion and not

religious education, the policy document on religion, together with the South African constitution advises how individuals should be treated and more importantly that no specific religious group should take precedence over any other.

The data that emerged at the primary school showed many forms of exclusion, which did not appear in the data received from the high school. Although I was looking at religious affiliation, I found other interesting things. Other issues, which may or may not be linked to religion but take precedence over religious affiliation, is that of language and race. A non-Christian educator at the primary school feels that because of her race everything associated with her is 'funny'. She is referred to a 'funny face' and has been told by a Christian colleague that Indians 'talk funny'. It seems that in her experience race and language has been the focus of her exclusion and for her these are as significant as relationships based on religious affiliation. The data also revealed non-Christian educators' views of social exclusion on the basis of the race and language, which raises the question of internalised subordination. One non-Christian educator in particular at the primary school has accepted the dominant group's ideology about non-Christians and for her more specifically, Indians. This suggests that she accepts a definition of herself that is hurting.

Chapter Six

Conclusion and recommendations

In conducting this research my aim was to establish whether after ten years of democracy, educators of different religious backgrounds from that of the Christian mainstream have been accepted in the workplace of two specific schools. The research has shown that the educators' experiences differed from one school to the other. This study has been limited to two schools, and it is therefore very difficult to prove or disprove oppression as a phenomenon that is social in nature and relates to the whole society and thus cannot be limited to specific institutions. Thus the data presented provides sufficient evidence of elements of exclusion, but not sufficient evidence to warrant a judgement as strong as oppression, which would require evidence that this is systematic and not limited to one or two institutions. In the case of the primary school exclusion appears to be obvious while at the high school relatively minor elements of exclusion exist. These elements of exclusion might be very different in another context within the same society. An important point of note is that whatever the situation across the broader society, schools as institutions do in fact have the ability to create conditions of inclusion.

While focusing specifically on one area of identity reveals how often it is caught up with other social identities, in this case race and language. To my knowledge, and more specifically at the primary school, educators rely on directives from policy documents to guide their thoughts and actions. It has been established that the policy document on Religion and Education has never been presented to the educators at the school and therefore has not been implemented. The same holds true for the South African Constitution, which when requested was not available. As indicated by an educator, 'no real religious policy is in place therefore it is assumed that Christianity is the mainstream religion of the school." A minimum requirement is that guideline manuals on the treatment of individual differences with regards to race, colour, or religious affiliation, are printed and handed to individual educators.

However, the second school in the same context is inclusive in its way of operating. This shows that schools can be agents for social change, and can communicate a different understanding of religious affiliations to that that prevails in the society at large. This may be attributed to the fact, as indicated in chapter two, that the high school has a high proportion of non-Christian educators.

Becoming 'agents of change' is what I envisage for all adults, especially educators. The actions and responses from only one Christian educator at the primary school made her a change agent. This makes the point very strongly that this is not about religious beliefs primarily, but about exclusion or inclusion. That educator has completed a course called 'Teacher Education in a Diverse Society' and demonstrates in her practice attitudes of inclusion. It should therefore be clear that education may address these issues very well.

The call within the education department and a key issue in the educator appraisal is that of educator professional development. Since higher education is playing a role in offering such courses to address issues of social diversity, a strong recommendation would be that through these courses, schools could address such issues. It is also recommended that all educators, as part of their professional development, attend courses that address the issues of religious diversity as a guide and for direction when confronted with religious diversity.

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APPENDIX ONE

QUESTIONNAIRE / INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

gender _____   age: _____

Religious denomination :_____

1. What are the different religions represented amongst the learners and educators?
2. How does religion fit into the school curriculum?
3. In what ways, if any, does your teaching take into account the different religious beliefs of the learners?
4. I'm interested in the way the school handles gatherings such as assembly. Have you any comments on that?
5. In your opinion does assembly play a role in formulating attitudes about religion?
6. Have you attempted to do anything which might change the regular format or provide readings which would address the diverse needs to ensure that all religious are catered for?
7. Who do you think is/ or should be responsible for encouraging religious diversity?
8. What have been your experiences as a (Christian) non-Christian educator around religion?
9. What helped these experiences to be formed in this way?
10. In your career have you ever felt discriminated against or less powerful because of your religious affiliation?
11. To what extent have your experiences at the school been similar to earlier experiences in relationship to religion in your life?
12. In your opinion, would you say that all religions are given equal status at your school, if not to what extent is one religion more dominant?
13. Do you have reason to believe that other schools operate differently to this one with regards to religious tolerance? If so comment.

FOR NON-CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

14. To what extent would you describe your situation as one of 'religious oppression'?

FOR THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

15. To what extent do you think that the non-Christian educators at your school can describe their situation as one of 'religious oppression'?

APPENDIX TWO

Questions : Focus Group

1. I picked up from the interviews that other than religion, some of you have to contend with issues of race and language. What are your comments on this?

2. How did you respond to such comments?

3. Did you challenge these comments to help resolve your differences?

4. Would I be wrong in saying that certain people have more power over others?

APPENDIX THREE

<u>GLOSSARY</u> - definitions taken from tutorial notes of the course module Introduction to Social Justice and Popenoe,D. (1995)

Oppression

Oppression -when a social group has much greater social power than another group, and that has prejudice against that group, keeps the other group down in different ways and over a long period of time. Oppression involves both prejudice and social power.

Social power

Having access to and availability of resources and information which enhances one's chances of getting what one wants and influencing others; also the power to name and define reality and normalcy.

Discrimination- an overt behaviour pattern which is directed towards a minority group

Privilege

A resource, ability or position that only some people have access to because of their social group membership

Stereotype-generalizations that are made concerning individuals in ceratin religious, racial or ethnic categories

Prejudice- an attitude or feeling that a person has toward members of a minority group.

Collusion

When people act to perpetuate oppression or prevent others from working to eliminate oppression.

Ally

A member of the agent social group who takes a stand against social injustice directed at target groups

Target group

Targets are members of social identity groups that are exploited and victimized in a variety of ways by the agent groups

Agent Group

Agents are members of the dominant social groups privileged by birth who knowingly or unknowingly exploit and reap unfair advantage over members of the target group

Change agent

A willing member of the dominant group who has the ability to improve or alter the situation of the target group and bring about positive change for the target group and in so doing can become an ally of that group.

Internalised Subordination

When members of the target social group have adopted the agents (dominant) groups ideology and accept their subordinate status as deserved, natural and inevitable.

Horizontal oppression

Occurs when members of a dominant group, based on their internalized oppression and/or prejudices, mistreat other members of their own group or members of other dominant groups.

Internalised Domination

When members of the agent group accept their group's socially superior as normal and deserved.