

Revue québécoise de droit international
Quebec Journal of International Law
Revista quebequense de derecho internacional



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”BREAKING DOWN THE “US” AND “THEM” ATTITUDE**

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Volume 12, Number 1, 1999

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1100408ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1100408ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Société québécoise de droit international

ISSN

0828-9999 (print)

2561-6994 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Zachariah, M. (1999). “... THINGS FALL APART, THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD...
”BREAKING DOWN THE “US” AND “THEM” ATTITUDE. *Revue québécoise de
droit international / Quebec Journal of International Law / Revista quebequense
de derecho internacional*, 12(1), 117–135. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1100408ar>

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**“... THINGS FALL APART, THE CENTRE CANNOT HOLD...”
BREAKING DOWN THE “US” AND “THEM” ATTITUDE**

*By Mathew Zachariah**

*...Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity...*

William Butler Yeats, “The Second Coming.” 1921

In this gathering it is particularly appropriate to begin by mentioning that we are still noticing the ripple effects of the Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development entitled *Our Creative Diversity* (popularly known as the Perez de Cuellar Report) published in 1995. As many of you know, the *Report* devotes a brief but important chapter to intercultural education.

In the introduction to his edited volume, *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (1995), William Kymlicka says:

In focusing on the accommodation of cultural differences, I am taking for granted that a minimal level of tolerance and goodwill exists amongst the various groups of the state. Needless to say, in many parts of the world, minority groups face enormous discrimination and persecution, even genocide and “ethnic cleansing,” and so are fighting for the minimal set of basic civil and political rights which are at the heart of traditional liberal democratic theory. For these groups, the sorts of issues addressed here – like language rights, regional autonomy, or group representation – may seem like utopian ideals. (p. 3)

Canada, for all its vexing problems, is a liberal democratic state that has recognized the rights of minorities without endangering the rights or relative strength of the state. When I mention later the many problems that Canadians face in the promotion of democratic rights for all its citizens, this important fact must always be kept in mind.

Canada is in many significant ways a nation of immigrants. (Appendix No. 1: Some Recent Immigration Data). It still welcomes immigrants although it has had a history of openly racist immigration policies. Those changed in the mid-1960s when they were replaced in favour of more “colour-blind” policies that gave greater

* Professor, Faculty of Education, Graduate Division of Educational Research, University of Calgary.

emphasis to education and professional background. Nevertheless, racism is still a very important but often hidden element of Canadian life. (See, for example, *The Economist*, July 24th 1999, "A Survey of Canada", pp. 9-14). I shall discuss this in more detail later.

I will assume for purposes of our discussion today that intercultural education and multicultural education are synonymous terms. In English Canada, the term multicultural education has acquired several unsavoury connotations. It has been stereotypically described as a cynical government ploy used by the dominant political parties to buy ethnic Canadians' votes by throwing at them some money to hold their cultural events during which they can indulge in the four Ds – dance, diet, dress and dialect. Critics, such as Indo-Caribbean author Neil Bissoondath, say this policy creates ethnic and cultural ghettos where leaders of relatively powerless, marginalized groups can create a place for themselves alongside the mainstream and more powerful groups so that the latter do not have to yield or share their real economic, political or cultural power in a more democratic and fair manner. Now the preferred term among those who previously used "multiculturalism" is "cultural diversity" as in this example: "let us promote cultural diversity."

Whatever term is in vogue, the goal of multiculturalism is to promote equal and full participation of all individuals in ascribed cultural groups that make up the so-called mosaic of Canada. The 1988 Multicultural Act recognizes multicultural diversity as a fundamental characteristic of Canada and emphasizes the value of: equality of opportunity, participation, contribution of various cultural groups to the enrichment of Canadian life, as well as community integration through improvement in race and inter-group relations. At minimum, discrimination based on prejudice on the grounds of race, religious beliefs, skin colour, gender, physical or mental disability, marital status, age, ancestry and place of origin are prohibited. The addition of sexual orientation to this list remains a very controversial matter among several groups and some provinces (such as Alberta) in Canada.

There are eight (8) distinctive methods of ethnic conflict regulation. (Appendix No. 2: Methods of Ethnic Conflict Regulation) It is important to recognize that all the eight responses assume hegemonic control of the minority groups by dominant groups. Let me emphasize that in the matter of hegemonic control, Canada is no exception. In Canada's case, education is particularly relevant in 1(d), 2(a) and (d), of Appendix No. 2.

We have a tendency to equate the word "education" with schooling or other structures of formal education. Although I will focus on formal education in my remarks, it is important to recognize that there are three distinct types of education. Education includes informal or primary socialization that takes place for the most part before a child enters school but continues throughout life; formal education, whose most distinctive characteristic is the credentialling or certification of persons for eventual gainful employment, and, structured non-formal education, which is primarily for the personal enrichment of individuals irrespective of whether it takes place in institutional or less formal settings.

Informal and formal education have been very effective in promoting social cohesion – the “we” feeling – within distinct cultural groups and within nations that contained many different such groups. The challenge we now face, as the *de Cuellar Report* correctly points out, is to promote both *intra*-national and *international* social cohesion. This is a relatively new challenge which the field of global education is trying to promote. This is a field in which I have worked for many years. (See the Bibliography).

It is important to recognize that education can play a very important part and can be an important partner in promoting intergroup harmony. But it can do so only when supported by its more dominant institutional partners, namely, the family, the polity, the economy and the mass media. If the mass media, for instance, continues to encourage, indirectly or directly, racist values, attitudes and behaviours, then those of us in formal educational institutions will be promoting intercultural harmony with our hands tied behind our backs.

Our Canadian experience is that education for cultural diversity, if it is to be effective, must encompass all three dimensions of education and acknowledge that the word education encompasses motions of motives, means, commodity, process, interaction, personal goals and social-political goals. (Zachariah, 1997 p. 472)

Appendices Nos. 3, 4, and 5, I hope, illustrate the complexities involved in using the instruments of the state to promote inter-group or interethnic integration through education.

Let me now make a few positive points about Canada’s record.

There is considerable support among the dominant elites that Canada should integrate immigrants into the Canadian Mosaic.

Focusing on formal education, let us mention one important fact right away. Some 90 % of the children and youth in most of the provinces and territories of Canada are required to attend publicly-funded elementary and secondary schools where children of all backgrounds intermingle. This demographic fact alone creates situations where friendships are formed, interethnic and interracial dating takes place (that may or may not result in marriage) and even families get to know each other because of their children’s friendships.

Almost all Associations or Unions of teachers have professional sub-groups whose focus is on multicultural education. The Alberta Teachers’ Association, for instance, has an Intercultural Education and Second Languages Council with over 300 members; it publishes a newsletter and a journal and holds annual conferences about promoting sensitivity to cultural diversity. Faculties of Education throughout Canada and Professional Teachers’ Associations organize several workshops every year to promote sensitivity among the school administrators, staff and teachers in matters of inter-group relations.

I know that there is a “Tolerance and Understanding Unit” in the Department of Education of the Province of Alberta that checks textbooks and other materials for content that is derogatory about cultural and ethnic groups. Perhaps such units exist

in other provinces as well. We have made much progress since the landmark 1971 publication of the book *Teaching Prejudice* which, based on a content analysis of Ontario textbooks, proved extensive negative stereotyping, particularly of Canada's First Nations peoples.

In every school jurisdiction there are people in authority – senior as well as lower level administrative staff, teachers and support staff members – who are genuinely committed to promoting respect for people whatever their ascriptive characteristics. They are probably a minority, but they are making the school culture the cradle of a new form of socialization that breaks down the “Us” and “Them” attitude based on race or ethnicity to create a “We” attitude.

Scholars and teachers have joined together to conduct experiments on reducing prejudice and improving relationships among people. These have been published and, one hopes, emulated. (See Aboud, 1993)

Student groups, with the support of teachers, have formed anti-prejudice groups in many schools. Two examples are SPEDS at the elementary level in Calgary and S.T.O.P. in Red Deer both in the province of Alberta. (See Byers, 1995; Lund, 1993).

There are abundant resources available to help teachers promote respect for cultural diversity. Here are some examples. (Appendix Nos. 6 and 7)

Many guidelines and helpful tips have been produced to deal with difficult situations that one might encounter. Here are four examples. (Appendix Nos. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12)

Teachers have been encouraged to use literature produced in different cultures within Canada and across the oceans to help students understand these cultures in situ rather than through the stereotypical images that most of the mass media propagates most of the time. (See Johnson, 1995, Huene and Zachariah, 1989; Zachariah, 1997)

So, is everything rosy and beautiful in the area of cultural diversity in Canada? No.

The informal education that takes place in many family settings such as at the dining table in too many Canadian homes, I suspect, passes on to the younger generation, if not hatred, at least disparagement about cultural groups of which we are ignorant or have deformed opinions.

I wish I could say that the teaching and administrative sectors of formal educational institutions also mirror the racial and ethnic composition of Canada's current population in the same way the school population does. But that is not the case. White males are dominant in the higher levels of administration at every level of formal education. White males and females are dominant in the teaching population.

Despite good intentions, many, many books, videos, teachers etc. are all too complicit in propagating harmful stereotypes about minority cultural groups. For

example, a graduate student in one of my classes did a content analysis of a Grade 5 topic "Early Canada: Exploration and Settlement" and found that the Iroquois, for example, were depicted in grossly unfair terms. (See Matheson, 1998)

Within schools, there are still too many teachers who do not take the time to examine their ignorant assumptions and do not feel challenged to do so because the many workshops that I mentioned earlier are attended on a voluntary basis. I do not know whether compulsory attendance will really solve the problem either because – we know from experience that – captive audiences are not committed audiences.

Students, especially at the high school level have often been seen to organize themselves on racial and ethnic grounds. Most of them are relatively harmless in themselves but when these groups become gangs, as has been happening in Calgary and many other cities recently, many years of positive socialization for good citizenship quickly go down the drain.

The generally accepted and generally valid view that Canada is a shining example for the rest of the world also makes it difficult to bring about significant changes for fairness and justice in matters such as proper evaluation of foreign degrees/credentials and promotion of policies for employment equity. The presumption may be phrased as follows: "We are better than any other country in the world. So there is no need for us to change until many other countries catch up with us."

At the post-secondary level with which I am associated, when compared to the elementary and secondary levels, very little has been done to promote acknowledgment or respect for cultural diversity.

Not Multiculturalism but Anti-racism

Frustrated by the gap between rhetoric and reality, many advocates of multicultural educators have become antiracist educators.

What is antiracism? It focuses not on individual prejudices, but on systemic problems. It attempts to challenge the inequitable distribution of power in society and the consequent abuse of power in, for example, institutionalized education.

Canada is rightly known around the world for the civility with which most Canadian political and policy debates are conducted. This is so because most cultural groups have so far acquiesced in the hegemonic role of the dominant white elites in both English and French Canada. As cultural groups within Canada, frustrated by lack of progress in sharing resources and power and in economic and social mobility, begin to articulate their demands with greater stridency, will that civility continue?

I know of many parents who have accepted the awful devaluation of their educational and professional credentials and their work experience when they arrive in Canada and are working as taxi-drivers, building cleaners and private sector security staff. They hope that their children, as a result of doing well in school and acquiring proper credentials, will have a better life. If those hopes are frustrated

because employers will not hire them based on racial, ethnic or other prejudice, or if there are no opportunities for them or their children to acquire English or French language competency, civility will give way to what Yeats prophesied. I hope that is not the case for the sake of all the children of Canada, for Canada and the World.

Would members of immigrant cultural groups who successfully go through the four phases of identity transformation – such as, for example, arriving in Canada as a citizen of Poland, becoming a Polish-Canadian, then a Canadian of Polish descent and, finally, a Canadian – still find many doors close to them? I hope not. And I hope all three types of education will play their role in continuing to make Canada a genuinely, democratic, participatory society tempered with justice and mercy.

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**APPENDIX NO 1
CANADIAN IMMIGRATION DATA¹**

Immigrated Before 1961

	Number	%
Total	1,054,930	100.0
United Kingdom	265,575	25.2
Italy	161,730	15.3
Germany	107,270	10.2
Netherlands	88,810	8.4
Poland	57,820	5.5
United States	45,050	4.3
Hungary	33,215	3.1
Ukraine	27,640	2.6
Greece	21,555	2.0
People's Republic of China	17,545	1.7

Recent Immigrants²

	Number	%
Total	1,038,995	100.0
Hong Kong	108,915	10.5
People's Republic of China	87,875	8.5
India	71,335	6.9
Philippines	71,325	6.9
Sri Lanka	44,235	4.3
Poland	36,965	3.6
Taiwan	32,140	3.1
Viet Nam	32,060	3.1
United States	29,020	2.8
United Kingdom	25,425	2.4

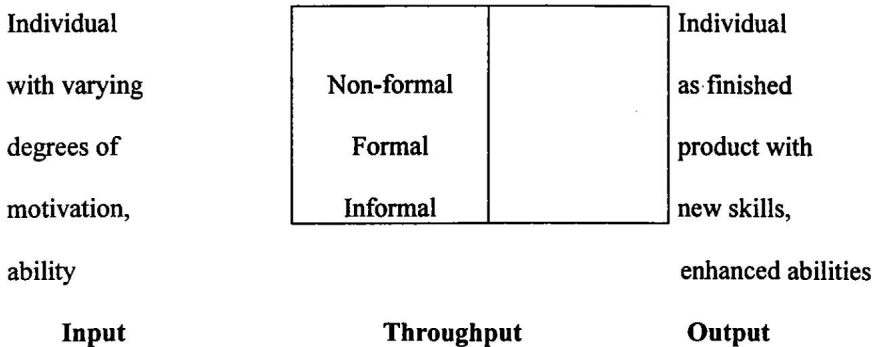
¹ Catalogue No. 93F0023XDB96003 in the Nation Saarties. Non-permanent residents are not included.

² Those who immigrated between 1991 and the first four months of 1996.

APPENDIX NO 2
METHODS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT REGULATION³

- (1) **methods for eliminating differences:**
- (a) genocide;
 - (b) forced mass-population transfers;
 - (c) partition and/or secession (self determination);
 - (d) integration and/or assimilation;
- (2) **methods for managing differences:**
- (a) hegemonic control;
 - (b) arbitration (third-party intervention);
 - (c) cantonisation and/or federalisation;
 - (d) consociationalism or power-sharing (p.4).

APPENDIX NO 3
THE MAGICAL "BLACK BOX" OF EDUCATION⁴



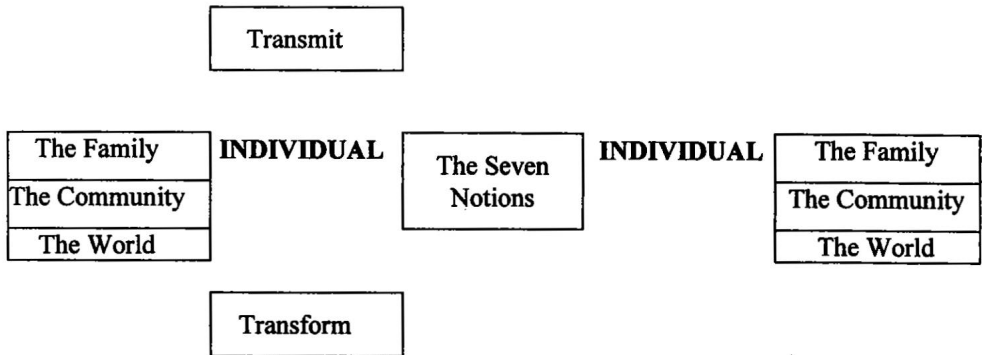
There is very little explanation of what happens in the box.

³ McGarru & O'Leary, 1993.

⁴ Zachariah in Cummings & McGinn, 1997 at 473.

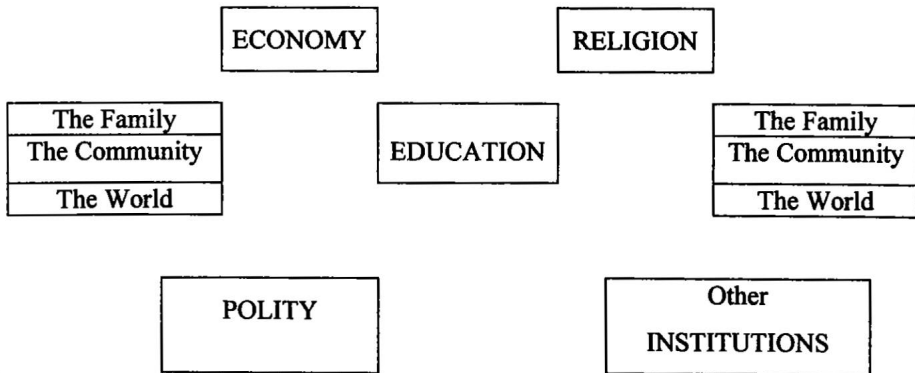
APPENDIX NO 4

THE COMPLEXITY OF PROCESSES IN AND OF EDUCATION⁵



APPENDIX NO 5

MAJOR INSTITUTIONS THAT INTERACT WITH EDUCATION⁶



⁵ Zachariah in Cummings & McGinn, 1997 at 474.

⁶ Zachariah in Cummings & McGinn, 1997 at 473.

APPENDIX NO 6
CLASSROOM GUIDELINE⁷

Schools as agencies of educational and social change must operate at various levels, from primary-Junior to post-secondary, to transform society.

At the elementary to secondary levels, school personnel should:

- address diversity issues directly in the classroom, focusing on both similarities and differences;
- critically evaluate process and curriculum to ensure their ongoing evolution in keeping with the pluralism that is a reality in Canadian society;
- create a holistic school environment which respects and affirms ethnocultural differences; this would become a model of what the larger community ought to be in a multicultural society;
- engage students in meaningful productive interactions with their communities in the form of positive community development and social change projects, critical political activism and global initiatives.

At the community level we should:

- critically evaluate and implement educational policies to ensure that there is heterogeneity in staffing of schools, inclusive curricula that reflect diversity and an equitable allocation of resources;
- promote an open dialogue between schools, board administration and the community to ensure that educational policies and practices represent the interests of all groups.

At the post-secondary level personnel should:

- collaborate with teacher education institutions to ensure that pre-service and in-service teachers have the opportunity to develop the sensitivity, knowledge and skills to work effectively with racial and ethnocultural diversity in schools and communities;
- work collaboratively with teacher education institutions and ethnocultural communities to ensure that these communities are reflected in those who are recruited for teacher education and teaching.

These suggestions focus on the level of collaboration that is required for schools to be successful agents of change. The primary goal of educators should be to facilitate the development of a knowledgeable, democratic citizenry.

⁷ McLeod & Krugly-Smolka, 1997 at 9.

APPENDIX NO 7

DR. JOHN W. KEHOE'S GUIDELINES⁸

In his study, Dr. Kehoe gives six succinct guidelines based on research available in Canada and the United States for presenting information:

1. Emphasize positive achievements rather than hardship and persecution.
2. Emphasize cultural similarities rather than exotic and bizarre differences.
3. Information should be presented from an insider's point of view - using the "we" rather than the "they".
4. Don't emphasize the material poverty of a region.
5. Allow students to examine the harm ethnocentrism and stereotyping has on its victims.
6. Emphasize family life and everyday activities.

⁸ Roe, 1982.

APPENDIX NO 8**WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN
YOU HEAR A DISCRIMINATORY JOKE OR SLUR?⁹**

1. Make your displeasure known; being silent or looking in a disapproving way may not work – words are needed. Open a dialogue, challenge the statement.
2. Challenge the joke or slur – not the person. Say “That’s not funny,” “I’m offended by that comment.” Try not to embarrass the person publicly; silencing or punishing the person does not solve the problem.
3. Remain calm to discourage comments such as, “You’re over sensitive” or “You’re too emotional.” Try not to overreact with another put-down.
4. You are likely to make assumptions about the risks of speaking up - “no one will support me,” “I’ll look stupid,” “I’ll be laughed at,” “They’ll say I’m a trouble-maker.”
5. Value the feelings of others. Try to understand the feelings that happen to people in incidences of discrimination, slurs, jokes. Talk about differences and what it feels like to be seen and treated as less acceptable.

⁹ Office of Human Rights, University of Alberta.

APPENDIX NO 9
BENCHMARKS FOR MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS¹⁰

- Criterion One:** The *total school atmosphere* reflects cultural diversity in the larger society.
- Criterion Two:** A multicultural education *policy statement* sanctions and supports diversity and each program component is *monitored* on a continuing basis.
- Criterion Three:** The *staff* has positive attitudes and expectations towards diverse students.
- Criterion Four:** The *curriculum* is transformational and action-focused.
- Criterion Five:** The school *staff* reflects ethnic and cultural diversity.
- Criterion Six:** *Patent participation* provides a cultural context for teaching and a link with student personal/cultural knowledge.
- Criterion Seven:** *Teaching strategies* are personalized, empowering, and participatory.
- Criterion Eight:** *Teaching materials* present diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural perspectives on events, concepts, and issues.

¹⁰ Banks, 1994 at 91-99 & 113-115; Banks, ed., 1994 at 315-320; Wang, 1999 at 248.

APPENDIX NO 10
TORONTO BOARD OF EDUCATION
HANDLING RACIAL INCIDENTS¹¹

The Toronto Board of Education condemns and will not tolerate any expressions of racial/ethnic bias in any form by its trustees, administration, staff or students.

What is a racial incident?

A verbal or physical expression of racial or ethnic bias which exhibits a negative attitude, disparagement, or hatred toward a person's or group's race, colour or ethnocultural heritage (including racial/ethnic slurs, jokes, and stereotyping as well as threats, abuse, intimidation or assault).

Handling racial incidents

Fighting racism is everyone's business.

No school staff who observes or receives a report of a racial incident shall ignore or refuse to investigate the incident.

In addition to reporting and investigating the incident, every effort shall be made to turn the incident into a learning experience.

Parents will be informed annually, as part of their local school's general discipline policy, how the school implements the Board's policy on race and ethnic relations.

Incidents between students

School staff who witness a racial incident must intervene immediately.

The school will arrange for a meeting with the offending student and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) if a problem is not effectively resolved or is repeated.

If the meeting with the parent(s) or guardian(s) proves ineffective and there is another incident, students, particularly in Grades 7 to 13, may be withdrawn for one day or suspended for 2 to 3 days at the Principal's discretion.

¹¹ Advisor on Race Relations, Equal Opportunity Office, Toronto Board of Education.

It is important that parents report all racial/ethnic incidents to the Board. Parents will be informed of the resolution of any such complaint.

Once an allegation of a racial incident is made, the students involved have the right to know what action is being taken.

Incidents between staff and students

All racial incidents involving staff and students will be reported immediately to the Principal. The Principal will immediately report every allegation to School Superintendent.

The School Superintendent will investigate every alleged racial incident.

If an allegation is substantiated, the School Superintendent will write a letter of reprimand to the employee including documentation relating to the incident.

If there is a second substantiated incident involving the same employee, the School Superintendent will advise the employee in writing that:

- he/she has been suspended without pay;
- this discipline has been reported to the Board's Personnel and Organization Committee;
- and that any further substantiated incident could lead to dismissal.

APPENDIX NO 11
EMPATHY OR SYMPATHY?

It is helpful to understand the difference to see which one is operative in you.

Both empathy and sympathy may evoke tears. Tears of sympathy flow because you feel sorry for the person in pain. Tears of empathy flow from actually feeling a small portion of that pain.

In sympathy, you are on the outside looking in. In empathy you have, as the Native Americans say, crawled in through a person's feet, up through their belly, felt the pain in their chest, and are looking at the world through their eyes.

Sympathy is not a very productive stance. It often makes people feel their burden more heavily because the grieving person can feel responsible for the pain and tears of the sympathetic care giver. It may also add embarrassment to the grieving person's list of painful feelings.

Empathy, on the other hand, allows the person to feel understood, which can often significantly reduce the pain.

QUESTIONS:

Do I think that I might find a solution for this person or make her situation better?

If yes, you may be feeling sympathy. Empathetic care givers often are so much "into the space" of the hurting person that they understand the problem may have no solution.

Do I feel sorry for this person, or do I feel simply sorry that the person is in so much pain?

If you feel sorry for the person, you are likely feeling sympathy. If you feel sorry that the person is hurting, you are likely feeling empathy. Empathy is the ability to feel what another is feeling without losing yourself in the other's pain. You really share the other person's experience, but you remain yourself. Empathy implies acceptance and support.

APPENDIX NO 12
TOWARD A DEFINITION OF ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION¹²

Assumptions:

1. That racism is learned and therefore can be unlearned.
2. That racism is a question of inequitable distribution of power and of the consequent abuse of power.
3. That because of a history of inequitable power relations based on race, our society continues to be fundamentally racist in its structures and systems.
4. That the education system, as part of this society, has historically been structured on racist foundations and has therefore inculcated and perpetuated racism in its curricula and pedagogical practices.
5. That racism must be challenged in all its manifestations, from the individual to the systemic.
6. That active intervention to challenge existing barriers to equity in the education system is an essential component of Antiracist Education. These barriers exist in the curricula, the practice and the environment.
7. That Antiracist Education is essential to the development of an equitable society.
8. That Antiracist Education must be a fundamental component of all education, and is not a "subject", nor is it subject-specific. It must permeate the curriculum from Kindergarten to OAC.

¹² Nora Allingham, Curriculum Division, Toronto Board of Education, 1991.