

**A Common Ground Between Liberalism and Multiculturalism?: Addressing Citizenship
and Canadian Identity in British Columbia's Social Studies Curriculum**

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“Our expectations for schools are high. We have, in fact, an ambitious social as well as an educational agenda for them, as we seek to support our social structure in various ways. In the broadest sense, we have long expected schools to serve as agencies for civic and democratic development and as places where our culture and values can be sustained and transmitted to the young.”

Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework, 2008, p.7

In our society, schools have long been thought of as places where we not only teach reading and writing, math and science, but also where society has a say in the development of its citizens. Schools are seen as the places where societal values are passed on, and where children are made aware of their rights and responsibilities as Canadians. In this country where multiculturalism is considered a core value and one of our defining national characteristics, “we look to schools to help us sustain a climate in which racial, religious, and linguistic differences will be both understood and appreciated” (Sullivan, 1988, p. 11). Further, schools have been asked to build a sense of national unity, “to buttress that collective memory and strengthen those mnemonic bonds that are believed to hold society and the nation state together” (Osborne, 2012, p.136).

Given these expectations, it is hardly surprising that the ‘Educated Citizen’ is a stated goal of British Columbia’s redesigned curriculum. Currently being phased in from Kindergarten to grade 12, this curriculum has been crafted “to respond to [the] demanding world our students are entering” (“Redesigned curriculum”, 2015, p.1). Citizenship in Canada, however, is contested territory. Throughout Canadian history, the country has faced questions of who belongs as part of the nation. These concerns grew further in the latter decades of the twentieth century, as with “increasing immigration and expanding multiculturalism, questions arose as to just who was entitled to be a citizen and what it meant to be a citizen in the first place” (Osborne, 2012, p.168).

These concerns are especially pressing given the reluctance in Canadian society to engage in issues of inequality and injustice. In recounting his experience living in Canada, Stewart

(2014) asserts that “Canada’s inability or unwillingness to engage seriously with the issues, problems, and promises of the people of colour who try to call it home creates for many of those people the experience of living in a Canada different from the one enjoyed by its citizens who descend from Western Europe” (p.56-57). Similarly, the way that our nation’s history is treated can serve to marginalize the experiences of many. For instance, in examining the impact of government apologies for the history of Residential Schools, Japanese Internment, and the Chinese head tax, Miyagawa (2012) found that the government apologies, rather than making this past relevant again, “seem to break our link with history, separating us from who we were and promoting the notion of our moral advancement. They also whitewash the ways in which Canadians still benefit from that past, stripping the apologies of remorse. Rendering them meaningless. Forgettable” (p.187).

These examples illustrate some of the flawed nature of multiculturalism within Canadian society, stemming from the demands multiculturalism places on citizenship to accommodate diversity and allow group-differentiated rights while also maintaining a sense of national unity and belonging. The ‘multicultural mosaic’, while still enshrined in the nation’s public discourse, can be criticized for the way it defines ethno-cultural minority groups as ‘other’ in relation to a majority culture, and as such tokenizes rather than legitimately recognize cultures and lifestyles (Pashby, 2008). In this, “the dominant culture remains unquestioned and rather than recognizing the workings of prejudice and inequities, the neutral, dominant culture is lauded for being so benevolent as to acknowledge various minority cultures” (Pashby, 2008, p.7). As Stewart criticizes the mosaic, the role of minority groups within the mosaic “is determined by people who have often not given much thought to the visitors’ roles at all, other than to say, if and when it comes up, that they are ‘welcome’ and to be ‘tolerated’”(p.53).

In light of these experiences of marginalization for minority groups, it is worth considering the way citizenship has been, and continues to be, constructed in our schools. This is especially the case with a new curriculum entering our schools – one that claims to be offer a template to “Education for the 21st Century” (*Introduction to British Columbia’s Redesigned Curriculum*, 2015, p.1). What philosophical beliefs have influenced the nature of citizenship in Canada, and hence Canadian citizenship education? Have shifts in the nature of Canadian national identity, multicultural policy, and history education influenced conceptions of who is fully welcomed into Canadian citizenship? How has school curriculum served as the vehicle of these conceptions of citizenship, either to promote change or preserve the status quo? And what factors influence how citizenship curricula are actually implemented in schools and classrooms?

In what follows, I consider these questions in light of British Columbia’s redesigned curriculum. I begin by considering liberal and multicultural theory in order to identify the conditions necessary for a liberal-multicultural citizenship, and hence what is expected of a liberal-multicultural education. I then examine the history of multiculturalism in Canada, and how it has evolved since it first became national policy in the 1970s. I then focus my examination on the subjects of History and Social Studies, as this is where the educational focus on citizenship education is most explicit. I will first explore how the teaching of History and Social Studies has evolved in Canada over time. Finally, I will examine the nature of citizenship as constructed in British Columbia’s Social Studies curriculum at the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade levels, in both the 2006 and the 2015 curriculum documents. I conclude with some thoughts regarding the implementation of the redesigned curriculum, and factors that will influence the impact it has on the learning that takes place in British Columbia’s classrooms.

Foundations of Multicultural Citizenship and Multicultural Education

Liberalism and Multiculturalism

The political philosophy central to most modern democracies is liberalism. Liberalism emphasizes “the overriding importance of the ideals of individualism, freedom, and equality, which manifest themselves politically in, for example, individual rights, the separation of church and state, guaranteed freedom of expression, [and] formal equality under the law”(Reich, 2002, p.11). Further, liberalism also prioritizes autonomy, and the freedom to develop and revise the aims of one’s life: “it allows people to choose a conception of the good life, and then allows them to reconsider that decision, and adopt a new and hopefully better plan of life” (Kymlicka, 1995, p.80). To enable the living of a good life, then, two preconditions must be met. First, people must live their lives in accordance with their individual beliefs about what gives life value. As such, individuals require the resources and freedoms to live their lives in this way, without fear of discrimination or punishment. Second, people must be free to question those beliefs, and to examine them in light of any information and arguments that the culture can provide. As such, individuals must be able to acquire information about other views of what constitutes the good life, as well as the ability to examine these views critically. This leads to the liberal emphasis upon education, as well as the freedoms of expression and association (Kymlicka, 1995). The challenge of the liberal state, then is to “secure political agreement about the fundamental principles of justice while remaining neutral to the various and often incompatible worldviews professed and lived by citizens” (Reich, 2002, p.36)

It is through this lens that governments have, in the 20th century, attempted to protect cultural minority groups. Previously, cultural minorities had been managed through physical elimination, assimilation, or discriminatory treatment as resident aliens. Following World War II,

however, it became clear that a different approach to minority rights was required. Out of this emerged a new emphasis on human rights, such as freedom of speech, association, and conscience. This emphasis on liberal individual rights led to documents such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Liberals hoped that protecting individual rights in this way would eliminate the need to provide direct protection for vulnerable groups. While these rights are attributed to individuals, they are exercised in community with others, and as such would provide protection of group life while preserving the state's neutrality (Kymlicka, 1995).

This view, however, has come under criticism from many theorists. Kymlicka (1995) argues that a liberal emphasis on individual rights fails to resolve some of the most relevant and challenging questions surrounding cultural minorities. Questions surrounding which languages should have official recognition, how power should be distributed within a country, and what would form an appropriate set of immigration and naturalization policies are left in the balance: "The problem is not that traditional human rights doctrines give us the wrong answer to these questions. It is rather that they often give us no answer at all" (p.5). As such, these questions have been answered in accordance with majority views within countries, leaving cultural minorities vulnerable to injustice.

Further, liberalism has been criticized as being inherently non-neutral. Taylor (1992) argues that a liberalism based on a single set of individual rights – a principal of equal respect that "requires that we treat people in a difference-blind fashion"(p.43) – negates individual and group identities. He asserts that, "the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture" (p.43). Such principles force only the minority or suppressed cultures to take on new forms. As a result, a society based

on such principles of equality is actually, in a subtle way, quite discriminatory. Reich (2002) echoes this argument in noting, “the liberal state privileges certain ways of life over others in the demands it makes on citizens in the development of political virtues, skills, and behaviors” (p.38). He further argues that such demands influence not only a citizen’s public life, but will also impact their nonpublic lives as well, and as such shape the way in which persons and groups seek out their conception of the good life.

Stemming from the shortcomings of liberal equality to adequately address minority cultures and difference in modern societies, multiculturalism emerged. Multiculturalism stems from a belief in “the validity of the diverse values embodied in the practices which constitutes the diverse and in many ways incompatible values of different societies” (Reich, 2002, p.11). While multicultural thought is quite varied, Reich (2002) broadly defines multiculturalism as “a theory or position that emphasizes diversity over sameness, recognition of difference over homogenizing similarity, the particular over the universal, the group over the individual, race and ethnicity over, say, class and gender, and cultural identification rather than cultural affiliation” (p.12).

One such multicultural framework is Charles Taylor’s (1992) ‘Politics of Recognition’, an argument growing out of liberal individualism. Many liberal thinkers argue for “an individualized identity, one that is particular to me, and that I discover in myself.” (p.28). However, Taylor argues, this overlooks the dialogical nature of how people uncover their identity: “discovering my own identity doesn’t mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others [...] My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others” (p.34). As such, recognition takes on great importance: “identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the

misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (p.25). Thus, the survival of cultures is a crucially important good.

The only solution to this is “a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals” (p.50). Taylor takes issue with a traditional liberal politics of individual rights and equal respect as “(a) it insists on uniform application of the rules defining these rights, without exception, and (b) it is suspicious of collective goals” (p.60). Rather, he proposes a liberalism that is “willing to weigh the importance of certain forms of uniform treatment against the importance of cultural survival, and opt sometimes in favor of the latter”(p.61). As a case study, Taylor examines the protection of the French language in Quebec – and how protections were not illiberal, but aimed at ensuring the survival of the Quebecois culture. He finishes by suggesting that societies start from the assumption that “all human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings” (p.66), and admit that we are far from the viewpoint to be able to judge cultural superiority.

Kymlicka (1995) puts forth an alternative version of multiculturalism, arguing that minority rights can actually be seen as promoting a liberal notion of individual freedom. In his view, a plurality of cultural options is important as “freedom involves making choices amongst various options, and our societal culture not only provides these options, but makes them meaningful for us” (p.83). As such, access to cultural choices is an important precondition of true liberal freedom, and group-differentiated measures that promote access to a societal culture can be justified in a liberal multicultural state. While it may be possible for people to leave their own cultures, and that at times they voluntarily do so, “the ties to one’s culture are normally too strong

to give up” (p.87), both because of the meaningful options for life that a person’s culture provides, and because of the deep role that culture plays in people’s self identity. Given that minority cultures are disadvantaged in terms of access to their own culture – as compared to the majority – special protections are warranted.

These minority cultural rights are subjected to some limits on the grounds of liberal justice, with an emphasis on autonomy. Liberal justice requires the freedom and capacity to question and revise traditional practices within a minority group. It also demands that protections to given groups promote equality by rectifying disadvantages or vulnerabilities, rather than enabling oppression. As Kymlicka claims, “a system of minority rights which respects these two limitations [...] is consistent with, and indeed promotes, basic liberal values”(p.153). Such rights are of such import that they should be protected even when a minority group’s values clash with the liberal values of the majority society; national groups should settle disputes through negotiation and agreement, and when no common ground can be found, that there may need to be accommodations, such as exempting the national minority from a federal bill of rights. While liberals would be obligated to speak out against illiberal practices, support liberal reformers within a group, and incentivize change, they would not have the ability to prevent the violation of individual rights (Kymlicka, 1995 p.168).

The adherence to the importance of group rights has drawn criticism from liberal thinkers, who find that group rights have the potential to limit individual rights, and argue that this sort of group protection will result in education that is inconsistent with the liberal value of autonomy (Reich, 2002). For instance, Okin (1999) argues that there will be tension between “feminism and a multiculturalist commitment to group rights for minority cultures” (p.10). In looking at the private sphere, many cultural practices and rules are centered upon the spheres of

personal, sexual, and reproductive life. As a result, the defense of cultural practices is likely to have a much greater impact on women and girls than on their male counterparts. Further, “most cultures have as one of their principal aims the control of women by men” (p.13), as seen through patriarchal practices both around the world and in the western past. As such, controlling women is often a central part of minority group rights. In multicultural societies, then, “cultural defenses violate women’s and children’s rights to equal protection of the laws” (pp.19-20), and leave them at risk of harm.

Thus, in considering a liberal multicultural state, there is a tension that exists between those two strands of thought. Multiculturalists find that the liberal state is unable to be neutral to the culturally based ways of life pursued by its citizens. In fostering the autonomy of its citizens, the state advances a particular dominant culture of its own, and disadvantages cultures that do not value this same sort of autonomy. Further, in this, they risk negatively impacting individual and group identities, and jeopardize group survival. On the other hand, liberals find that multicultural thinkers elevate the equality of groups above the freedom and equality of the people within groups, especially women and children. This tension persists when expanded to the field of education: multiculturalists find that liberals have often promoted a school system that impose a narrow cultural uniformity upon citizens, and purport to be neutral, while they should allow for “the expression and cultivation of cultural diversity in schools” (Reich, 2002, p.7). Likewise, liberals find that multiculturalist claims – especially to separate schooling – threaten to undermine the development of civic virtues such as autonomy and mutual respect. From a liberal perspective, children should be provided an education that fosters their autonomy, allowing them to revise and pursue their own conception of the good life, whether it be similar or different than their parents’. (Reich, 2002).

Pursuing a Liberal-Multicultural Education

How, then, shall the demands of liberalism, a foundational belief in western democracies, be balanced with the need for an inclusive multicultural education? Reich (2002) argues for a liberal multicultural education, which attempts to draw a compromise between these two camps. His conception of multicultural education stems from a compromised understanding of autonomy, as the concept is key to both multiculturalists and liberals. Reich proposes a minimalist autonomy, which consists of “a person’s ability to reflect independently and critically upon basic commitments, values, desires, and beliefs, be they chosen or un-chosen, and to enjoy a range of meaningful life options from which to choose, upon which to act, and around which to orient a pursue one’s life projects” (p.105). This conception of autonomy does not set autonomy apart as excessively individualistic – rather, it is “consistent with individuals whose lives are deeply shaped by the community or communities of which they find themselves apart”(p.106), and allows for Taylor’s notion of dialogically constructed identity. What matters to Reich is that all individuals develop the capacity to reflect upon those components of their identity. This allows for an autonomy that seems to go hand in hand with multiculturalism in that the respect of autonomy allows, “the freedom of individuals to pursues individual cultural ends”(p.118). While it is an autonomy that welcomes a wide range of cultural difference, however, Reich acknowledges that as some cultural groups will not wish to promote the cultivation of autonomy, and so “to claim that it is hospitable, or neutral, to all cultural groups would be a lie”(p.119).

For Reich, there are two main components of multicultural education, the first of which is to develop this minimalist autonomy. This autonomy must be enabled in two different ways. It must be protected from interference from outside forces, through a societal respect for autonomy

that creates the background conditions for its use; this can be guaranteed through liberal human rights. But it must also be fostered as a capacity within individuals: “people are not born autonomous; they must be educated to be so”(p.119). As such, if minimalist autonomy is a good, the state “must not only support background conditions for its exercise, but provide an education for its development” (p.119).

Reich argues that minimalist autonomy is a worthwhile good in several ways, both for the individual and for the state. It is requirement for an individual’s self respect, as it is in reflecting upon one’s way of life and acting upon those reflections that allows one to place value upon their commitments and values. Autonomy also prevents in children the growth of servility to the values of their parents or society, which is necessary for a flourishing life. Further, for the state, the legitimacy of any set of rules of justice relies upon the citizens accepting these rules and agreeing that they are valid. For this to be possible, they must be able to critically and independently reflect upon those rules, and political arguments surrounding them. Thus, state legitimacy is reliant upon autonomous citizens.

The second component of Reich’s liberal multicultural education is that “the content of education must to some extent be multicultural, by which I mean that all students must learn about other ways of life and acquire some understanding of the history, practices, and values of diverse cultural groups” (p.116). Knowledge of other cultural groups is key to the practice of minimalist autonomy, as it “stimulates comparisons, illuminates contrasts, and encourages independence of thought”(p.119). A knowledge and understanding of the way other people live gives students the tools they need to evaluate the way they live, as such evaluation is only possible through comparison. It also enables students to understand the perspectives of others, and creates a stronger sense of mutual respect among citizens. Further, such an education allows

students to delve into the realities of history, accurately reflecting a diverse students population, and avoiding the pitfall of turning history into the story of white European men. Focusing upon multicultural content allows for students from diverse backgrounds to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and hence, avoids Taylor's fear of missing or misrepresentation of cultural minorities.

These components of a liberal multicultural education align well with the BC Ministry of Education's definition of an educated citizen. As the curriculum documents define the Educated Citizen, they:

- Are thoughtful and able to learn and to think critically, and can communicate information from a broad knowledge base
 - Are creative, flexible, and self-motivated and have a positive self-image
 - Are capable of making independent decisions
 - Are skilled and able to contribute to society generally, including the world of work
 - Are productive, gain satisfaction through achievement, and strive for physical well-being
 - Are co-operative, principled, and respectful of others regardless of differences
 - Are aware of the rights of the individual and are prepared to exercise the responsibilities of the individual within the family, the community, Canada, and the world.
- ("Redesigned curriculum", 2015, p.2)

In these priorities, we see that citizens must be able to make independent decisions, think critically, and are aware of individual rights – all conditions that contribute to Reich's definition of minimalist autonomy. An emphasis on multicultural content in education would be consistent with building a broad knowledge base for students, as well as in fostering a spirit of cooperation and respect regardless of difference. Further, in aiming to foster a positive self-image, the importance of both an individual's autonomy and of diverse representation within the curriculum become critical. To be certain, this is an effort that must be taken seriously, and in conjunction with a focus on critical reflection; under the influence of liberalism, multiculturalism is often haunted by a hierarchy where "Eurocentric knowledges are positioned at the cutting edge of

universal human progress while racialized and indigenous knowledges are marginalized as local, ‘traditional’ curiosities and exotic cultural expressions and ‘contributions’” (Taylor and Hoechsmann, 2012, p.319). Yet when undertaken in critical ways, such an education has the potential to deepen intercultural understanding, and to benefit the entire student body (Taylor and Hoechsmann, 2012).

Canada’s History of Multiculturalism

Schools in Canada have been asked instill a sense of national unity in our society – “to buttress that collective memory and strengthen those mnemonic bonds that are believed to hold society and the nation state together” (Osborne, 2012, p.136). However, coming from colonial roots and consisting of a diverse population, Canada does not fit into the European model of national identity, based upon shared ethnicity. Rather, Canada has “has had to look for alternative models of nationhood and national identity, and has had to do so ‘across competing forms of ethnicity and against a history of occupation and dispossession of the original inhabitants’ (Mackey, 1999, p.26). This search for Canada identity has been constant in the history of Canada, especially as the country sought a strong, unified national identity and culture to differentiate itself from both Britain and the United States. One thing that has come to be a defining piece of the Canadian identity is multiculturalism, which has been official federal policy since 1971. Canadian multiculturalism, however, is not a simple concept; rather it is an ideal that has always held multiple meanings, and one which has changed significantly since its inception.

When the policy took hold in 1971, it could be seen as having many purposes. Its most direct roots trace to the national unity crisis raised by the rise of Quebec nationalism during the 1960s. As the government sought to emphasize the equality of English and French in Canada as

founding nations, other long-settled ethnic groups, such as the Ukrainians, Italians, and Poles, objected to discussions of bilingualism and biculturalism, seeing that they rendered other groups invisible. Hence, ‘the idea of ‘multiculturalism within a bilingual framework’ was [...] a political bargain: in return for not opposing efforts to accommodate Quebec nationalism, ethnic groups would be given a measure of official recognition of their own, and modest financial support to maintain their identities” (Kymlicka, 2015, p.19). Harney (1972) argues that this shift can be seen in four different ways: as a product of the immigration of displaced peoples after the second world war, and a failure to assimilate them on the part of English Canadians; the assertion of the philosophy of democratic pluralism as the legitimizing principle for the Canadian state, replacing loyalty to the British Empire; as an effort by Anglophones to minimize the uniqueness of the French minority in Canada; and as a way for politicians to exchange with and thus control new ethnic voting blocs. Regardless of which narrative prevails, all center around the same three protagonists – English Canadians, French Canadians, and the ‘other ethnic groups’.

In addition to being a political bargain, however, it also stemmed from the liberal values that had led to the emphasis on civil rights at the time. Multiculturalism was seen as a way of “expanding the scope of individual autonomy, by tackling the relations of hierarchy, stigmatization and oppression that had precluded or penalized particular life choices” (Kymlicka, 2015, p.20). Ultimately, multiculturalism was attempting to establish the role of ethnicity in light of the emphasis on individual human rights. (Kymlicka, 2015). What this led to was a multiculturalism known as the ‘cultural mosaic’, focused on celebrating diversity and on creating cultural sensitivity (Kunz and Sykes, 2007).

In late 1970s and early 1980, as non-European immigration was rising, it became clear that these new immigrant populations had needs relating to settlement and integration that were not

challenges for second or third generation residents. Further, these ‘visible minority’ populations were facing discrimination based not on their ethnicity or country of origin, but rather on the colour of their skin. As such, the nature of multiculturalism policy shifted to incorporate anti-racism and immigrant integration efforts (Kymlicka, 2015). The focus shifted to creating a “level playing field”, with its focus on managing diversity and employment equality (Kunz and Sykes, 2007). What is important to note, though, is that “even as multiculturalism expanded and adapted to deal with newcomer integration, it maintained its original focus on legitimizing and acknowledging ethnicity” (Kymlicka, 2015, p.24); in addition to anti-racism and integration, then, multiculturalism also preserved the importance of bilingualism and liberalized human rights.

The focus of multiculturalism in Canada has continued to evolve over the past few decades. In the 1990s, the focus shifted to “fostering shared citizenship in order to develop a sense of belonging for all Canadians regardless of their social, economic, and demographic differences” (Kunz and Sykes, 2007, p.7). Religion has emerged as a basis for multicultural claims, along with ethnicity and race. In adding these elements to Canadian multiculturalism, though, the previous renditions have not faded away – rather, they all continue to co-exist, and are seen in different aspects of Canadian society.

Multiculturalism has also come to hold a prominent place in defining the Canadian national identity; it has been seen as “an innovative and altruistic civic philosophy of democratic pluralism to replace loyalty to the British Empire as a legitimizing principle for the Canadian state” (Harney, 1988, p. 65). Through this, multiculturalism has become a defining characteristic of the national culture, and a way to set Canadian society apart from both Britain and the United States (Mackey, 1999).

Throughout the tenure of Canadian multiculturalism, it has served as “a great national bandage to bind over all of the divisions, or a philosophy to help individuals develop a self-concept rooted in their unique past and looking toward a united future” (Mackey, 1999, p.80). The current official metaphor for multiculturalism is ‘harmony-jazz’; “harmonious interaction between and among communities, anchored in the structure of Canadian values, within which pragmatic improvisation facilitates a dynamic of integration and accommodation to ensure the full participation of all in Canadian society” (Quoted in Courage, 2012, p.211). These descriptions may set out the ideal of Canadian multiculturalism, but this climate has not been reached in our society. Rather, there remain flaws in the way difference is addressed.

In recent years, the Canadian government has apologized formally for a number of events in our past, including the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War; the creation of Indian Residential Schools to assimilate First Nations, Inuit, and Metis populations; and the Head Tax that targeted Chinese immigrants in the early 1900s (Miyagawa, 2012, p.180). In examining the role of these apologies, Miyagawa found that these government apologies, rather than making this past relevant and critically engaging Canadian society with this history, serves to place these sorts of issues purely in the past, and obscures the way in which many Canadians still benefit from those past injustices. It is easy to imagine other voices in Canadian history doing the same thing— separating this history from the present, and filled with the message that while those events were terrible, Canada is not like that now, and we should be proud of how far our country has come. For those who lived through these historical wrongs, however, it was not an apology, or even fiscal compensation, that they desired. As Miyagawa found in one example, “what those pushing for redress wanted was an acknowledgment that democracy had broken down, and that people had benefited from the internment of Japanese

Canadians. They wanted to change the system in order to protect people in the future” (Miyagawa, 2012, p.188).

This sort of concern for Canadian society can also be applied to the present. In a country that prides itself on multiculturalism, Stewart argues that “to continue ignoring the issues of systemic discrimination, the structures that reinforce unacknowledged systems of advantage and privilege in Canada, is to allow the majority to continue benefiting from being in the majority [...] while requiring others to remain silent as they are told a story that they cannot reconcile with their daily reality of life in Canada” (2014, p.37). While his arguments are concerned predominately with race, they could also be applied along lines of gender, religion, sexual identity, and ability. To be sure, there are things Canada does well in these regards. But, “If Canada is going to brag about what it may have gotten right, it must also come clean about the work that remains to be done. To do one without the other looks self-serving, dishonest, and hypocritical” (Stewart, 2014, p.49). Thus, in the constructing a sense of national identity and shared belonging in young citizens, the task facing our education system consists of more than simply celebrating the successes of multicultural policy in Canada; our schools must prompt critical reflection upon our nation’s flaws as well – upon the work that remains.

The teaching of School History and Social Studies in Canada

More than perhaps any other subject, history is supposed to teach citizenship, broadly defined as a combination of a sense of national identity, patriotic spirit, civic engagement, and more or less critical acceptance of societal norms and values.

Osborne, 2012, p.135-136

To this point we have examined the nature of multiculturalism, both as a philosophical construct in the western liberal nation-state, and also as an evolving policy and cultural marker within Canada. I will next examine the nature of history and social studies education in Canada,

as in no other subject is citizenship education such an explicit aim; the main purpose of the Social Studies curriculum is to develop graduates who have the knowledge, skills, and competencies to be active, informed citizens”(“Goals and rationale”, 2015, p.1) We must now consider how multiculturalism as theory and policy is to be instilled into the nation’s citizens. How has education outlined the nature of citizenship in Canada? How has this definition changed with the shifts in Canadian multiculturalism? Is the citizenship espoused in schools inclusive to all who consider themselves Canadian?

The National Myth

Since the early 1900s, school history has been considered a key part of instilling a national Canadian identity into children. History has been “the inspirational story of building the Canadian nation, usually against heavy odds, whether in the shape of internal doubters or external enemies, and always in the context of a harsh and forbidding natural environment. History demonstrated the national character in action”(Osborne, 2012, p.136). This myth was the history of a nation being built: “geographically by explorers, fur traders, and others; economically by merchants, railway builders, industrialists, and the like; demographically by successive waves of immigrants; and politically by statesmen and politicians”(Osborne, 2006, p.108). Citizenship entailed entering into this story, and striving to embody this Canadian identity (Osborne, 2012, pp.141-142).

This use of the nation-building narrative was intended to create unity in the country through the Canadianizing of people to ensure their allegiance to the British parliamentary system, Anglo-Saxon culture, and to create good workers and citizens (Levesque, 2011). Immigration policy reflected a tension between the need to increase the population and the desire

to preserve the ethnic and cultural composition of the country; the goal was immigration without changing the character of the nation. In this, immigration was seen as serving the host country, rather than the newcomers, and was tied to the perceived ability of the country to absorb and assimilate new immigrants (Harney, 1988).

This version of history, and hence its version of citizenship, excluded many Canadians; the English-Canadian narrative “is premised on a series of exclusions, the marginalization of Aboriginal people, the infantilization of people from Quebec, and the exclusion of Africans and Asians, but because it is always told from the point of view of English Canadians of British origins, these exclusions are obscured” (Stanley, 2006, p.34). As such, school history came under criticism for presenting “little more than a ‘white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant political and constitutional history of Canada’ that presented ‘a shadowy, subdued, unrealistic version of what actually happened [...] without the controversy that is an inherent part of history’” (Osborne, 2012, p.159).

Stanley (2011) argues that this sort of public memory has enabled the persistence of racism by “selectively representing the histories of the many people who live in Canada, by identifying certain people as Canadian and largely ignoring the others, and by sanitizing the histories through which some people have become dominant” (pp.32-33). This silencing of histories makes this version of Canadian history unable to represent the lived experiences of many Canadians.

Sears (2011) argues that the use of national myth to generate social cohesion will result only in a superficial adherence to a “civic religion rooted in myth and ceremony” (p.356). As a result, while “the search for a sustainable national identity through myth making has often been the central focus of the history taught in schools, [...] it is not an appropriate project” (Sears,

2011, p.356). Further, in the context of today's educational reality, "with different pasts, different cultures butting up against one another, traditional practices are no longer adequate for supplying meaning, largely for this reason: they provide no way of reconciling differing stories, different accounts in a multicultural society" (Seixas, 2002).

Despite this, there has been a return to prominence of national myth in citizenship education, especially in the neo-conservative approach of the Conservative Canadian government under Steven Harper. As seen in the citizenship handbook made for adult immigrants, the Conservative government promoted a version of history focused on battles, political leaders, and a British heritage. This guide has been criticized for the manner in which it prioritizes an Anglophone and white depiction of Canadians, while paying minimal attention to Indigenous populations, immigrant groups, some women, and the poor (Pashby et al., 2014).

The version of citizenship offered by the nation-building narrative is based neither liberal values nor multicultural ones. It does not hold at its center the values of individualism, freedom, and equality for every person as a defining characteristic of the nation. Nor does it model the multiculturalism and the fostering of diversity as a distinctly Canadian value. What it attempts to create is a version of the European ethnicity-based citizenship for a colonial settler state, by creating a sense of shared past and roots, a shared purpose, and hence a shared future; this model construes Canada as "a 'Britain of the North', a 'northern kingdom' whose unique and distinctive character derived from its northern location, its ferociously cold winters, and its heritage of 'northern races'" (Mackey, 1999, p.43). While this proved reasonably effective for much of Canada's past, in the latter part of the twentieth century it became clear that a new version of citizenship was required

A New History, 1970s-1990s

In response to the criticisms directed towards the nation-building narrative, a new approach to school history emerged between the 1970s and 1990s, often as part of social studies. This new pedagogy placed less emphasis on political history, beginning to incorporate social history, and the history of women, First Nations people, labour movements, and minorities. It aimed to involve students in the frameworks and methods used by historians, and encouraged students to construct their own meaning of the past. It focused on delving in-depth into a more limited range of topics or themes, rather than on a wide range of subject matter, and it treated history as valuable for its ability to address present problems and concerns (Osborne, 2012, pp.153-154). This had the effect of changing the purpose of history education; the narrative approach, seeing a single national identity, treated school history as a process of assimilation into the existing stream of citizenship. This new approach, however, spoke not of a single national identity, but of identities; this made learning history valuable as it engaged students into debates surrounding present issues (Osborne, 2012, pp.163-164). In this reframing the study of Canadian history, Canadian citizenship was redefined “not as an initiation into an essentialized narrative of the past, but as the ability to analyze, and in its more utopian versions perhaps even resolve, the public issues of the present.” (Osborne, 2012, p.154).

This change in the direction of history education emerged at the same time national political rhetoric shifted from Bilingualism and Biculturalism to that of Multiculturalism; “To say we have two official languages is not to say we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more ‘official’ than another. A policy of multiculturalism must be a policy for all Canadians.” (Pierre Trudeau, 1971, as quoted in Harney, 1988, p.72). The shift established an official policy of multiculturalism in Canada within a bilingual framework. This produced an

emphasis upon celebrating diversity and the multicultural mosaic, and cast Canadian society as English Canadians, French Canadians, and other ethnicities.

In the curricular shift to this new history education, teachers never totally abandoned the nation-building narrative of Canadian history; they rearranged the narrative so it spoke more directly to present issues, tied the narrative to students' experience, and taught it using much more student-centered methods (Osborne, 2006, p.112). However, the persistence of the national myth raises concerns over how much the system had really evolved. Stanley (2006) argues that the addition of minority narratives to the grand narrative does not counter it in any substantial way. As long as the stories of non-European groups are treated as isolated anecdotes to enrich the national narrative, rather than something that weaves throughout the story of Canada, then they "cannot address the problem that those who do not have long-lived roots in the country still get constituted as outsiders" (Stanley, 2006, p.40). Likewise, Mackey (1999) argues that, "cultural forms other than the unmarked and dominant British national identity (which defines the project), are limited and defined according to their place within the project of nation-building" (p.102). In this process, minority narratives are defined as part of the dominant narrative of nation building, continuing the progress begun by European settlers; their stories are limited to become part of the national myth.

In this version of history education, then, we can see both multicultural and liberal thinking taking hold. The promotion of multiple version of history is consistent with group-based rights, and creates opportunities for a more authentic recognition of non-European identities within school history curricula. Likewise, it is a natural fit with the early goals of Canadian multiculturalism, hoping to produce a higher degree of cultural sensitivity and allowing for the celebration of difference (Kunz and Sykes, 2007). The liberal ideal of autonomy is promoted as

students are encouraged to create their own understandings of the past, and in the ways it seeks to give students the skills to engage in contemporary societal issues. However, as this version of history still relied on the national narrative, it perpetuates the hierarchy of knowledge wherein “Eurocentric knowledges are positioned at the cutting edge of universal human progress while racialized and indigenous knowledges are marginalized as local, ‘traditional’ curiosities and exotic cultural expressions and ‘contributions’” (Taylor and Hoechsmann, 2012, p.319). This sets the Eurocentric narrative apart as the most authentically Canadian history, skewing perspectives during attempts at critical reflection, and limiting authentic engagement with multicultural content.

Historical Thinking, 1990s to Present

In the late 1990s, amid concerns that Canadian history had died at the hands of politicians, social historians and multicultural educators, two competing streams of thought emerged of how history education should evolve. One stream was a neo-conservative return to the nation-building narrative. The other stream, however, viewed history as a form of knowledge and a way of thinking about the past. (Levesque, 2011, p.44). This has been called Historical Thinking, or Historical Consciousness.

The primary goal of this new history education is to teach students to think historically. The guiding questions of this approach to history are:

- How did things get to be as we see them today?
- What groups am I a part of, and what are its origins?
- How should we judge each other’s past actions, and therefore, what debts does my group owe to others and/or others to mine?
- Are things basically getting better or are they getting worse?
- What stories about the past should I believe? On what grounds?
- Which stories shall we tell?

(Seixas, 2002)

This version of history education places a great emphasis upon students taking part in the creation of history, through the use of primary and secondary sources, and asks them to question the assumptions of a telling of history: “They must learn to ask whose stories are not being told, who is absent from the narrative under consideration, how that narrative might appear when viewed through the eyes other than those of the narrative, and, not least, why and how any particular narrative comes to be regarded as history” (Osborne, 2012, pp.171-172). This new history education promotes a citizenship defined by “critical thinking, analytical skills, tolerance for diversity” (Osborne, 2012, p.171), and other cognitive skills. Thus, the citizen is one who is able to think in certainly disciplinary ways, and will bring those skills to bear on personal and collective problems and issues. What citizens are being introduced to, then, “is not citizenship in the ethnic or sociological sense of belonging to a community; rather, they are being included in the community of those who participate, who join in a process” (Sears, 2011, p.353).

While this form of history education creates a model of citizenship that is open to all in a multicultural state, it has been critiqued for the way it dismisses the role of the nation, as well as dismissing citizens’ backgrounds and senses of self, as long as they engage in the process of citizenship. Sears (2011) argues that these concerns all need to play a prominent role in citizenship education through history, and that historical thinking skills can provide a foundation for this sort of education. This would consist of introducing students to the complex nature of national identities not by telling them what it means to be Canadian, but by “introducing them, in an informed way, to the discussion of what those identities have been in the past, are across various contexts, and should be now and in the future” (p.355). Further, it is important to explore “the range of experiences of different groups with the state and to wrestle with questions related to exclusion, inclusion, and social justice” (p.356). Through this approach, with historical

thinking skills enabling the discussion, “the assimilationist nature of national content can be mitigated by attention to the fluid and contested nature of democratic ideas”(p.355).

This model of history education provides a framework that is consistent with Reich’s model of liberal-multicultural education. The emphasis upon historical thinking skills aligns well with minimalist autonomy and the fostering of the capacity for critical reflection in young citizens, enabling them to question the values of different ways of life. In exploring the experiences of different groups within Canada and wrestling with challenging questions, students will develop the broad knowledge base to allow for critical reflection, and allows for all students to be authentically represented within the curriculum, supporting the development of their identity and self worth. Further, in engaging students in discussions about challenging issues and the nature of national identity, this model of history may create “a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals” (Taylor, 1992, p.50), and allow for the dialogue and mutual understanding required for Taylor’s identity development, and the ideal of ‘Harmony Jazz’ multiculturalism in Canada (Kunz and Sykes, 2007, p.21).

The Reality of History Education in Schools Today

While the preceding section discusses trends in the ways scholars have thought about History, Social Studies, and citizenship education, the realities as seen in classrooms vary greatly. These differences are attributable to the myriad conditions that influence education in schools, but there are patterns that present themselves, both at the levels of curricula and classroom instruction, in the literature on history and citizenship education.

Curricula often present racism and inequity in Canadian society as problems that took place in the past and are now solved (Pashby et al., 2014). This sort of teaching can have the

effect of silencing students lived experiences of intolerance, and will “deemphasize their capacity to do something about continuing injustice (Bickmore, 2006, p. 361). In societies that see themselves as harmonious, those who problematize this view or dissent may find themselves unjustly marginalized (Bickmore, 2006).

The education of students in the tasks of citizenship has also become an increasingly individual and interpersonal, rather than a societal and national, undertaking. In examining curricula in three different provinces, Bickmore (2006) found that while conflict education was a key part of citizenship education, it was most common found in the context of interpersonal conflict-resolution and conflict avoidance in the name of harmony – at times giving the impression that good citizenship consisted of being kind and compliant, rather than critically engaged. Situations of societal conflict, and the ability to engage in such conflict purposefully and productively, receive little attention. Similarly, Pashby et al. (2014) find that in Ontario’s curriculum documents, “Citizenship and character education are used interchangeably” (p.13). This places the main focus of citizenship education on the individual student, and equates “the good citizen with the good person” (p.13). In doing so, there is a lack of critical engagement with group-based exclusions such as race, culture, gender, and religion.

Citizenship education is often taught disconnected from content knowledge (Bickmore, 2006). This aligns with the push from employers and schools to focus on generic skills such as problem solving and critical thinking, rather than on building a broad knowledge base. Osborne argues that it is easy to see why employers would appreciate employees with lots of skills and limited knowledge, as “their skills would help them follow instructions and their lack of knowledge would leave them with no basis on which to question what they were instructed to do” (2000, p. 21). It is imperative then, in Osborne’s view, to ground the instruction of

disciplinary thinking skills and the aptitudes of citizenship within the context of content knowledge, providing students the resources needed to question and assess.

Pashby, Ingram and Joshee (2014) likewise fear the intrusion of market forces into citizenship education. In examining curriculum documents in two provinces, they found that while K-12 citizenship education featured some focus on social justice, much more prominent were “neoliberal discourses [that] ignore differences, see diversity as a fault line, and therefore perpetuate the privileging of a dominant culture”(p.19). Through this lens, competition is valued, and individuals are the primary economic resources. Social cohesion is seen as a way of maintaining productivity, diversity is seen as divisive, and hence neoliberal multiculturalism “avoids in-depth analysis of systemic inequalities” and finds that “inclusion of diverse groups has already occurred” (p.19).

All of these concerns become much messier in the classroom itself. Given that teachers’ primary concern lies with their group of students and the realities of teaching, rather than with nation-building or social cohesion, it is likely that educators draw eclectically on all three forms of history education in the creation of curricula and classroom programs (Osborne, 2012, p.173). Gibson (2012) finds that pre-service teachers are often unaware of citizenship as a goal of social studies education. Faced with a new curriculum centered on historical inquiry, teachers often felt unsure of the new teaching methods, and came to rely on prescribed textbooks and worksheets. “It is not surprisingly then, that the students did not mention learning to be an active, responsible citizen as a reason why they take social studies in school” (p.56).

Osborne (2000) similarly notes that there has long been a discrepancy between the rhetoric surrounding citizenship education and the actual practice seen in schools. While discussions of meaningful citizenship education may be present in curricular preambles or school

statements, it often falls victim to other priorities such as passing exams or preparing for jobs. Even when citizenship was focused upon, the definition or meaning of citizenship was left overly vague, and often equated a good citizen with a good person.

Additionally, many students are alienated by the way in curricula may represent or obscure their own lived experience. As Stanley (2006) claims, many minority students “disengage from school in part because they rarely see themselves represented by the curriculum. For these young people, school is about and for racialized white people” (p.37). While theories surrounding history education have evolved, then, the implications vary widely within Canadian schooling itself.

Conceptions of National Identity in BC Social Studies Curriculum

“Achieving British Columbia’s social and economic goals requires well-educated citizens who are able to think critically and adapt to change. Progress toward the achievement of these goals also depends on the province having citizens who accept the tolerant and multifaceted nature of Canadian society and who are motivated to participate actively in our democratic institutions”

Introduction to British Columbia’s Redesigned Curriculum, 2015, p.2

In pursuing the goal of the ‘educated citizen’, British Columbia’s redesigned curriculum claims to move towards the ideals found in Reich’s liberal-multicultural education. In promoting citizens “who are able to think critically, understand and explain the perspectives of others, make judgments, and communicate ideas effectively” (*Introduction to Social Studies*, 2015, p.1), we see the roots of critical reflection and minimalist autonomy. By studying “some of the many different cultures and ways of life that exist and have existed throughout the world” (*Introduction to Social Studies*, 2015, p.1), the curriculum offers the potential for the broad knowledge base required for critical reflection, as well as authentic recognition within the curriculum for a wide range of students. Further, in studying “the people, places, issues, and

events that have shaped the world they live in” (*Introduction to Social Studies*, 2015, p.1), the redesigned curriculum seems to offer authentic critical engagement with the realities of history and the present, including diverse groups of people, challenging issues, and multiple perspectives. To what degree has this new curriculum, especially in the subject of Social Studies, truly fulfilled these promises? Further, as the new curriculum comes as an effort from the province to “transform its education system” (*Introduction to British Columbia’s Redesigned Curriculum*, 2015, p.1), how much of a step forward does this curriculum take?

To explore this question, I will begin by examining the previous British Columbia curriculum, released in 2006, and follow up by examining the most recent curriculum, released in 2015. This examination will focus on these two curricula at the fourth and fifth grade levels, as well as at some elements of the 2006 curriculum’s sixth grade level, as in these grade levels the focus of Social Studies is on Canadian history and Canadian society today. I will examine each for elements of liberalism, multicultural content, depictions of the current state of multiculturalism in Canada, and authentic engagement with challenging issues. Through these lenses, I aim to determine the degree to which a truly inclusive model of Canadian citizenship is put forth.

The 2006 Curriculum

The introduction to the 2006 Social Studies curriculum states that it was designed to provide students “with opportunities to reflect critically upon events and issues in order to examine the present, make connections with the past, and consider the future”(“Social Studies”, 2006, p.11) in order to “develop thoughtful, responsible, and active citizens who are able to acquire the requisite information to consider multiple perspectives and to make reasoned

judgments”(“Social Studies”, 2006, p.11). These statements would seem to indicate that the curriculum fosters the development of minimalist autonomy, with its focus on critical reflection and comparison. This focus can also be seen in the grade-specific pages of the curriculum. Both the fourth and fifth grade curricula stipulate that students should “apply critical thinking skills - including comparing, imagining, inferring, identifying patterns and summarizing – to a selected of problems and issues” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.81). In each grade, there are various points where the curriculum is open to students creating their own meaning. In grade 4, rather than knowing specific pieces of information, students are asked to “analyze factors that influenced early European exploration of North America” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.85), and to “distinguish characteristics of various Aboriginal cultures in BC and Canada” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.83), while students in grade 5 are asked to “describe the significance of key events and factors in the development of BC and Canada” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.93) and “analyze the relationship between the economic development of communities and their available resources” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.95). In all of these outcomes, students are expected to create their own understandings, and reflect critically upon the subject matter they engage with. Further, the sixth grade curriculum asks for students to “assess equality and fairness in Canada with reference to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*”, and to “compare individual and collective rights and responsibilities in Canada with those in other countries” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.102). Students are to be educated in both what their liberal rights are, as well as in how to exercise them.

While the 2006 curriculum put forth key skills required for liberal autonomy, it struggles to engage with multicultural content in authentic ways. While students in grade 5 are expected to “assess why immigrants came to Canada, the individual challenges they faced, and their

contributions to Canada” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.93), this goal is focused purely in the past (with recommended immigrant groups such as gold rush prospectors and World War II refugees), and plays a small part in the grade level curriculum. Much more prominent are hints of the nation-building narrative, with its emphasis on European contributions to the nation of Canada. Students are asked to investigate key events in the development of Canada such as exploration, the fur trade, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Confederation – and in doing so, are asked to represent “the roles of Aboriginal peoples, the British, and the French in key events in Canadian history” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.93), omitting the roles other groups have played in Canada’s past. The theme of the fifth grade curriculum itself – “Canada – from Colony to Country” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.90) – evokes the nation building narrative of Canadian history.

The engagement with multicultural content is perhaps best seen in the fourth grade curriculum, entitled “Aboriginal Cultures, Exploration, and Contact” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.80). In this curriculum, students are asked to consider the role of explorers in the establishment of Canada, and also the nation’s indigenous peoples. In doing so, aboriginal cultures are constructed as a critical part of Canada’s past, and rendered invisible in the present. In describing “technologies used by Aboriginal people in BC and Canada” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.85) and “Aboriginal methods of harvesting fish, animal, or forest resources” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.87), the emphasis is overwhelmingly on traditional practices, without mention of aboriginal communities today. In being asked to “identify effects of early contact between Aboriginal societies and European explorers and settlers” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.83), students are asked to consider the potentially positive impacts (the introduction of new materials and technologies) much more so than negative impacts. While disease and the potlatch ban are both mentioned

briefly in the curriculum, the legacy of residential schools is not mentioned, and there is no connection made to the ongoing hardships faced by indigenous communities and the continuing effects of colonialism. The history of discrimination faced by indigenous Canadians, as well as present day issues and injustices, are largely omitted.

Similarly, in assessing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, students are asked to consider “past incidents of inequality” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.102), such as the Chinese Head Tax, internment of Japanese Canadians, residential schools, or discriminatory government practices relating to gender or sexual orientation. However, in being asked to “speculate how these cases might be handled today under the *Charter*” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.102), these events are treated purely as part of the past. Present day Canada is presented as a much more just place, without such issues to be addressed.

More broadly, in considering diverse cultures within Canadian society, this curriculum seems to be aligned with the rendition of multiculturalism one would have found in 1970s Canada; there are several mentions of Canadian society as a cultural mosaic, and rather than engaging with issues facing society, there is much more emphasis on celebrating diversity. In learning about Aboriginal cultures, grade 4 students the focus is upon specific characteristics – including art forms, symbols, stories, and relation to the environment – rather than upon any current social issue (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.83). In sixth grade, students are asked to “relate a society’s artistic expression to its culture” (“Social Studies”, 2006, p.101), and give examples from a specific culture. While these are not the only considerations of difference, elements such as these are much more prominently found in the curriculum than discussions of beliefs, values, or national identity. Perhaps of greater concern, examinations of aboriginal and immigrant cultures are treated as something distinct from Canadian culture – they are studied largely in

isolation, which sets these groups apart from mainstream society, and avoids many issues of integration or belonging that have emerged within Canadian multiculturalism in the past decades.

Through this curriculum, then, the depiction of the Canadian citizen is unclear. On the one hand, the stated aim is a citizen who is able to engage in current debates and address issues in society, and there is openness to a variety of stories as part of the national identity. However, in addressing multicultural content, this curriculum failed to provide fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students the opportunity to engage with the challenging reality of Canada both past and present. The main characters in the story of Canada are European settlers out to conquer the land – a lens that masks the effect of colonization on Canada’s first peoples, limits the role of other ethnic groups, and harkens back to the nation-building narrative model of Canadian history. The resulting depiction of Canada is one that limits the opportunity for many students to see themselves and their experiences represented, and does little to engage students in the problematic parts of Canada’s past, the challenging issues of the present, and discussions about the direction of the nation. As such, this curriculum falls short of truly fostering the independent thought required for minimalist autonomy, and excludes many from the core of its conception of Canadian citizenship.

The 2015 Curriculum

As justified by the Ministry of Education, the new social studies curriculum follows the historical thinking model of history education, and as such, places a heavy emphasis upon the critical evaluations demanded by minimalist autonomy. In the introduction to the new curriculum documents, the Ministry highlights that the learning goals are “less detailed and prescriptive than past curricula” in order to “allow teachers to spend more time delving deeper into fewer key

topics and focus less on rushing through a long list of factual details”(“Introduction to Social Studies” [Socials Introduction], 2015, p.1). There is less required content to place “greater emphasis on acquiring and developing key disciplinary thinking skills [...] built around six major historical and geographical thinking concepts: significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, perspective, and ethical judgments” (Socials Introduction, 2015, p.1), which echo the six concepts put forth by Seixas (2002). This focus is designed to allow students to investigate open-ended questions, and support their own positions on issues, “rather than simply receiving that knowledge from books, teachers, or other authoritative sources.” (Socials Introduction, 2015, p.1) Further, students are asked to consider multiple perspectives, and question the justifications of certain interpretations of events and issues. (Socials Introduction, 2015, p.2)

The emphasis upon disciplinary thinking skills remains in examining the grade-specific curriculum guidelines. At each grade level, there are ‘Big Ideas’, related content points, as well as a series of ‘Curricular Competencies’, which directly relate to the disciplinary thinking skills. While the Big Ideas and Content are kept brief and left open to interpretation, it is the curricular competencies that are more explicitly described. For instance, at the grade 5 level, in looking at the Big Idea that “Immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity”, the content would include points such as “the changing nature of Canadian immigration over time”, and “human rights and responses to discrimination in Canadian society” (“Social Studies 5”, 2015). In doing so, however, they are expected to use a variety thinking skills such as building “narratives that capture the attitudes, values, and worldviews commonly held by people at different times and places (perspective)”, or making “ethical judgments about events, decisions, and actions that consider the conditions of a particular time and place, and

assess appropriate ways to respond (ethical judgment)” (“Social Studies 5”, 2015). There are similarly detailed descriptions of what is expected for each of the six disciplinary thinking skills outlined at every grade level. Clearly, the curriculum places the instruction of historical thinking skills, and hence the skills of minimalist autonomy, at the fore.

While some of the content points in the redesigned curriculum touch on key markers in the nation-building narrative, they are not presented as a natural sequence, and there is a greater emphasis on different viewpoints of the same historical events. For instance, learning about “the fur trade in pre-Confederation Canada and British Columbia”, fits into the fourth grade Big Idea that “British Columbia followed a unique path in becoming a part of Canada” (“Social Studies 4”, 2015) – setting apart a different regional story. Likewise, the overarching themes for each year do not evoke the old narrative in the same way that “Canada – from Colony to Country” does - grade 4 investigates “First Peoples and European Contact” (“Social Studies 4”, 2015), while grade 5 looks at “Canadian Issues and Governance” (“Social Studies 5”, 2015).

The redesigned curriculum, in engaging with multicultural content, does open the door to critical reflection of Canada’s past and present. In the grade 5 social studies curriculum, for instance, two of the four Big Ideas for students to grapple with are that “Canada’s policies and treatment of minority peoples have negative and positive legacies” and that “Immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity” (“Social Studies 5”, 2015) – both ideas which prompt the examination of the present impacts of past injustices. The content which supports these big ideas includes the investigation of “past discriminatory government policies and actions, such as the Head Tax, the Komagata Maru incident, residential schools, and internments”, as well as “human rights and responses to discrimination in Canadian Society” – a area which could focus on the present state of Canadian society, and includes suggested topics

such as racism, language rights, gender equality, LGBTQ issues, and religious freedoms. (“Social Studies 5”, 2015). The fourth grade curriculum similarly points to issues from Canada’s past that extend into the present, with its understandings that “the pursuit of valuable natural resources has played a key role in changing the land, people, and communities of Canada” and that “demographic changes in North America created shifts in economic and political power” (“Social Studies 4”, 2015). This sort of multicultural content creates a rich set of issues for students to reflect upon and critically consider.

This investigation of past and present inequity is quite thorough in regards to the First Peoples of British Columbia. This is hardly surprising, given that the curriculum includes a stated emphasis on embedding Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge throughout all grade levels and subject areas, and that Aboriginal teachers were involved throughout the curriculum design process (“Redesigned curriculum”, 2015, p.8). In investigating the Big Idea that “Interactions between First Peoples and Europeans lead to conflict and cooperation, which continues to shape Canada’s identity” (“Social Studies 4”, 2015), students are expected to learn “the impact of colonization on First Peoples societies in British Columbia and Canada”(“Social Studies 4”, 2015), including topics such as the Potlatch ban, the reserve system, and residential schools, along with ongoing struggles such as loss of territory and the impact on language and culture. In grade 5, they are expected to investigate “First Peoples land ownership and use” (“Social Studies 5”, 2015), a very prominent issue in present-day Canada. In the way these issues are framed in the curriculum, there is a much more authentic representation of the lived experience of BC First Nations groups than in the 2006 curriculum. Further, all of these learning outcomes – along with those throughout all subject areas – are encouraged to be taught through the ‘First Peoples Principles of Learning’, a set of principles created by the First Nations

Education Steering Committee, a First Nations controlled organization (*First Peoples Principles of Learning*, 2008). In considering the way citizenship is constructed through curriculum, Mackey (1999) would argue that the key “issue at stake here is the authority to define the project” (p.165). If that is the case, the involvement of First Nations groups in the creation of curriculum may indeed be a significant step.

While students are expected to understand that “Immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity” (“Social Studies 5”, 2015), multiculturalism is not otherwise mentioned explicitly in the curriculum documents, and there are not the same references to the superficial characteristics of culture exhibited in the 2006 curriculum. Rather, in investigating indigenous cultures and worldviews, immigration, and the development of Canadian society, students are asked to consider the way in which all of these things have shifted in the past, and continue to change. Through this, challenging issues are brought into the present, and not treated as things found solely in the past. Rather than learning about one set of facts, students are engaged in discussions about the “fluid and contested nature of democratic ideas” (Sears, 2011, p.355). Through this focus, the this curriculum seems to foster the dialogue and understanding sought by ‘Harmony Jazz’ multiculturalism, and Taylor’s “regime of reciprocal recognition among equals” (1992, p.50)

In prioritizing historical thinking skills, this new curriculum promotes a conception of citizenship that is defined by the wielding of the cognitive abilities. Through its consideration of multiple perspectives and viewpoints, along with its questioning of the justification of certain viewpoints, a version of history can be created where all students can see their own personal and family narratives reflected in the history of our country. By stepping away from the Euro-centric nation-building narrative, this curriculum does not present a national identity that overtly

prioritizes particular citizens based upon race, gender, or culture, and avoids the negative effects on identity development caused by such under- and misrepresentation. Rather, this citizenship is one based upon the skills of autonomous reflection and comparison it aims to instill, and upon the understanding and valuing of different views. This conception of citizenship education, then, is quite closely aligned to Reich's liberal-multicultural education, and seems to be much more representative of the students in our schools.

The redesigned curriculum, with its emphasis on disciplinary thinking skills and upon an honest reflection of Canada past and present, presents a powerful way to foster the skills of minimalist autonomy through considering authentic multicultural content. It seems to suggest that students should carefully consider the historical wrongs found in Canada's past, the present shortcomings of Canadian society, how these situations have come to be, and possible ways forward. However, I am concerned that the explicit focus of the new social studies curriculum on disciplinary thinking skills also leaves the door open for these topics to be addressed differently. The learning standards laid out in the redesigned curriculum are less detailed and prescriptive in order to allow deep delving into the given topics, but in their vagueness are not very prescriptive in their direction to consider the issues facing Canadian society, and to engage with them critically. A great deal of autonomy is left in the hands of teachers to determine what this curriculum actually looks like in classrooms and schools, which means that the fate of this ideal of citizenship education is uncertain, and will likely result in a wide range of educational experiences. Regardless, the redesigned curriculum prompts teachers in the direction of promoting autonomous and critical thinking around multicultural content, and that is a significant step towards a liberal-multicultural education.

Possible Challenges for Curricular Implementation

While the redesigned curriculum creates the opportunity for a liberal-multicultural education, the implementation of this sort of education is far from certain. As Osborne sagely notes, “teachers approach their work pragmatically rather than philosophically. Their concern is not with nation building or the construction of collective memory or understanding the structure of history but with what works with their students” (2012, p.171). Educators will naturally focus upon engaging students, assessing progress, and all of the more day-to-day concerns of classroom teaching far more than considering the implications of their teaching practice upon citizenship and national identity, which will lead to great variation in the way this new curriculum, or any curriculum, is implemented. However, there are some specific challenges that will need to be addressed if the pursuit of a liberal-multicultural education is to become somewhat widespread within BC schools, rather than the ideal pursued by a small number of idealistic teachers. Each of these concerns will be a challenge facing districts, schools, and teacher education programs, and would be valuable areas for further research.

First of all, the implementation of this curriculum will vary greatly in the degree that teachers are willing to approach controversial and challenging issues with their students. Issues of race, discrimination, and injustice are inherently uncomfortable. This new curriculum makes possible honest discussions of Canada’s flaws, both past and present, but in a country where race issues are rarely addressed; as Stewart (2014) argues, “the largely unstated agreement is that Canadians will not talk about race, and by not talking about it improve it” (p.35). Facilitating conversations about these sorts of issues goes against most teachers’ lived experiences. For many educators, these conversations are intimidating to plan, especially in an open way that allows students to reflect critically and create their own understandings. This is especially true when

faced with the prospect of addressing past and present injustice in Canada with young students. It is worth pausing to consider that the curricula I have discussed here are targeted at students ranging from nine to eleven years of age – ages where, in my experience, they are ready to grapple with such issues, but are not always thought to be so. This means that, as young students are starting to build their understanding of Canada as a country, they will be engaging in the challenging parts of our past and present. This also means that teachers will be introducing most students to these challenges in Canada's history and present, and will fear potential concerns from parents. This is an especially intimidating prospect for all teachers, not just those who are beginning their careers.

In the face of these concerns, it is likely that teachers will resort to teaching in ways they are most comfortable with. Teachers naturally fall back upon their previous experiences in schools, whether as educators or students. As such, they may resort to teaching some rendition of the nation-building narrative, teaching multiculturalism in ways that are consistent with the celebrating diversity and the cultural mosaic, and sprinkling other narratives for good measure. For many teachers it will also be more comfortable for them to maintain control of content knowledge, rather than pursuing the creation of understanding with their students. As such, schools, districts, and teacher education programs will need to consider ways to facilitate teacher growth into these new and challenging aspects of the curriculum.

A further concern is that teachers rarely consider what sort of citizens and what sort of society they hope to foster in their classroom. Their focus is largely with the details of how to make a classroom function, and meeting the daily demands placed upon teachers. As a result, the fostering of citizens, a key responsibility of our schools, is left as something that will just happen. For this curriculum to be fully realized in its potential of fostering a liberal-multicultural

education, citizenship is likely something that should be addressed purposefully by educators, and understood by students, rather than hidden beneath the surface. Further research into how discussions of national identity and citizenship can shape professional practice for educators, and the impacts this has on student learning, could prove very valuable in guiding the implementation of this new social studies curriculum.

Conclusion

National identity in Canada has, for most of our nations history, been based upon the European model of shared ethnicity and history. This was propagated through the nation-building myth and the school history that accompanied it, portraying Canada as a nation being constructed against heavy odds, in the face of a forbidding environment, by a series of explorers, fur traders, settlers, industrialists, statesmen and politicians. This story was intended to legitimate the dominance of the British parliamentary system and Anglo-Saxon culture, and put forth a version of citizenship based on entering into this story. However, as immigration changed the ethnic composition of Canada over the twentieth century, this version of history became inadequate, as it reserved true citizenship and belonging for those with ethnic roots in northern Europe, and excluded other cultural groups from its protections.

In the name of offering such protections, there has been an emphasis on the protection of individual liberal rights, such as freedom of speech, association, and religion, as well as protected forms of individual equality. These efforts emerged following the Second World War, with the emphasis upon universal human rights. At the same time, multiculturalist theorists viewed the liberal protections as insufficient for minority cultures, and argued for the protection of difference, the survival of culture, and minority group rights. Such priorities, as seen in

Taylor's politics of recognition and Kymlicka's liberal justification of minority group rights, became entrenched in the national landscape with the adoption of multiculturalism as federal policy in 1971. While the subsequent decades have seen multiculturalism and the welcoming of diversity become a rallying point of Canadian identity, this has not always found common ground with the liberal rights and values that underpin western notions of citizenship. Not surprisingly, then, educators have struggled to teach a version of citizenship and national identity that captures the values of both liberal individualism and autonomy, as well as multicultural content and intercultural understanding.

This split is seen in the 2006 version of British Columbia's Social studies curriculum, which is emblematic of the school history that emerged following the onset of official multiculturalism in the 1970s. Less emphasis is placed upon an ethnocentric narrative, with multiple versions of history being acknowledged, and hence multiple versions of Canadian identity. Aboriginal and immigrant cultures are studied, creating a base of multicultural content. The curriculum also aims at fostering the skills of critical reflection required for liberal autonomy. However, the main elements of the nation-building narrative are still present, resulting in a history that prioritizes a Eurocentric definition of Canadian identity, and co-opts minority narratives as part of the dominant story of nation building. Multicultural content is fairly superficial – in line with the 1970s emphasis in Canadian multiculturalism upon celebrating difference – and is rarely opened up for the critical engagement that would foster autonomy. In short, multiculturalism and critical reflection are dealt with separately, allowing neither ideal to be fully realized.

The 2015 curriculum seems to present a version of school history that is much more consistent with Reich's model of a liberal-multicultural education, and with the BC Ministry of

Education's definition of the educated citizen. The primary focus of the curriculum is upon a set of disciplinary thinking skills that would enable the critical reflection needed for liberal autonomy. This focus is done in the context of engaging students in authentic multicultural content, reflecting the realities of history and the current issues facing our society. Through this, the curriculum creates the potential for instruction that truly represents the lived experiences of all students. It crafts a model of citizenship based upon entering into reflection upon issues facing our society, respect and understanding across cultural lines, and the use of cognitive skills. The realization of this model of citizenship will be dependent upon the degree to which teachers are able to address controversial issues with their students, and can consider the nature of national identity in planning their practice. But to the extent that this curriculum lives up to this potential, it seems that BC schools are shifting towards citizenship defined by critical thinking skills and understanding difference, which is a much more inclusive depiction of what it means to be Canadian. Our schools may also be moving in the direction addressing our nation's shortcomings and seeking productive steps forward. This rendition of History and Social Studies education, then, at least creates the opportunity for a liberal-multicultural education.

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