Educator to Educator

Unpacking and Repacking Generative Concepts in Social Studies

Todd A. Horton and Lynn Lemisko (Eds.)

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, we attended a national conference to present a paper on the conceptualization of democracy in Canadian social studies curriculum documents. After presenting, we were sitting in a nearby cafeteria debriefing about how we thought our paper had been received. In the course of our discussion, which by the way always goes back and forth in rapid fire—ideas flying one atop the other, bobbing and weaving, swooping and soaring about—one or the other of us said, "We should really put all of this in a book," to which the other naively said, "Yes we really should." Little did we know at that moment we were setting in motion an undertaking that would not only impact our personal and professional lives, but also transform our thinking about concepts we thought we knew so well.

Over the next few months we discussed the idea of a book. What will it be about? What should be the focus? Very quickly we agreed that the book had to be about concepts relevant to social studies education. We had been exploring how various concepts are *officially* manifested within curriculum documents for some time, so this book project seemed like a natural extension of our ongoing work. But with so many concepts relevant to social studies education, it was very difficult to choose which ones should serve as the focus. Drawing on our personal interests, our research foci, and many, many, telephone discussions, we settled on five concepts: democracy, multiculturalism, social justice, diversity, and ecological or environmental justice.

We then asked, "How shall we frame the book?" We wanted something that would capture the joy and effortless give-and-take of our personal conversations, telephone calls from Saskatchewan to Ontario and back again, in which we wiled away hours talking about ideas and how they might impact education. We also wanted to do something different, something imaginative, creative, personal; something with a touch of the whimsical here and there. It was important that our work be substantive and useful to other educators, but we also wanted it to be unlike a typical textbook or academic paper. We decided the book would be framed as a personal exploration of our thinking about the five concepts mentioned above and at the same time, as a conversation with and between social studies educators that had the potential to continue into the future—educator to educator. In short, we wanted to incite or contribute to ongoing discussions, rather than have the last word. But we knew we needed a little more flesh on the bone to make this work. Because one of the points that frequently came up in our personal conversations was the need to make students' learning meaningful, to make learning *generative*, we decided to make that

our starting point, and we sought out other conceptions of 'generative knowledge'. We found David Perkins (1992) S*mart Schools: Better Thinking and Learning for Every Child* to be an excellent resource.

Perkins (1992) asserts that the goal of education is to engage students with "knowledge that does not just sit there but functions richly in people's lives to help them understand and deal with the world" (p. 5). Focusing on this goal, we decided our exploration of concepts and our contributions to a conversation about social studies education had to be about the ways knowledge can be made generative for students *and* for us as educators as we build and improve upon our understandings and practice.

At this point, we reflected, "Should we write the book ourselves or include others? If we do include others, whom should we ask to contribute?" Because we know that people think about and engage with these concepts in very different ways, it seemed obvious that for the book to serve as a contribution to conversations, we needed a variety of perspectives included. Both of us wanted a variety of voices from the broad field of education: teachers, academics, graduate students, and parents. We also knew our consideration of contributors needed to be sensitive to gender, cultural background, sexuality, geographic location, and other aspects of identity that inform how we understand these concepts and how we view the worlds in which they are made meaningful. Ultimately, in addition to the two of us, contributors include Dr. Kurt Clausen, a university professor working in North Bay, Ontario; Margaret Epp and Kim Beaulieu, teachers with the local school board in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; and Robyn Liu Hopson, a recent PhD graduate and college instructor in Toronto, Ontario.

The book itself is divided into five sections (one section for each concept), with each section comprised of four chapters. The following is an overview of each section and its contributing chapters.

PART 1 − ECOLOGICAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In the first chapter, *A Case for Appeal*, Clausen begins with the suggestion that we return to the Bible to understand Western civilization's problematic relationship with the natural world, specifically the enduring belief that humanity is at once different from and superior to other living creatures and plants on the Earth. However, he purports that humans have misinterpreted biblical passages, erroneously believing *dominion over* means *ownership of*. In a creative twist, he puts forward a "legal" case for ecological justice, *Regna Plantae & Animalia* (sans *homo sapiens sapiens*) v *Regnum Animalia* (*homo sapiens sapiens*), claiming that humankind has broken the Biblical contract. Artfully argued, Clausen considers the status of the respondents in the world (humankind) through an exploration of the historical meanings of ownership, its parallels with absolute monarchy, and the need for humanity to act more like a *prudent parent* than overlord. He asks if the respondents are *unfit guardians* of the world, using analogies of physical abuse, negligence, sexual abuse,

substance abuse, and mental incompetence of parents on the health of the *child* (ecology). The conclusion outlines a list of appellant demands based on the need to rebalance the relationship in more just ways.

Lemisko pens an insightful second chapter, *We Are Not Strangers Here…* based on notions that the Earth has *rights* and that no part of the earthly community "can be guided in its activities except with reference to the total community" (Berry, 2003, p. 3). Lemisko claims we as human beings have forgotten our connectedness with the Earth due to the widespread influence of Western or Euro-centric ways of thinking. Almost instinctively she asks: *How can we remember and how can we educated to remember?* Drawing on her Collingwoodian roots, Lemisko engages in a *coming to know* exercise that encourages the asking of questions of our presuppositions about relationship with the Earth, tackling the unacknowledged/taken-for-granted underpinnings of contemporary ideologies that impact our world. She asserts that

> ecological justice, if it is to be had, involves teachers opening themselves and their students up to multiple ways of knowing and learning—to participate in experiential learning that uses the mind, body, and heart. It also involves going out into the world, visiting local ecosystems and engaging with the soil, plants, and animals. In short, we have to 'educate to remember' that we are not strangers here.

In the next chapter, Horton takes a different turn, directing his attention towards environmental justice. *Where in the World Is the Justice?* begins with a recollection of a class where the teacher is facilitating an exploration of the concept *environment.* The chapter easily flows into a history of the related concepts of *environmentalism,* noting the evolving nature of caring for and preservation of the environment, and *environmental justice* with its focus on how people are treated relative to the benefits offered and the challenges faced by the environment. He includes ideas for teachers to consider as they help students create generative knowledge about these concepts.

Finally, in Chapter Four, Epp considers environmental sustainability and ecological justice in a chapter called *Developing a Disposition Towards the Natural Environment in Early Childhood Classrooms*. After more than 25 years in the classroom, she is called to ponder how children's early experiences with the natural world help to create an appreciation for nature and a disposition of wonder and caring for the environment that will last throughout their lives. Using poetry, photographs, and personal recollections, she weaves a tapestry of meaningful relations with the natural environment while integrating relevant research, educational books, and other resources available to teachers who want to inspire generative engagement in the next generation of environmentally conscious people.

PART 2 – DIVERSITY

In a chapter entitled *Interweaving Differences*, Lemisko defines *diversity* as the differences among and between human beings with a particular focus on individual

characteristics such as personality, physical characteristics, age, sexuality, gender, race, class, ableness, skills, capacities, and interests. Recognizing that each individual encompasses multiple identities that are constructed at the intersection of these characteristics, she suggests that diversity can be made generative as one explores such complexity. Though educators have historically focused on diversity by noting *difference from X*, Lemisko claims that we are actually all the same, as no person is anything *other than different* from everyone else. Drawing parallels with bio-diversity, she asserts that individual differences between and among people enhances the resilience of human communities. By "bridging differences," a process that involves *seeing* differences, *seeking* contextualized understanding of differences, and *examining* one's own identity statuses and social location in relationship to differences, teachers are better positioned to help learners "live multiculturalism."

Epp considers what it means to be 'living diversity' in the second chapter: *Diversity Creates Dimension*. Using her experiences as a classroom teacher, she shares her belief in the following: the need to cultivate a culture of respect, what it means for students to engage in respectful talk, the need to incorporate a variety of resources into one's teaching, and how each of these factors contribute to the exploration of diverse perspectives and points-of-view. Through reading, writing, and discussion activities designed with an eye to students' diverse interests and abilities, Epp outlines her views on what it means to learn about diversity.

Horton attempts to get at the core essence of diversity in the chapter, *A World of Difference*. Asking, *What is diversity?* he explores the etymology of the word and its basis in the notion of *difference*. Suggesting that even young students have a basic understanding of difference, evident from their growing ability to categorize objects based on particular attributes, Horton believes that this understanding can in turn be used to scaffold to a more complex comprehension of diversity in the world. With a focus on various aspects of identity and personhood, Horton asserts the need to encourage the embracing of diversity as a matter of course when living in pluralistic societies. However, living in a diverse society is not without its challenges, as differing values and beliefs can conflict, raising tensions and threating peaceful co-existence. In recognition of both these points, Horton provides lesson ideas to help teachers facilitate the creation of generative knowledge with their students.

Clausen turns his attention to how diversity is conceptualized in social studies curricula across Canada. In *The Uniformity of Diversity in Canadian Curriculum Documents*, he analyzes official government discourse, noting the near lack of operational definitions, and the almost uniform expectation/mantra that *Diversity is good*. Clausen suggests that this uncritical usage is problematic, and he challenges teachers to look beneath the surface of the concept.

PART 3 – DEMOCRACY

In *Blogging Democracy*, Beaulieu and Epp describe using a *Blog* as a forum for learning. Over the course of one year, these educators reflect about the meaning

of democracy and how it can be made a lived experience in the classroom. As they consider topics such as the teacher as *co-learner* rather than *expert*, the democratic nature of knowledge construction, and the need for 'brave' teachers to push the revolution for democratic classrooms forward, references to educational scholarship as well as the voices of teacher-candidates are woven into the narrative.

In *Studying Democracy as an Endangered Species,* Clausen calls for a teaching of democracy filled with passion, tales of conflict, and a defying of the odds. Likening democracy to an endangered species, he offers a field guide for understanding the history of the concept, how and why it has become a species-at-risk (i.e., introduction of exotic influences, overexploitation, and disease), and ways to save the *species* from outright extinction.

Horton takes on the concept of democracy in *The 'Ayes' Have It?* beginning with his recollections of trying to create a more democratic classroom as a grade five teacher. This is followed by suggestions of how teachers might explore the meaning of *Democracy*, the role of elections, the majority-minority tensions, and the undemocratic aspects of current democracies in the classroom.

Lemisko captures her feelings about democracy in the title of her chapter, *To Believe in Democracy Is to Be Profoundly Optimistic about the Capacities of Human Beings*. Drawing on Kymlicka (2001), she asserts that it is not enough to simply learn about basic democratic structures; rather, the health of a democracy is dependent on the attitudes and qualities with which citizens participate in public decision-making in their societies. Further, 'the people' must develop autonomy by learning to critique authority, by engaging in well-reasoned public discourses, and by nurturing a reciprocal sense of justice. Lemisko shares a personal narrative of teaching in Alberta under the auspices of a curriculum that was ostensibly more about the transmission of knowledge rather than about accessing the requisite tools to actually participate in a democracy in a meaningful way. Dissatisfied, she begins to examine the curriculum more carefully, and using an approach to document analysis championed by R. G. Collingwood, discovers a curriculum rooted in presuppositions passed down from the earliest days of education in English Canada.

PART 4 – MULTICULTURALISM

In *Living Together, Growing Together,* Horton uses his observations of a teacher-candidate in the classroom as the launching pad for a consideration of the concept of multiculturalism. Through an exploration of how multiculturalism has historically evolved in Canada, and through scholarly critiques of the concept as both *philosophical tenet* and *official policy*, Horton is well grounded to offer activity suggestions to teachers that facilitate the construction of generative knowledge with students.

Clausen whimsically invokes titular analogy in *The Tight Fitting Suit of Multiculturalism* to engage in a personal discovery of his relationship with the concept and how he believes it needs to evolve in the future. Returning to his

research roots, he investigates provincial curricula across Canada to unearth how multiculturalism has been conceptualized. Clausen finds the documents wanting, as multiculturalism is constantly juxtaposed with and subjugated to *pluralism*, *diversity*, *social justice*, and *anti-racism,* leading to a sense of ill-fitting unease. Similar to his increasingly tight-fitting suit, Clausen contends that for multiculturalism to maintain its curricular and educational relevance, it will have to move beyond its historical roots as policy—to let out the seams if you will—and move forward with a more expansive meaning.

As the next chapter title suggests, Lemisko unleashes a clarion call for teachers to move *Beyond Foods & Festivals* in their approach to teaching about multiculturalism. Finding the Food and Festival approach lacking in substance, she entreats teachers to consider critical ways of teaching and learning about connectedness and culture. Through an exploration of people's similarities and differences, getting *inside* cultures to gain a deeper understanding of their tangible and intangible features, and teaching and learning from multiple perspectives within cultures, students will have the opportunity to develop a more meaningful and thoughtful understanding of multiculturalism conceptually as well as how it is 'lived' in practice.

Liu Hopson shares a personal reflection in *Hey Miss, What's an "Other"?* that challenges social studies educators to incorporate a meaningful and critical conception of multiculturalism in their classrooms. Rather than foods and festivals, she models a taboo-free environment of discussion, thoughtful analysis, and active participation in confronting racism in all its forms. As well, Liu Hopson draws on her graduate research about the ways racialized teachers understand their work, and about the expectations that are often cast upon them as representatives of *visible minorities*. She describes a fearless form of teaching, recognizing that multicultural education is embedded in the language we use, the dialogues we initiate, and the consciousness we raise as we thoughtfully deal with cultural differences every day of the year.

PART 5 – SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lemisko begins *Unpacking Presuppositions for Social Justice* by making a distinction between the 'justice' based on individual rights in a democracy and the 'social justice' found in recognizing power differences and ensuring collective rights for various historically disempowered groups. She suggests that citizens need to develop a sense of 'reciprocal justice' as well as a sense of justice based on reducing harm and exploitation; and she encourages actively confronting inequitable power structures in society. Lemisko explores various literatures and the social studies curriculum in her quest to enrich teachers' philosophical foundations for engaging in social justice as classroom practice.

In *The Broom and the Water in Social Justice,* Clausen invokes Bunyan's allegorical story of the broom, the dust, and the water from *Pilgrim's Progress* to

raise questions about modern society's penchant of turning to the courts to mete out social justice in the form of financial compensation for past wrongs. Believing this approach to be inadequate at best and *anti*-social justice at worst, Clausen calls on citizens to become involved in their own societies, to reconnect with the 'social', and move beyond being simply consumers of social justice to people who ensure it becomes a reality in the worlds in which they live.

Horton asks the question "What is social justice?" in *There But for the Grace of God…?* and the answer is embedded not only in its root terms *social* and *justice,* but in a core belief that the common good of society is based on mutual respect for the intrinsic value of human beings, their differences, and the need to accommodate one another to the extent necessary so that each can flourish as individuals and as members of communities. Horton offers a series of generative activity suggestions for elementary and secondary school, including explorations of philosophical criticisms of social justice through the ages.

Using a reflective narrative approach, Beaulieu explores *Social Justice in Social Studies* by asking the question "Do we truly cultivate a culture of social justice in our schools and our classrooms?" As he interlaces memories of flourishing as a curious, motivated student in elementary school with the depths of despair as he floundered in junior high, Beaulieu calls on schools of the 21st century and teachers of the digital generation to reconsider what social justice means and to institute practices that will better prepare youth for their futures.

INVITATION

As we said at the outset, creating this book has been a transformative journey. It has at times been at the forefront of our thinking as we wrote, edited, revised, reconsidered, and revised again, and it has occasionally been placed on the backburner as competing work commitments, births, deaths, and other personal events assumed necessary priority. As a result, the main elements embedded within our work are invitations to listen and learn, to argue and critique, and above all to live at the intersection of theory and practice. As we've read the contents quietly to ourselves, talked with one another about it further, and considered old ideas anew, our perspectives have been expanded and our understandings enhanced. We hope the book does the same for you, as the conversation continues.

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PART 1

ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE/ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

KURT W. CLAUSEN

1. A CASE FOR APPEAL

> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them
> have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over
> the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth
> upon the earth.
>
> Genesis, 1:26 (King James version)

These words, written originally in ancient Hebrew sometime between the 10th
and 5th centuries BC, have had a huge influence in shaping Western civilization's
relationship with the natural world. Whether it influenced our primordial thinking,
or it is a mere reflection of a belief system that was already in place, there is no doubt
that a great percentage of states, sects, and individuals throughout the previous two
millennia have taken up the belief that humanity is at once different from the rest of
the living creatures and plants on this planet, and is somehow superior to them. This
text has become such a wellspring of misunderstanding and misinterpretation that
most societies today adamantly hold to the belief that, within the bounds of human
law, we can do just about anything we like with the animals, birds, insects, and plants
that inhabit the entire natural world in order to benefit ourselves. This is due to the
fact that, as God's image on Earth, humanity plays the role of judge and jury when
the issue of the natural world and ecology are concerned. I would argue, however,
that the only thing giving us dominion over the earth is the fact that we have the best
lawyers.

This lack of legal representation is borne out by the scant laws that protect the
planet, and the great scorn incurred when legal action is attempted on its behalf.
In spite of this, numerous cases have been fought to defend the rights of particular
species within the legal system: Richard Ryder's act against pulling wool off live
sheep in 1635, Colonel Richard Martin's *Act to prevent the cruel and improper
treatment of cattle* in 1822; Henry Bergh's "Declaration of the Rights of Animals,"
in 1866, and the many ensuing acts for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the
British Commonwealth and the United States. In addition, although several countries
have passed clean air acts over the years, their impact remains inconclusive. In
many cases, people wishing to protect the environment have had to work outside
the law. This may be seen in the particular cases of Paul Watson and the Sea
Shepherd Conservation Society, or the Animal Liberation Front. In most of these

cases, however, these actions have merely resulted in the relief of animal suffering through human intervention and protecting laws. However, the actions undertaken by humans working inside and outside of the law seem to have only strengthened the case for Genesis: Mankind as overlord, cruel or benevolent.

I would like to suggest an alternative case that may not have been previously entertained. In it, I propose that rather than trying to find better and more efficient ways for humans to 'look after' the natural world, there should be a challenge as to whether we are fit to do this in the first place. I therefore present the following case of ecological justice:

Regna Plantae & Animalia (sans *Homo sapiens sapiens*) *Appellants*

v.

Regnum Animalia (*Homo sapiens sapiens*) *Respondents*

On appeal from the court of Genesis
Ward's best interest – Parens patriae jurisdiction – Natural rights of the Ward – Protection of Ward's well-being – Age of consent

Cases Cited:

Statutes & Regulations Cited: Criminal Code: R.S.C. 1985, c. C-46 – Child and Family Services Act

For the past two or three millennia, a *de facto* contract [hereafter the 'Genesis contract'] has been in place between these two parties. In it, a distinction has been made between the two with an implicit recognition that they are made of different substances. It remains the assumption that the Appellants "eat without pleasure, cry without pain, grow without knowing it; they desire nothing, fear nothing, know nothing" (Malebranche, p. 394). Alternatively, the Respondents, are seen to be "How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!" (Shakespeare, p. 85).

It is the contention of the Appellants that since the two parties have first entered into this agreement (see Genesis above), the Respondents have broken the *de facto* contract in two ways. First, the Respondents are accused of changing the definitions of the terms used in the contact to gain unfair advantage. Second, the Respondents are accused of not living up to conditions that give benefit to the Appellants. Based on these grievances, the Appellants are asking that the traditional ties between them and the Respondents be severed and a new contract be arranged.

<center>POINT 1: STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS IN THE WORLD</center>

How have the terms changed today from whence they were first written down, and how have the Respondents misused them? This is outlined below.

Ownership

In general terms of contemporary Western society, animals and plants (and the natural world itself) have been largely objectified. To cut a tree, theperpetrator looks to paying off the human owner of the land. Polluters, when caught, pay fines to various nation-states who will then use the money at whim. If an animal is run down on the street, the biggest concern for the driver is if it was owned by any human. If not, the victim is usually left where it lies and the driver is more concerned with a scratched bumper. Each of these instances is common in modern society – humans see animals, plants, and the environment itself as objects that can be bought and sold as property.

This is in contrast to the evolution of thought that humankind has given to viewing its own species. Essentially, through much philosophical discussion, the Respondents of the modern Western world have come to view themselves through existential eyes. Humans are perceived to be free agents to do as they please and suffer the consequences of their actions. However, the Appellants have not been allowed such luxury: instead, they are all still seen to be made by some plan for a definite purpose. Some are seen as *bestia faber* and must pull a plow, give milk or sniff out drugs. Some are not so lucky, and are seen as *bestia instrumenti* to be eaten or worn. The same consideration has been given to the *flora*, water, air and minerals of this planet.

However, is this a proper reading of the Genesis contract? The key action word in the passage is the term 'Dominion', and it has certainly come to be understood as synonymous with 'ownership'. That land, animals, plants, water and pieces of sky can be bought and sold has become the basis of modern economics. In an increasingly commoditized world, the human soul seems about the only thing free from these ties. But, was this the intended meaning when the passages were originally written? This key word is found in the King James Bible translation of the Genesis passage: "Let them have dominion over…". Most English translations choose to employ the same term (see *American Standard Version; Douay-Rheims Bible; Darby Bible Translation; English Revised Version; Webster's Bible Translation; World English Bible*).

Fraught with ambiguity, the term can indeed alternately mean "to have sovereignty over", or "to possess" (see *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, p. 340). However, it is undoubtedly clear that in going back to the original translation of the vulgate, the precise Latin translation for the English word 'dominion' should have been *dominii*. However, the actual Latin word that was used in the Latin Vulgate bible is *praesit* from the root word *praesum* meaning "preside over, to be in charge of, to be at the head of" or "take the lead (in)". Other versions of the Bible have endeavoured to be more accurate: "Let them rule over…" (for examples of biblical variations, see www.biblegateway.com for *New American Standard Bible; New Century Version; New International Version; God's Word Translation; Young's Literal Translation*), and alternatively, "They will reign over…" (*New Living Translation*), "let them have complete authority over…" (Amplified Bible), "let him be head over…" (*New Life*

Version), "so that they may take charge of…" (*Common English Bible*), and "they can be responsible for…" (*The Message*). What relation is implied by these words? It is certainly not one of ownership – more precise terms could surely have been used (such as *auctoritas, authoritas*, or even *dominium*).

Instead, as Walvoord and Zuck (1985) allude, the contract designates humankind as God's representative (or go-between) in the natural world. So, rather than owner, humanity is more of an authority figure on Earth, collectively given the responsibility of presiding over the world, and, as ruler, making decisions that are supposed to be good for all. But legally, what does this entail? What form of leadership is designated? Many authors (see, for example, Morris, 2003; Reichenbach, 2003) argue that Absolute Monarchy is the proper relationship in this instance. However, the Appellants will now argue how this is an unfair premise given the present state of human affairs.

The Iniquity of Modern Absolute Monarchy: Until 1648, it was generally believed in the West that a monarch was placed in the ruling position by God's choice, and remained in this position in perpetuity. Because the monarch was made from 'different material' than common folk, no subject of the crown could lawfully remove this person from the throne. This was only reserved for God's judgment.

Until 1648, therefore, the position monarchs held over their subjects was roughly the equivalent to the position mankind held over the rest of the natural world. In that year, a new mentality was expressed in England that set the world upon a new path of relationships between leaders and their constituents:

> …whereas it is and hath been found by experience, that the office of a King … and to have the power thereof in any single person, is unnecessary, burdensome, and dangerous to the liberty, safety, and public interest of the people, and that for the most part, use hath been made of the regal power and prerogative to oppress and impoverish and enslave the subject; and that usually and naturally any one person in such power makes it his interest to encroach upon the just freedom and liberty of the people, and to promote the setting up of their own will and power above the laws, that so they might enslave these kingdoms to their own lust; be it therefore enacted and ordained by this present Parliament, and by authority of the same, that the office of a King in this nation shall not henceforth reside in or be exercised by any one single person… ('March 1649: An Act for the abolishing the Kingly Office in England and Ireland, and the Dominions thereunto belonging.' In Firth & Rait, pp. 18–20)

There can be no doubt that since this time, many nations of the world have come to the same conclusions, and the human world has taken definitive steps to abolish governance by absolute monarchies, or at least weaken this approach to the state of authoritative impotence. Presently, the only states that maintain any vestiges of absolute monarchy can be found in Brunei, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Swaziland, Vatican City, Jordan and Morocco. Many countries maintain a constitutional monarchy with the sovereign maintaining only a symbolic head while the real power

is divvied up amongst elected representatives (with no spiritual connotations). Other countries, like Nepal most recently in 2008, have abolished the monarchy altogether to replace it with a republic. Of course, many dictatorships remain entrenched throughout the globe, but they do not have the temerity to count on God alone to keep them or remove them from power.

What separates these two visions of leadership? It is as simple as this: Before 1648, the position of monarch was one of *a priori* status. A Monarch is a monarch. Their power comes from above by birth. They can do anything and remain a monarch simply by existing. Since 1648, however, the leader's position has become *a posteriori* – leaders gain their positions by their actions, and remain in power as long as they honour the contract between them and their citizens and endeavour to be worthy of the position.

When it comes to the contract between humanity and the natural world, however, it would seem that no new, evolutionary path has been undertaken during this time period. In fact, humans have continued to entrench the *a priori* mentality of absolute rule for humans over the planet. To relinquish our role would be as silly to us as it would have been to King Charles before he felt the full brunt of the Civil War.

The question that remains is: Should the Respondents' role be reassessed, subjected to the same reasoning that human leadership has undergone? Undoubtedly, absolute monarchy could not be replaced with any other forms of government that are presently in place on this planet. All others (such as constitutional monarchy, republicanism, and so on) need a voting population that can consciously make choices based on logic, literacy and the ability to think ahead. The natural world does not work in such anthropocentric ways. Instead, the Appellants are demanding that the outworn idea of monarchy be ignored for this case, and replaced with the notion of 'humans as parents or guardians of the earth'.

The Prudent Parent

The Appellants believe that this change in venue – to the court of family law – will do a fairer job of testing the Respondents' mettle. Appellants will not argue, to any extent, the finer details of whether or not the Respondents *should* be seen as guardians or stewards of the Earth, but rather will question if they are doing a good enough job to warrant the extension of this position.

In reading the Scriptures leading up to the questionable passage in Genesis (1:26), God is undoubtedly taken to be the progenitor of all life on Earth (i.e., God the Father). Therefore, if this passage is accepted, humans have been given the status of *in loco parentis* for the earth. To the Appellants, this is the only acceptable interpretation of the Genesis contract in this present age, as it is the only generally recognized relationship (in human terms) where one may use the undemocratic word 'dominion' without raising too much ire.

With this interpretation, the original contract would place humans in a parental role in their relationship with the natural world. However, what type of parents are

the Respondents to be? If we are to take the stance of parenthood that existed when Genesis was first written, the closest would be found in Ancient Hebrew texts that discuss parental rights. Here the concern is less with custody of a father over a son or daughter (although some rights did exist). Rather, there was a greater concern over mutual obligations of the family as a whole (Pollack, 2001, 162–165). Both parents and children are seen as part of a larger web. They have freedom to exist and do what they like within this web, but their rights end when they do damage to any part of the structure. In the end, it is the good of the child and progression of the family, its continued survival in the face of outside trials that holds the most importance for the law.

However, this contractual arrangement was fundamentally altered with the introduction of the Roman concept of *patria potestas*. Sweeping aside the idea of interconnected family obligations, and even the strongly entrenched idea of maternal power, the Romans replaced it with the notion of the *pater familias* – literally in Latin, the 'father of the family'. This position, the highest ranking family member in an ancient Roman household, went beyond the mere status of a biological father (*genitor*). He (as it was always a male) was considered absolute ruler of the family *domus* (house) in all concerns including political, economic, religious and domestic.

The power of the *pater familias,* handed down by the laws of the Twelve Tables, included *vitae necisque potestas* – the 'power of life and death' – over his children, his wife (in some cases), and his slaves. Legally, their lives were 'under his hand' or *sub manu*. If a child was unwanted, for example, the *pater* had the power to have this burden put to death by exposure. He could sell his children into slavery, or choose spouses for his offspring. Whatever judgment he gave was absolute and final in the eyes of the courts, and anyone under the roof could only escape his rules if they were delivered 'out of the hand' of the *pater* (in most cases by the *pater* himself), hence the term *emancipatio*.

In this system the family ceased to be a spiritual union, and was more generally conceived as an economic and juridical unit subordinated to a single person who held a great deal of authority over its members. In fact, legally, the *pater familias* was the only person endowed with legal capacity, or *sui iuris*. The *paters* were the only ones who could possess personal property or have the full protection of the law (the other family members did possess some quasi-legal privileges, but they were not full legal persons).

Over time, the absolute authority of the *pater familias* tended to be weakened, and rights that theoretically existed were no longer enforced or insisted upon. The power over life and death was abolished, the right of punishment was moderated, and the sale of children was restricted to cases of extreme necessity. By our present century, the concept of *pater potestas* has become a completely foreign notion to most Western philosophers, citizens and parents. Instead, a series of parental rights and responsibilities have been almost universally established in the area of parental rights and responsibilities.

While no detailed international law specifically defines parental responsibility, the following list, set out by the British Government, does outline the key roles.

Parents are responsible for the following: providing a home for the child; having contact with and living with the child; protecting and maintaining the child; disciplining the child; choosing and providing for the child's education; determining the religion of the child; agreeing to the child's medical treatment; naming the child and agreeing to any change of the child's name; being responsible for the child's property; and appointing a guardian for the child, if necessary (see *Parental Rights and Responsibilities*, 2014). These responsibilities have also been outlined in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

The Appellants' earlier argument concerning monarchy holds just as true for this discussion. It is their contention that while leaps have been made in the evolution of human child-rearing and parenting, the relationship between humans and the natural world have remained at the level of *pater potestas*. This continued relationship would be humiliating but tolerable, if the *pater familias* were reasonable, conscientious and enlightened in their role (or in short, act like responsible adults). However, the Appellants now contend that due to the Respondents' complete inability to act as fit guardians, life has become unbearable for the Appellants. These points will be listed below.

POINT 2: ARE THE RESPONDENTS UNFIT GUARDIANS?

In the sphere of human interactions, a number or criteria are used in determining the fitness of a parent or guardian. Now accepted by most Western countries (and international law) as grounds for the removal of parental rights, these include the following: Physical Abuse; Neglect; Sexual Interference; Substance Abuse; Emotional Abuse; and Mental Incompetence of the Parent. It is the Appellants' contention (supported by ample evidence) listed below, that not only have the Respondents failed in one of these categories, but that they have systematically engaged in all of them to the extreme detriment of the Appellants and themselves.

Physical Abuse

A website aimed at education children explains:

> Physical abuse is the most visible form of abuse and can be defined as any act which results in a non-accidental trauma or physical injury. This is usually defined as unreasonable, severe corporal punishment or unjustifiable punishment. Physical abuse injuries result from punching, kicking, hitting, beating, biting, burning, or harming in any physical way. (Center for Child Protection and Family Support, 2014)

Here the Appellants would like to distinguish between mere accidents which are unintentional, and abuse which is contact *intended* to cause feelings of intimidation, unnecessary pain, injury, or other physical suffering or harm. More specifically, the

Appellants would like to draw the court's attention to the incidents listed below that are not occasional, but systematically employed. The Appellants call on two types of abuse, and feel that the Respondents are guilty of carrying out both on a regular basis.

The first form of physical abuse is *cruelty as an end in into itself*, caused by mental disorders and the need for spectacle. Dating back to 1994, the *Pet-Abuse.com* data-base tracks the many incidents of pet abuse that have been reported and prosecuted around the world. These represent only a small fraction of actual incidents of abuse, but give some insight into the range of atrocities of which the Respondent is capable: beating, poisoning, shooting, stabbing; the list continues into the horizon. In most of these cases, the individual humans claim mental issues or misunderstanding of animal husbandry. In some instances, these are solitary affairs, but more often, the researcher finds a pattern of systematic violence towards non-humans (and a pretty strong indicator towards humans as well).

The suffering of animals has also played a systematic part in human entertainment for thousands of years. The Roman *circus maximus* was known for its extreme violence towards animals. This has bred a long history of cock-fighting, dog-fighting, bull-fighting, bear-baiting, and bull-baiting to name but a few blood sports. In the Twentieth Century, film-makers inflicted countless harm on animals for dramatic effect. More recently, the Respondents have engaged in a campaign on YouTube that display thousands of videos of real-life animal cruelty for the purpose of spectacle and entertainment. Efforts to stop this activity have been challenged with copyright infringement (Duffy, 2008).

The second form of abuse comes from *the need to cause harm for specific gain* such as killing animals for food or fur use, or destroying the environment for cheap power. Here the Appellants would like to differentiate between killing in self-defense, and murder for self-interest. Interestingly enough, humans rarely claim self-defense when killing any living creature save their own.

However, in terms of self-interest, humans are extremely efficient and insatiable in their appetites. It is estimated that every minute 90,000 chickens, 1,300 turkeys, 4,160 ducks, 2,000 pigs, 700 cows, 1,280 sheep and 2,700 rabbits are slaughtered for their meat and fur. This adds up to a total of 53 billion animals a year killed for human advancement (these figures do not take into account the billions of fish killed annually). In addition, if one animal dies due to illness, thousands may be slaughtered and their carcasses burned, just in case it might have an effect on man. With a desire to balance the scales, the Appellants would agree that animals have killed humans in the past. In the United States, independent researchers found that between 1979 and 1990, 1882 deaths were reported due to animal attacks (Langley & Morrow, 1997), making the murder ratio approximately one to 500 million.

Unlike the lightening attacks and swift death of the humans in these encounters, it cannot be denied that these animals suffer great abuse as they are being led to slaughter. Just one example of *systematic* violence includes:

Every year Australia ships over 4 million live sheep to the Middle East on a month-long journey by road and sea. Up to 100,000 sheep are crammed into a single ship and forced to stand and lie in their own excrement. Tens of thousands die each year during this trip from hunger, injuries and illnesses. Those that survive the journey are roughly unloaded and transported to 'fattening plants' before being slaughtered in deplorable conditions. (Berry, 2014)

Negligence

Neglect can take many forms. An example of physical neglect would be the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, or hygiene. This is another form of cruelty – but rather than an active cruelty, it should be considered a passive, more insidious form. After the Respondents have taken natural entities (dogs, horses, trees, birds, etc) and domesticated them, they have in essence recidivated them back to the stage of childhood. They can no longer survive without the intervention of humans to feed, house and care for them. This, in itself, is humiliating enough. But, all too often, the Respondents then fulfill this job improperly.

They are slowly starved or dehydrated to death, literally bled dry due to parasite infestations, or slowly garroted by their own collars. This is not a rarity, with a charge of neglect laid on an animal owner every 10 seconds in North America. And these are the cases that are brought to light rather than those buried and forgotten. Perusing the internet for just one minute will bring enough information to make the Appellants' point:

Five members of the same family have been found guilty after scores of horses, ponies and donkeys at a Buckinghamshire farm suffered neglect.

The scene of unimaginable horror that faced RSPCA officers at Spindle Farm in Amersham can now be described. More than 100 horses, emaciated, bones protruding, were dying where they stood from dehydration, starvation and infection. Elsewhere on the farm, 32 carcasses were discovered decomposing into the wintry mud – the horses, ponies and donkeys still lying where they had collapsed. The farm was owned by Jamie Gray – an equine trader with a history of animal neglect. He had been fined £3,500 in 2006 for causing unnecessary suffering to animals – but was allowed to continue his trading business. Gray … told the court there would always be some deaths. The District Judge in this case has had to consider whether animals such as these, destined for slaughter, should be protected under the same animal welfare act which domestic owners need to adhere to. (Harper, 2009)

A Tottenham-area man faces 12 charges under the revamped Ontario SPCA Act after a disturbing case of animal neglect left 28 dead cattle and 24 others in poor health. … In addition to the dead cattle, 24 beef cattle were also removed and taken to another farm to be fed and watered, along with receiving

veterinary care. OSPCA officials said conditions included no apparent water or food for the cattle, poor sanitation and no dry bedding. Dead and live stock were also being housed together. Potential penalties under the new legislation include a jail term of up to two years, a maximum fine of $60,000 and a ban on ownership. (Bowe, 2009)

192 cats removed from waste-filled trailer home. … They said Wednesday that the home contains so much cat waste and cat hair that it will probably be demolished. … [the owner] could face charges of animal cruelty and animal neglect … It's not clear how long she kept the cats in her home. … [the sheriff] described the interior of the trailer as horrendous and said it was the worst such case he had ever seen. I'm told the bathtub was filled to the brim with [soiled] cat litter and cat hair, Eckman said. The ammonia smell was so strong, our officers could hardly walk in there. … Every time you turned over a piece of furniture, 10 to 30 cats would come running out from under it, he said. Many were visibly afflicted with mites and had apparent eye infections, and numerous animals had patches of fur missing, he said. (Tayloe, 2009)

These are just three examples in an endless parade of human cases. The Appellants remind the court that cases brought to trial represent a mere fraction of neglect by humans of their non-human protégés.

Sexual Abuse

Includes penetration, fondling, violations of privacy, exposure of children to adult sexuality and rape (Under Our Rainbow, 2006). While rarely discussed (and then the butt of humour), these cases are quite prevalent. In viewing the database of pet abuse on *pet-abuse.com*, one is confronted with a seemingly endless number of bestiality cases. *New Scientist Magazine* (2006, p. 6) calls it far from harmless and in its Animal Abuse Fact Sheet outlines the details of this hidden crime.

The Appellants also wish to stretch this definition of sexual abuse a little further from the isolated cases mentioned above and extend it to what a large segment of the human population is systematically perpetrating upon the entire natural world. If a sexual relationship is one that takes place between two or more consenting adults for mutual pleasure and acceptance, the use of the world's natural resources can only be considered rape. Each day 80,000 acres a day are lost to farming, mining, and forestry interests: the Smithsonian Institute estimated that presently the equivalent of seven football field of land is bulldozed every minute (see Butler, 2012).

Substance Abuse

Another reason for removing parental rights is if the parent or guardian is convicted of substance abuse (illegal drugs or other toxins) or illegally introducing it to their wards. Are humans guilty of this to any significant extent? The Appellants argue that

this is undoubtedly the case. Lead, mercury, fossil fuels, PCBs, nuclear waste, oils, soaps, acids detergents, and sulphur. These are just a few of the poisonous substances that are poured into the oceans of the world at a rate of 19,000,000 kilograms a day (or 13,194kg minute).

At the same time, the fact cannot be hidden that increasingly toxic substances have been introduced into the air around the world in general. In Canada, for example, Statistics Canada reported that,

> …after reviewing key indicators from 1990 to 2005, it found a 12 percent increase in ground-level ozone (a major component of smog). Smog is created from ozone and fine particulate matter that come from transportation, electricity generation, wood burning and the use of some chemical products. The main source of this increased pollution appeared to be phosphorus from sewage, agriculture runoff and industrial waste, according to the report. It also found that water quality was poor or marginal in 23 per cent of sites tested. (CanWest News Service, 2007)

Emotional Abuse

This is said to include verbal abuse, withholding affection, extreme punishment and corruption, ignoring, rejecting, psychological terror and isolating (Thompson & Kaplan, 1996). It may also entail the abuser minimizing, or "downplaying" the severity of abuse along with the act of invalidation. Invalidation is to reject, ignore, mock, tease, judge, or diminish someone's feelings. It is an attempt to control how they feel and for how long they feel it (see Shepherd, 2014).

This is perhaps the most devastating aspect of abuse for the Appellants. Not only is the world brutally assaulted each day for human interest, but this suffering is systematically downplayed as not important. Animals are said to feel pain to a much lesser degree than humans, while plants are not thought to suffer at all (see Carter, 2005).

Of greatest concern has been the idea that animals are so plentiful that they are expendable: In scriptural terms, animals were created so that they may give up their bodies to go towards the sustenance of humanity. However, in recent years, the quantity of waste that this has entailed has been staggering. The Respondents consume only a portion of any given food animal, while the rest of the body goes to waste. Approximately 50–54% of each cow, 52% of each sheep or goat, 60–62% of each pig, 68–72% of each chicken and 78% of each turkey end up as meat consumed by humans with the remainder becoming waste after processing. Based on mortality rates and livestock statistics in Ontario, it has been estimated that the annual mass of deadstock alone is greater than 86,000 tonnes. The meat waste from federal and provincial abattoirs in Ontario is believed to be 333,000 tonnes each year. This does not take into account other waste from meat processing, which is also substantial (see Haines, 2004; Jacquot, 2008). This is a devastating fact for the natural world.

That they should die for a cause is one thing. That their deaths should be needless is another.

Another aspect is the seeming uncaring attitude of all those humans involved. For all the visible signs of abuse, most of the world stands by, or include only token punishments for these horrendous acts. Countries that have laws against these acts include punishments that never carry prison terms of more than 5 years or some fine (this includes Canada, the UK and many EU countries). Others have draconian laws that are never enforced (such as the death penalty in Egypt). However, the most populous countries in the world have no laws whatsoever that govern the mistreatment of animals, and only slight laws that deal with the environment as a whole (such as China, Saudi Arabia and Mexico).

Mental Incompetence of Parents

The Appellants' final and perhaps strongest argument is that the Respondents have not the mental capacity to act as prudent parents for the world. It has been shown that humans not only engage in willful abuse and destruction of the wards that they have been mandated to protect, they have also travelled down a path that will inevitably lead to their own eventual demise. By adding extreme amounts of toxins to the air and water of the world, they have poisoned themselves – for example, statistics have shown the dramatic rise in breathing ailments and cancers in the human race. The products they create that include phthalates, lead, mercury and other chemicals add to this increased mental instability.

Their determination to deforest the planet while increasing fossil fuel emissions will inevitably lead to extreme changes in global weather patterns that may render the planet uninhabitable. At the same time, many medicinal plants, roots, trees and herbs that exist in fragile ecosystems are being carelessly destroyed in this rush for easy living. While it is a well know fact that the world only has a limited store of resources, humans are presently reproducing at an ever-increasing rate. Even if each human demands no more food, clothing, shelter, or transportation than at present, they will strip the world in mere generations.

Of greatest concern is the fact that the humans of the world who control this destruction know and understand the consequences of their actions; yet, they still choose to pursue this path. Even when a determined effort is espoused (such as during the Kyoto Protocol) to help the planet, large sections of the world then whimsically change their minds and reverse the decisions. The Appellants cannot see any other reasons for this except insanity.

<div align="center">APPELLANTS' DEMANDS</div>

The Appellants can only think of two possible separate solutions that may rebalance this obvious abuse of the Genesis contract.

1. *Rid the world of the overlord:* The first solution is to simply continue with the same flawed arrangement or dissolve it and have none. As Homer put it many years ago: "There can be no covenants between lions and men" (Butler, 269). Within a century, which to the natural world, is the blink of an eye, the problem will be solved as all human life on the planet will probably be completely or mostly eradicated. In a sense, the higher court of ecological justice would be called upon to carry out the sentence. This would, of course, be the simplest solution, but would lead to a Pyrrhic victory.

2. *Redraw the terms:* While a much more complicated process, the second solution may finally give redress to both sides. Humans would have to relinquish their title of *pater,* and would have to bestow upon the natural world the title of "emancipio", adult and of equal importance. This would have to entail a whole process of re-education of humans however. Rather than seeing themselves as distinct from the natural world, humans would have to view their existence in a harmonious balance with the world, where the well-being of humans includes the well-being of all on this planet. This implies a more holistic way of seeing the world as interconnected and interdependent across time, where human societies are understood as not distinct and superior to the rest of nature, but part of it.

Students will have to be taught about the term "sustainability" in a positively-biased manner, and "exploitation" in ways other than using the guise of neutrality. More importantly, students have to be enlightened about the precariousness of their future. They must be taught to live for action rather than complacency. Most importantly, the lessons they learn in the classrooms must be applied outside. Examples must be seen (for good and bad), that they might follow or eschew. Humans who learn that the world is interconnected and interdependent can come to understand ecological justice as an affirmative and generative concept. And it is only by recognizing that their existence is based on a harmonious balance with the natural world, that they could truly become *bona fide* partners with the Appellants.

It is the contention of the Appellants that it is only through this second option – that is, renewal of the contract through re-education, that the Respondents may regain their title as 'stewards of the earth', and avoid the death penalty. Of course, this may be beyond humankind as it is still presently impossible for many basic rights to be accorded to much of the *human* species, let alone those outside of it.

This being said, the Appellants now demand a response from the accused.

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2. WE ARE NOT STRANGERS HERE

Sunlight trickles down.
Leaves shimmer and sparkle in the warm breeze,
light reflected like water rushing over pebbles in a shallow stream.
Swishing, rustling breath of the forest
sings harmony with warbling chirps of back-capped chubby chickadees.
Shoulders touch, warmth seeps between, slow breath expanding lungs, quiet rest.
Suddenly he is there – a dash, a leap, then pause and momentary stillness.
Huge dark eyes smiling, long ears upright, tiny brown body trembles with anticipation.
She springs in, grinning,
long ears flat along soft furry body.
Between breaths we all join the game.
Human eyes widen in delight as he dashes under bench.
She is close behind.
Human legs entangled have no time to move,
but he and she are unconcerned.
Away again through roots and tangled branches,
rabbits playing chase, include us in their circle,
laughing.

What wonder! These small beings, running, jumping and chasing for the pure joy of it. And we, who witnessed this play, felt part of it as we sat quietly in the small glade in a stand of trees, near a field, along a riverbank in Saskatchewan. Why were we including in this game? And, why is this story important to me?

I think my life partner and I were included by these beings in their play because, at least in that moment, we acted as if we remembered that we are not strangers here. In quiet rest between eating lunch and the chores of hoeing and picking vegetables, we were simply one of the many inhabitants who belonged in that place and in that time, posing no threat to those who belonged there too. This story is important to me because it symbolizes that which I think important when contemplating the notion '*ecological justice*' – that is, the idea that human beings are not strangers here. But what does this phrase mean, and why did it spring to mind when I contemplated the notion of ecological justice? To explain the connections between my understanding of the meaning of this concept and educating for ecological justice I will explore

these questions: Why do I think we need to 'remember' why did we forget? Why is such remembrance so important? How can we remember? How can we educate for ecological justice?

In claiming that 'we are not strangers here', I am talking about how I think human beings need to see themselves in relationship with the world. We need to see ourselves and feel ourselves as deeply and profoundly embedded in the web of life on our planet and that we are, in fact, deeply connected to both the animate and inanimate. We need to remember that we do belong here, and although we need to meet our human needs within our environments – we must use air, water, animals, plants and minerals to survive—but as 'belongers' we have no right to damage or 'use up' that which surrounds us.

In my opinion, this is where the notion of ecological justice comes in. When I use this term, I begin with the idea that everything in and on earth has rights – that is, "… that every component of the community of Earth needs to have its say, and to find its place and needs a spokesperson [and that] …no part of that community can be guided in its activities except with reference to the total community" (Berry, 2003). For me, *ecological justice* means ensuring just or fair resolutions when interests conflict by taking into account the freedom and security (read: group survival/ non-using up) of all web-of-life community members. When we remember that we belong and are deeply connected, we know that damaging and using up does not just hurt that which is outside of ourselves; but rather, when we remember we are not strangers here, we remember that damaging or using up any part of the web damages and uses up ourselves. I do not think that we can speak of ecological justice in any meaningful way unless we remember this.

At present, in some circles, it seems to have become axiomatic to express these kinds of ideas, and a reader could ask what I think I have to add to the conversation. With heightened awareness of environmental issues and climate change, catch phrases about recycling, carbon footprints, and saving the planet have entered popular culture and could be taken to represent a paradigm shift in thinking about environmental sustainability. But I am concerned that the underpinning ways of thinking (with accompanying presuppositions) that caused us to forget our deep connections might not be recognized or challenged. And, if this is the case, all the emerging catch phrases in the world cannot and do not represent real remembering. Therefore, as I elaborate my thinking about the idea of ecological justice and explain why I think this connects in a generative way to education, I need to explain why I think we need to 'remember' and why we 'forgot'.

This goes to my understanding of how past ways of thinking are influencing us now, and this arises out of my own particular (and perhaps peculiar) historical ways of looking at the world, which I think I should take time to explain. I need to name my biases and perspectives and explain from where some of my notions have been derived. I am a Celtic (Irish-Scot) Canadian middle class female market gardener, have been a social studies teacher, am a teacher educator and social studies methods instructor, a working historian, an educational historian and a philosopher of history.

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In these roles I have been deeply influenced by many interdisciplinary scholars, including historian and philosopher, R.G. Collingwood. Put simply, Collingwood (1946/1993) claimed that philosophizing and 'coming to know' is simply a process of asking questions, gathering evidence, constructing a web of understanding through thinking about the relationship between one's questions and one's evidence and then thinking/reflecting upon the thinking one has done. Collingwood did not believe this process produced universal and necessary truth. Rather, he believed that knowledge is "something always needing to be re-created by an effort of thought" (Collingwood, 1939, p. 63). This way of thinking about knowledge and philosophizing is very appealing to me. It puts philosophical inquiry and knowledge construction into the hands of any person who is willing to ask questions and think carefully. Coming to know does not reside in the hands of 'the experts' – it is democratic.

Another aspect of Collingwood's ideas I find appealing is his contention that coming to know is subjective, and that human beings can use the questioning, re-constructing, reflecting-on-thinking method to come to understand both personal experiences and each other. Thus, unlike some post-modern theorists who seem to me to argue that our subjectivity makes it impossible for us to understand one another, Collingwood (1939) offers us hope that we can develop some understanding if we use the question and reflection approach to get "inside other people's heads, looking at their situation through their eyes" (p. 58) – a process he calls 're-enactment'. In arguing that we can come to understand human actions by coming to understand contexts of the action, as well as the thought/presuppositions lying behind the action, Collingwood has provided me with one way to think about how human beings are connected to each other, which I think has implications in how we might see ourselves connected to and within our environments.

I have also been deeply influenced by Collingwood's understanding of the importance of history, which lies in his understanding of the connections between the past and the present. Collingwood (1946/1993) contends that the past 'turns into' the present or, to put it more concisely, he thinks that the past 'interpenetrates' the present. To accept this claim requires us to think about the past and present in a particular way. Collingwood did not use the argument that 'if we do not understand our past we are doomed to repeat it'. He would have thought this argument somewhat silly because he considered it presumptuous to think that events that unfolded in a particular past context would unfold in exactly the same way in a present context. However, Collingwood (1940) did claim that past ways of thinking (presuppositions) survive into the present and continue to influence the way we act now. He argued that in order to more deeply understand why we act as we do, we need to not only understand the ways of thinking that underpin our present actions, but we also need to understand where, when, and under what circumstances these ways of thinking arose. Only through this process can we come to understand how we have come to think in the ways that we do and challenge ourselves as to whether such assumed, implicit ideas actually continue to make sense. Collingwood's philosophizing has pointed out for me that it is these past ways of thinking that interpenetrate the present

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and continue to influence and shape contemporary human behaviours. If we want to reform, or transform, it is not enough to simply look at what people did in the past and learn lessons from this behaviour; we must look deeply into beliefs and patterns of thinking that arose back then, and try to understand how these continue to affect our present thoughts and actions.

Although Collingwoodian philosophy is rather 'in the head' as compared to the 'embodiedness' of deep ecology, it was the influence of his philosophical approaches which first grounded my personal inquiries into how we have come to be where we are now in our relationship with the earth. My claim that 'we must remember we are not strangers here' is related to my historicity – that is, the belief that our present is affected by presuppositions that have caused us to forget ourconnectedness. My efforts to explore the questions, "Why did we forget and why (and how) do we need to 'remember'?" are anchored in this set of beliefs.

I think our forgetfulness about our connectedness within the web of life has arisen as a result of the widespread influence of Western or Euro-centric ways of thinking. While I know that many folks around the world have not forgotten the connectedness of all things/beings, I am afraid that a dominant (hegemonic) way of thinking about economic systems, progress, and development has spread around the world through mechanisms of imperialism, colonization, and conquest. At present, it seems to me that discussions about development are mostly about ways of increasing production and consumption – that 'progress' is tied to finding bigger markets in which to sell an ever increasingly large supply of things that fulfill whims and wants rather than basic needs. Even discussions about quality of life seem to be more about material things (e.g., number of: school buildings, books, pencils, paper, shoes) rather than about having time, quiet, relationships and connections. With this evidence before me, I think that humans around the globe are being affected by Western ways of thinking that have caused forgetfulness about connectedness. And, because of this, I think it is worthwhile exploring, at least briefly, where and when these ways of thinking emerged.

In my understanding, Euro-Western forgetfulness about belonging within the web of life has been shaped by several ways of thinking that emerged between the time my ancient Celtic ancestors held rituals in sacred oak groves, or tossed golden jewelry into streams to honour spirits within these places, and now, in the present day, when those oak groves have gone the way of the dodo, and trash is thrown into streams. It seems to me that one of the ways of thinking that had a profound affect on 'connection forgetfulness' is that which emerged with Christianity as an organized, hierarchical religion. The way of thinking, which became orthodox between about the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., was based on rejection of the material world in favour of the spiritual. For example, when St. Augustine proclaimed the City of God (and a god who lived outside of and beyond the perimeters of the natural world) as the penultimate goal upon which human beings should set their sights, while at the same time disparaging the City of Man (or the material world) as corrupting, he

shaped and promoted a way of thinking that severed humans from the natural world. Augustine (413–426) wrote:

> …Cain was the first-born, and he belonged to the city of men; after him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God… . When these two cities began to run their course by a series of deaths and births, the citizen of this world was the first-born, and after him the **stranger** in this world, the citizen of the city of God, predestinated by grace, elected by grace, by grace a **stranger** below, and by grace a citizen above. [Bold added]

In declaring Abel and others who achieve a state of grace as strangers to and in the material world, Augustine conceived the spiritual, divine, or 'that which is holy' as residing outside of the web of life of the natural world – a conceptualization which began to shape a set of beliefs and assumptions underpinning Euro-Western 'connection forgetfulness'.

This set of assumptions supported a notion of hierarchy in which humans (along with the angels) were seen to be set over, above, or outside of the material, world.

During the 18th century, Enlightenment thought fully encompassed these ideas. Embracing the notion that humans possessed a powerful intellect unavailable to other members of the web of life, Euro-Western thought promoted the notion that we were both separate from and superior to the natural world. Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1782) proclaimed:

> It is then true that man is lord of the creation, – that he is, at least, sovereign over the habitable earth; for it is certain that he not only subdues all other animals, and even disposes by his industry of the elements at his pleasure, but he alone of all terrestrial beings knows how to subject to his convenience, and even by contemplation to appropriate to his use, the very stars and planets he cannot approach. Let anyone produce me an animal of another species who knows how to make use of fire, or hath faculties to admire the sun. What! am I able to observe, to know other beings and their relations, – am I capable of discovering what is order, beauty, virtue, – of contemplating the universe, – of elevating my ideas to the hand which governs the whole, – am I capable of loving what is good and doing it, and shall I compare myself to the brutes? Abject soul! it is your gloomy philosophy alone that renders you at all like them. Or, rather, it is vain you would debase yourself. Your own genius rises up against your principles; – your benevolent heart gives the lie to your absurd doctrines, – and even the abuse of your faculties demonstrates their excellence in spite of yourself.

> For my part …I see nothing in the world, except the deity, better than my own species; and were I left to choose my place in the order of created beings, I see none that I could prefer to that of man.

With this way of thinking, all other beings, including animals, plants and minerals, became items created for human use, and Europeans 'forgot' that these beings should be regarded as members of the web of life, important in and of themselves.

During the 19th century, the emergence of positivism (a philosophical position that attempts to purify knowledge of all metaphysical or transcendental aspects and that puts an extremely high value on 'objective' natural science and its methods) added another set of assumptions which contributed to Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. While positivism has contributed to development of human knowledge by advocating close and careful observation of natural phenomena, this philosophy also promoted an approach which encouraged humans to examine slices of nature using an increasingly narrow and mechanistic analysis. This analytical approach sponsored development of specialization, where human experts study tiny bits of phenomena in isolation from one another (after all, too many variables muddy the waters). In this support of analysis – the breaking down into bits to try to understand the whole – I think positivism encouraged an approach to knowledge construction at odds with the notion of synthesis – that is, the capacity to integrate bits together to comprehend a wholeness – and ultimately contributed to Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. Positivist philosophers also propounded a hierarchy in ways of knowing which described as primitive or childish any approach to understanding the world that included intuition, animism or wholeness. For example, positivist philosopher, August Comte (1830–42), declared:

> In the theological state, the human mind… supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings. In the metaphysical state, the mind supposes abstract forces, veritable entities (that is, personified abstractions) inherent in all beings, and capable of producing all phenomena. In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws – that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of this knowledge.

> …our speculations upon all subjects whatsoever, pass necessarily through three successive stages: a Theological stage [which contains three stages: animism, polytheism and monotheism] in which free play is given to spontaneous fictions admitting of no proof; the Metaphysical stage, characterized by the prevalence of personified abstractions or entities [world is one great entity in which Nature prevails]; lastly, the Positive stage, based upon an exact view of the real facts of the case.

With this, Comte and other positivists gave credence and priority to a particular way of knowing (techno-rationale) that supported Euro-Western connection forgetfulness. In this approach to knowing, rocks, water, and soil became 'dis-imbued' of life – transforming into the inanimate, or 'non-living', and so even more

foreign to humanness than animals and plants (which, although 'living', are to be considered 'objects' rather than 'subjects'). In severing our understanding of our deep connections with all members of the web of life, the environment seems to have become a foreign (and, perhaps, frightening) place. However, positivist philosophy gave human beings a way to conquer their fears by promoting the idea that people would, could and should manipulate, control, or conquer environments as the 'laws of nature' were more fully understood through observation and fact-gathering. Rather than operating on the assumption that humans are deeply embedded within the natural world, positivists reinforced the notion that we are outside, objective observers of nature – a place and space totally separate from 'us'. This way of thinking endorsed our forgetfulness and promoted the notion that humans are strangers within their environments.

Interestingly, this way of thinking lies behind two contradictory contemporary ideological positions regarding the environment: one, (a dominant Euro-Western ideology) allows human beings to exploit the natural world without paying much attention to consequences – the other (one of the emerging 'eco-friendly' ideologies), advocates the notion that humans are some kind of aberration – that is, that humans lie outside of and counter to nature, and act as a kind of destructive force, at odds with the natural world. Both of these ideological positions represent what I have been calling 'connection forgetfulness' – that is, both positions presuppose human beings as strangers to and in the natural world, rather than members of the web of life who are the natural result of evolution. In my opinion, both of these positions are antithetical to the notion of ecological justice. As I claimed at the beginning, I do not think that we can speak of ecological justice in any meaningful way unless we remember that we are "intimately embedded in a reality greater than ourselves" (Selby, 1998).

But, how can we remember? And, how can we educate to remember?

When contemplating these questions, I think we need to understand that the very approaches we use to teaching and learning have been shaped by Euro-Western ways of thinking; therefore we must recognize that 'educating to remember' requires that we tackle the unacknowledged/taken-for-granted suppositions have underpinned these ideologies. To do this, we need to ensure that our pedagogical approaches do not simply reinforce dominant Euro-Western modes of thinking – for example, analysis rather than synthesis – and that we ask learners to engage with the environment not simply as outside 'objective' observers exercising their intellect, but also as 'subjects' using feelings/perceptions. Using such approaches means that we must encourage learners to access a wide variety of ways to gather and record their perceptions (for example, photography, painting, drawing, poetry), as well as to utilize multiple ways to represent their developing conceptual understandings (for example: story-telling, photography, painting, drawing, poetry, singing, dance, dramatic reenactment).

As teachers, we must open ourselves to multiple ways of knowing and learning. In educating to remember, we must hark back to the time of our ancestors, remember that all early humans lived with the understanding of their deep connections with the

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earth, and attempt to uncover evidence (including art & artifacts, songs and stories) that reveal their ways of thinking. I think we should also pay attention to the ways of knowing and learning of peoples who still remember they are not strangers here – for example, to the ways of knowing and learning of the First Nations peoples of Canada. I think that peoples who still remember connectedness can teach educators much about such pedagogical approaches for educating to remember as described by Williams & Tanaka: "Indigenous ways of teaching and learning includ[e]: mentorship and apprenticeship learning; learning by doing; learning by deeply observing; learning through listening; telling stories and singing songs; learning in a community; and learning by sharing and providing service to the community" (2007).

In my experience, young children are wide open to experiential learning that engages them in exploring the wondrous and the mundane using mind and body/ head and heart. However, I have also learned that older children and adults are often puzzled, confused, defensive, and sometimes actively resistant, when asked to venture into ways of thinking and learning that lie outside of their previous experiences. If we are to educate to remember connectedness we must, while remaining gentle and respectful, require learners to take such journeys with us.

For example, in working with teacher candidates, I first try to help them remember their connectedness through a relatively simple activity, which I model as a learning strategy that they could use with children during a Social Studies lesson. The purpose of the activity is to explore the question: What is the connection between 'identity' and geography? By exploring the connections, I am hopeful that teacher candidates are helped to 'remember'. After a large group speculative discussion about what they thinking the connection between identity and geography might be, I ask teacher candidates to:

Paint a picture of yourself using words. Jot down words that pop into your mind when you hear me say the following: Describe:

- Your physical self (what you look like)
- Your feelings (your emotional self
- Things you like to do with friends
- Things you like to do with family
- Things you like to do by yourself
- Future plans (when you grow up)

Pick from these words and write two to three sentences to describe your personal identity.

Next, paint a picture of the geography where you live (grew up). Jot down words of description that pop into your mind when you hear the following:

- The shape of the land (landscape) where you live
- Bodies of water where you live
- The climate where you live

- The trees/plants where you live
- The animals where you live
- The natural resources where you live
- Things made by humans on the land/water where you live
- The smell of the air where you live

Pick from these words to write 2 – 3 sentences to describe your 'where you live/grew up.

Compare the two word pictures – yourself and where you live. Do you think the picture you painted of yourself is/has been influenced by where you live? If yes, in what ways?

Use the Think/Pair/Share approach to discuss responses to the questions with a partner and then the whole class.

After engaging in this simple exercise, teacher candidates usually express surprise about what they discovered regarding the connections between their personal identities and their 'place(s)' and they comment, with a degree of wonder, on aspects of this relationship that they had not previously recognized. For example, one teacher candidate commented, "I didn't think it would make such a difference that I was raised in the city, and [name of another teacher candidate] grew up on a farm. I guess the rural, urban thing really does matter."

In the end, however, I do think that the most important way in which we can educate for remembering is to engage learners in experiences outside the boundaries of schools and classrooms, using place-based learning approaches, where students experience connections with and within various ecological sites though a dialogical conversation where the perceptual (the body) and conceptual (the mind) work in tandem to shape understandings (Kentel & Karrow, 2007, p. 97).

To remember we are not strangers here we must go out into ecosystems, leave the protection of human-created environments, and engage with the soil, plants and animals, wind, rain and sunshine. We need to use our hands to grow and harvest our own food to more deeply understand the relationships between actions and consequences. Growing and harvesting also teaches us that we actually cannot control natural occurrences (like hail, frost, heat, insects, and deer) that can damage what we are growing. We need to experience how and why the deer eat our carefully planted seedlings, remembering that the doe and her tiny speckled fawn need nourishment, too; and when we plant the seeds in a location where the deer will find them as they journey down to the river to drink, we must recognize that the deer have as much right to eat the sweet beet tops as we have. In living side by side with beings who share our places, we can appreciate first hand, both the wonder and frustration of existence, and we can learn to laugh together. To remember we are not strangers here, we need time to sit quietly – to listen – to feel – to simply be with and in the 'here'. To educate for remembering we need to ensure these opportunities for both children and adults.

No matter how we approach educating for remembering, I think the ultimate goal of the process is to enhance the possibilities for ecological justice. Knowing that we are not strangers here – that is, creating "a sense and experience of belonging, of being "at home," with all life forms and all places" (Selby, 1998) is a necessary precondition for ecological justice. When we remember we are not strangers here, developing "that mystic sense of limitless belonging" (Capra & Steindl-Rast, 1992, pp. 15 & 57. in Selby, 1998), we become empowered to take meaningful actions toward protection of ecosystems. In remembering connectedness, we can move beyond the pop culture catch phrases about recycling and reducing carbon footprints, into the necessary paradigm shift in thinking about environmental sustainability.

For me ecological justice is a 'first order' generative concept. By this, I mean that the notion of ecological justice that results from deep mind and body comprehension of connectedness, lies behind or is the 'primary generator' of other ideas. As a first principle ecological justice comes before all the rest. When we remember we are not strangers here, we remember the connectedness which generates ideas necessary for living fully and justly and in relationship with all members of our earth community.

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3. WHERE IN THE WORLD IS THE JUSTICE?

The answers keep coming and coming….
> Blue skies.
> The lush greenness of country fields.
> Choking smog hanging over Beijing, China.
> Killer tornados ripping through towns in the American Midwest.
> The smell of freshly cut hay.
> Water shortages from Australia to Central Africa.
> The sound of water cascading over smooth river rocks.
> Polar bears under threat in the Arctic.
> Snowflakes gently falling onto a blanket of white on the front lawn.

It's 8:30am on a Monday morning, and I'm beginning a social studies class on concept development. The teacher candidates who comprise the student body are sleepy-eyed yet always game to engage in thinking activities. They have a thirst to learn how best to teach young people about the world around them. Today, I've asked this group of aspiring teachers to tell me what they visualize when I say the word 'environment'.

As the list of imagery grows on the whiteboard at the front of the class, a teacher candidate calls out from the back, "The environment is everything! It's all of it".

I have to agree. The environment is everything. It is core to life itself, and for that reason, it is one of the most significant concepts for teaching and learning in social studies. The environment, with its intricately woven systems, is at the heart of all existence. There would be no need to talk about socially significant concepts of any kind – diversity, multiculturalism, social justice or democracy – without a strong conception of the environment and the importance it has for our capacity to live and live in the ways we choose. Every civilization from the Mayans to the Mongols, from the earliest Aborigines of present-day Australia to the Sumerians of Mesopotamia, each grouping, each culture, has had to engage with the environment to meet their life needs. Anthropologists generally accept that it was absolutely essential for the earliest civilizations to ensure a reliable water supply, the availability of animals to be hunted for their meat, skin and fur, and the accessibility to edible plants for food and fuel, before other concerns could be addressed.

Little has changed for contemporary societies. Every nation, every community has some relationship with the environment. The nature of the relationship may vary

greatly, but in each case there is a system, some simple, some complex, whereby water and food supplies are ensured. When water and food supplies are threatened, the very society itself is at risk of breaking down. As an example,current media stories noting the growing threat to inhabitants of the central Sahara due to the shrinking of Lake Chad, the main source of fresh water in the area, underscore the core relationship we still have with the environment and our vulnerability when supply and demand are askew.

As the lesson on concept development continues, I ask teacher candidates to examine the proffered environmental images and, in groups of three, suggest ways the image descriptions could be categorized around a commonality. It doesn't take long for the teacher candidates to come up with a number of possibilities, including the following: the images might be organized into categories based on whether the idea is mainly concerned with the natural environment or the human environment or both; they could be grouped according to whether they are presented in a positive or negative or neutral light; or they could be categorized as general or place specific. A group of three at the front of the class suggests we organize the images as to whether they speak to a current issue of environmental concern or not. Interestingly, a group on the left side of the class suggests that subsequent questions be asked so we can consider whether the images stem from a childhood memory, a recent news report, a trip taken as a young adult, or from poetry or a painting.

These are excellent responses, and as I pause to ask why a teacher would want to begin a lesson on conceptual development in this manner, teacher candidates are quick to note that by having students provide exemplars, the teacher can see who has a broad understanding of the concept 'environment' and who does not. Another teacher candidate points out that by generating their own examples, students draw on their own understandings and experiences, thus making the exercise more connective to prior learning. A teacher candidate in the back corner comments that the 'environment' is a broad concept with a number of sub-concepts, each with its own layers of complexity, and that by having students categorize the exemplars, they gain experience at identifying and grouping by a common feature or theme. A fellow teacher candidate picks up the point and continues by saying that categorization makes what initially appears to be a long list more manageable. By breaking the big list into two or three smaller lists the common features or themes are more visually apparent to students.

I hasten to add that following categorization around themes, the teacher is also more prepared to move the class forward. For example, if I wish to move students toward an exploration of the impact of natural phenomena on the built environment I can do so by circling a particular list and setting a boundary for the rest of class time. This visually narrows the focus, cueing students that we are not going to attend to all aspects of 'environment,' but rather to particular ones. This will help students make future decisions as to what should or should not be included in ensuing class activities.

I walk over to the whiteboard and circle 'choking smog hanging over Beijing, China', 'rats and birds foraging through city garbage dumps', 'children drawing

water from a polluted stream' and 'an oil lapping onshore from a tanker spill'. These are four of the most vivid images from the long list teacher candidates provided that are related to the topic focus for today. I ask, "If these were categorized together, what would be an appropriate heading for the list?" Teachercandidates quickly answer that they're all examples of environmental pollution – an issue many societies are facing today. I state that these examples, these imagesare the basis for two new concepts to be explored—environmentalism and environmental justice. How can I resist delving into these concepts with these teacher candidates?

ENVIRONMENTALISM

Environmentalism is a "philosophy and social movement focused on the conservation and improvement of the environment for its own sake and for its importance to civilization" (AskDefine). The philosophy is broad and encompasses a vast number of foci from efforts at the preservation of wilderness areas, to concern over overpopulation, to initiating and maintaining community recycling programs, to detoxifying landfill sites.

Care for the environment and concern about its degradation has a long history, dating back to ancient times. However, modern environmentalism emerged out of the industrial revolution sweeping across Europe in the 19th century. As large factories, run on coal and other fossil fuels, spewed out toxic smoke and discharged industrial chemicals into water systems, the public became increasingly concerned about air, water, and ground quality. Slowly, concern about these public goods resulted in the passing of new laws including the British Alkali Acts of 1863. Societies such as the Commons Preservation Society in the United Kingdom were formed, and in America, intellectuals such as Henry David Thoreau, author of *Walden*, and John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, contributed to a new public discourse on the environment. Today, due to media coverage and perhaps first hand experiences, we're more likely to be familiar with organizations such as Greenpeace, awareness campaigns such as Earth Day and Water Day, and school programs that teach students the new three R's—*R*educe, *R*euse and *R*ecycle. Regardless, these laws, organizations, books and activities are all part of what can be termed 'environmentalism'.

Environmentalists frequently speak of the planet Earth as a place where there are a number of serious and pressing threats that are associated with runaway consumerism, a belief in never-ending economic growth, materialism, unbridled development and exploding populations. Proponents note that many people in capitalist societies live with a worldview that is removed from a relationship to the natural world and where their environmental responsibility is limited by a cultural emphasis on satisfying their immediate and some might say superficial desires. Environmentalists tend to agree on the basic principles of environmentalism—preserving, conserving, protecting and renewing the environment, but how they bring about environmental change varies significantly.

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The following are a series of starter ideas I share with teacher candidates that can be used to have high school students generatively explore environmentalism:

Learning about …

- Research the differences between 'conservation' and 'preservation'. Note some of the organizations that work globally, nationally, and locally in each.
- Often erroneously considered synonymous, explore how the two terms 'eco-systems' and 'environment' are different, but related. Consider the relationship between environmentalism and the ecology movement.
- Choose an important environmental book such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*
- (1962), an organization such as the National Audubon Society (1905), or an agreement such as the Kyoto Protocol (1997), and develop a summary of its important points and/or significant activities.

Informing of …

- Develop a multimedia presentation on a global, national or local environmental disaster (e.g., the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, 1986; or the oil spill of the Exxon Valdez, 1989). What happened? What were the concerns? How was it handled? What are the long term implications?
- Create a mural, piece of music, story, or poem on your thoughts about care of the environment and/or environmentalism. Present your work to the class, school or local organization.
- Compose an opinion editorial on an environmental issue or contribute a regular column on environmental concerns to a class or school newspaper or blog.

Taking Action …

- Research a global, national or local environmental issue. Research what governmental entity and official within is most likely to have an impact on the issue. Write the official a letter or an e-mail outlining your viewpoint and suggested action(s). Also ask what actions, if any, are currently being taken and ask for the results thus far.
- Invite an expert on environmental issues (e.g., local official, university professor, organizational representative), and develop powerful questions to generate discussion. Ask how you and your classmates can get involved and help make positive change.
- Join an environmental organization or club after researching their mandate, views and activities. Obtain parental permission as necessary.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

But what does it mean to have 'environmental justice'? Let's consider for a moment what is meant by the word 'justice'. Understandings of justice vary from culture to culture, some being linked with concepts of fate and divine providence; but in western societies, justice is considered the result of acting evenhandedly or fairly, striving to balance multiple variables while ultimately prioritizing those that embody what the society values most (e.g., individual liberty). For many, environmental justice is not an effort to treat the environment itself more fairly, to consider the rights of the river or the feelings of the trees, though some environmentalists do assume this particular stance. Rather this position sees environmental justice as a philosophy positioned at the intersection between social and environmental movements.

Shepard (2007), a co-founder of the organization, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, describes the environment as "where we live, work, play, pray and learn" (p. 34). Shepard, along with other advocates of environmental justice, engages in the analysis of power structures that have inhibited meaningful environmental reforms. This stances identifies the inequitable environmental burden carried by groups such as women, racial and ethnic minorities and inhabitants of the developing world and seek redress to issues such as pollution, crime, poorly operated and maintained industrial facilities while helping to secure access to clean water, nutritious food, clean air, health care, education, safe jobs, transportation and recreation. In short, proponents want all people treated fairly and justly relative to environmental issues that affect quality of life.

This concept of environmental justice is not new, as it has long been known that impoverished African and Asian women suffer disproportionately from malnourishment and a lack of potable water, but its emergence as a meaningful movement only occurred in 1980's America. It grew organically out of numerous local struggles, but one incident in particular stands out as a flashpoint. In 1982, the state of North Carolina chose a predominantly African-American community as the site for a new landfill to dispose of highly toxic Polychlorinated Biphenyl's or PCBs. Subsequent protests and the framing of the choice as 'environmental racism' raised awareness of environmental injustice across America and spurred the establishment of Commission for Racial Justice. Believing that governmental officials were "intentionally selecting communities of color for waste disposal sites and polluting industrial facilities" (Bullard, et al., 2007, p. viii), the landfill went ahead, and in 1993, the seal that was to contain the PCBs from leaking into the soil began to fail. Residents complained to the Governor of North Carolina that local drinking water was at risk. It wasn't until 2001 that decontamination of the soil began, finally being completed in 2004.

This incident, along with many others, has served as a catalyst for large scale organizing. Environmental justice advocates see themselves as a segment of the larger environmental movement, wanting not only to preserve, protect, and renew the environment, but to do so in environmentally just ways. In 1991, the First National

People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held in Washington, DC. Robert D. Bullard, often cited as the father of the environmental justice movement, helped produce the final summit communiqué outlining the "Principles of Environmental Justice". These principles are as follows:

1. Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.
2. Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
3. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
4. Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisonsand nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.
5. Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.
6. Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
7. Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
8. Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
9. Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
10. Environmental justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
11. Environmental justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
12. Environmental justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring

the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13. Environmental justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15. Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16. Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

While actions taken by organizations like those mentioned above have heightened awareness, African-Americans, indigenous peoples, women(particularly women of colour), and the poor continue to suffer injustices in environmental decision-making. If these injustices are to be addressed, I suggest that teacher candidates consider the following ideas for inclusion in their teaching on environmental issues and the pursuit of environmental justice.

Learning about …

- Some environmentalists concerned with endangered species, wilderness preservation, overpopulation, energy consumption, and recycling believe that supporters of environmental justice are leaning too far toward human concerns of racism, sexism, and classism and ignoring what should be the key focus – the environment. Research one critic's perspective on this issue. How does he or she frame her or his argument(s)? What is your view? Why do you support this view?

Informing of …

- Develop an oral presentation on a particular issue of environmental injustice (e.g., Gypsy/Roma slums in Europe due to housing discrimination; exposure of illegal immigrant agricultural workers to toxic pesticides; status of potable water in Canada's indigenous communities).

- Interview a local company to find out how it ensures environmental justice for its workers. Analyze and present the results to the class.

Taking Action …

- Make a public presentation at city or town hall, encouraging the expansion of parks, water fountains, and/or tree and flower planting into socio-economically depressed parts of the municipality.
- Start a fundraising campaign to enhance awareness-raising efforts of a particular organization, or assist in deferring legal costs for a particular environmental justice case.

I encourage teacher candidates and in-service teachers to develop these ideas into meaningful and manageable critical thinking opportunities. The environment is everything, and thoughtful consideration of necessary background knowledge, vocabulary, thinking strategies, and criteria-based evaluation instruments will help ensure that learning opportunities which engage students in exploring environmentalism and environmental justice will maximize the generative possibilities embedded within. These concepts are core to life itself; and consequently, are some of the most significant concepts for teaching and learning in social studies.

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4. DEVELOPING A DISPOSITION TOWARDS THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS

When I Was Six (M. Epp)

The wheels
Squeak their way over the grassy meadow

Branches,
Saturated with last night's rain,
Hang low

Grass sparkles
And glistens
In the morning sunlight.

And then…

We see her!

A doe posed motionless
Across the meadow.
We stop in silence.

It's a staring contest…
Minutes,
Maybe only second
Pass by
And then…in a flash,
She's gone.

I remember
Branches
leaves
grass
And being late for school.

Mostly I remember
when all was quiet

peaceful
and beautiful.

Mostly I remember
her.

VIGNETTES: ENCOUNTERS WITH 'NATURE'

I am eight years old and attending a multi-grade school situated in the country. We do have a school playground, but at times that playground extends down the road. Sometimes it's a farmers' dugout where we go skating. One vivid memory is a slough just down the road. It must have been a dry year. The slough was dry and we could run through the cat tails. We designed a maze through them and spent much time running, playing hide and seek and stopping occasionally to find a curious bug or dragonfly or pop the cat tails. This truly was a natural playground – and no one had to set it up. We only had to discover it.

Skip ahead to my years of teaching in a preschool in an inner city area. Many of the children, whose ancestors had once had a close relationship with the land, had never set foot out of the city. Imagine the first trip out to a family summer camp. Delight, yes! But also a sense of fear of the unknown. A sense of wonder and some relief of the stress of urban living in conditions most of us could not cope with, prevailed. An escape!

It is 1985. It's my first teaching position in an elementary school and I'm arriving at school in early May. A curious sound comes from somewhere in the parking lot – or maybe it's from the field across the street. Memories of the meadow with the deer return as I recognize that sound from growing up on a prairie farm. A meadowlark! An indescribable feeling passes over me. It happens every morning. It actually happens for more than 15 years although I hardly think it was the same meadowlark. The mystery was that I actually didn't see this bird very often, but his song was the welcome sign that spring had arrived. I no longer teach at this school, but sometimes wonder if a meadowlark still returns to this area.

Just west on that same street and next to the same school was a pond. In those early years of teaching my grade one students and I would walk with the children to the pond at the edge of the school grounds. There we would spend time catching frogs and insects, releasing them because we felt it was healthier to leave them in their

natural environment (mostly I didn't want a frog jumping around in the classroom!). This pond was destroyed several years later as a housing development took over. For some time after, we could still cross the street and examine nature in a swampy field, but this too changed and became a soccer field.

Some years later I am teaching grade one. Over the summer I have acquired two peach ring-necked doves. In spite of my phobia about birds flying around my head (probably due to Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*), I have arrived at the point where I can let them out of the cage for some time (this is probably more due to the birds' own calm nature than mine) as the students and I observe their movements and sketch, write or talk about them. These birds are a source of curiosity for other students in the school as well. A blind kindergarten student with autism sometimes leaves her classroom and heads down the hallway to ours. The first time she is curious about the sound coming from the back corner of the classroom. She enters our classroom, walks to that corner, places both hands up high against the cage, and presses one side of her face against the cage wire to listen. She is silent for minutes and the rest of us just watch. Finally she asks, "Who is this?" We talk about what is in the cage. She comes back often after that and the next year she is a student in my classroom.

Cheepers in her cage

One day there is a squeal from the corner with the cage – "*Look at the eggs!*" All of us rush to the back. One of the birds has left the nest momentarily and we can see two tan coloured eggs. Someone suggests that we tone down our voices because the babies are sleeping. Throughout the day we continue to watch what Cuckoo and Cheepers are doing. We have a lot of questions. *Who sits on the eggs? Do they take turns (they should!). Will these eggs hatch? How long will it take? What will the babies eat? What will we do with them?* (According to grade ones, we keep any offspring!) *What will we name them? Will they have twins? Should we do anything special for the birds while they are sitting on the eggs?* We search for any and all information we can find about doves.

Fourteen days later we have a pleasant surprise – there are two scrawny, pink, featherless babies. *Why don't they have feathers? Can we hold them?* We watch. *What are the parents feeding their young?* Two days later, I arrive at school early in the morning and go to check on the birds. One baby appears very listless – in fact very still. I watch for a while and then decide this one didn't make it. *Do I remove it? Do I leave it for the students to discover?* The children arrive at school and do the morning ritual of checking in on the birds. They notice the still one, but not at first. *Oh, it's sleeping.* Okay, now is the time I need to say something. We are sad. *Why? What do we do with it?*

Snowflake (the baby) out of the nest for the first time.

About two weeks later we hear some rather angry sounds coming from the cage. One of the adult birds appears to be trying to attack the remaining baby. *Why is he being so mean? What are we going to do? What would these birds eat if they were in the wild? Would Cuckoo and Cheepers survive in the wild? Where do birds such as these live?*

Several months ago I visited a teacher store in search of musical instruments for a preschool classroom. It was the middle of August and the store was crowded with excited and somewhat nervous looking teachers. What hit me first though were the shelves and shelves of theme books, skills workbooks in Math and Reading, brightly coloured borders, posters with important strategies for students to use and vast array of numerous other items to decorate classrooms. I observed some teachers who, like myself, have a considerable number of years of teaching under their belt, reaching for more workbooks with reproducible pages. I restrained myself from shouting, "Don't do it. Put it back. Trust yourself. You can do better! You can think for yourself! And so can the kids." I gazed at other faces that didn't seem old enough to have a teaching certificate, but I suspected were either beginning or newly experienced teachers. This time I wanted to cry out, "Stop! Don't fall into this trap! Go with what you believe and dream!" I left the store, having forgotten about the musical instruments and feeling somewhat discouraged, got into my car and drove home. I thought about those classrooms, with the prepared materials decorating the walls – many of these materials not created by teachers (or students) but created *for* them – classroom walls with charts that contained great information, but would likely not mean a lot to students because they didn't have any input.

   I also thought about the classrooms with walls and bulletin boards that would be virtually empty on the first day of school, but would gradually fill up with student work representing student learning.

   What is it that is different between these two environments? Clearly, the physical aspects of these classrooms are a contrast. The big difference is in the beliefs and practices of the classroom teacher. How does this relate to the understanding of environment? I agree with Catherine Burke and Ian Grosvenor who state in their study *School,* that a school building, although sometimes silently, tells students who they are and how they should think about the world. "It can help to manufacture role obedience or independent activity" (Lurie, 2008, p. 31). I would venture to say that it can manufacture wonder or disengagement from the environment. Teacher created environments and commercial decorations for the classroom become scenery that does not necessarily promote engagement.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS:WHY AND HOW

I have been teaching for twenty five plus years now, and I wonder: How do children's early experiences with the natural world create an appreciation for nature, and will this help to create a disposition of wonder and caring for the environment that will last throughout their lives? How can we create classroom environments that promote

this? Why are my memories so significant to me? Why is it so easy to recall those experiences?

Richard Louv, author of *Last child in the Woods: Saving Out children From Nature-Deficit Disorder,* states that the health of children is at stake, but so is the health of the Earth. Studies have shown that, "almost to a person, conservationists or any adults with environmental awareness had some transcendent experience in nature when they were children. For some, the epiphanies took place in a national park; for others, in the clump of trees at the end of the cul-de-sac. If kids aren't going outside, who is going to care about the spotted owl or other endangered species in ten or fifteen years?" (Louv, 2007, p. 3).

What about those children who do not have the opportunity to live in and explore more natural settings? Is there anything we can do as classroom teachers to bring the natural world to children? Does the classroom environment send a message? What kind of environment supports children in their social-emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual development? "Environments have the power to shape the learning that takes place" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education 2008. *Play and Exploration.*).

Children are busy these days. They are in sports, dance, and all sorts of social events. Many of these activities involve physical movement, but we need to be careful not to equate physical activity with time playing in nature. Connecting with nature may involve physical activity, but physical activity does not necessarily involve connecting with nature.

In fact 'play' is too often seen as 'free time' or frivolous, and not as learning. Look at some preschool classrooms, and observe how much time is planned by the teacher rather than a time for children to explore materials and make sense of the world around them. Instead of the emphasis on academic skills, teachers need to be observant and responsive to children's play and conversations, watching for developing themes, questions, understandings and misunderstandings expressed by children and develop curricula that responds to these. By doing so, teachers work at supporting the children in developing a disposition to pay attention to their own emotions and needs and those of others. Diversity is honoured, children are taught to think critically and take action, children's identities are valued, and teachers become aware of their own cultural identities and how these shape their teaching.

"They cultivate a sense of place—of belonging to a particular patch of earth and sky—and a connection to the earth and its creatures. Teachers take the children outdoors and bring the natural world into the classroom, inviting the children to engage their senses and their minds as they come to know and care about—and to care for—the place where they are spending their days" (Pelo, 2008, p. 2).

Granted, children have a much more restricted range now than they did when my brother and I encountered the deer in the meadow as we took our time getting to school. Many also do not have the surroundings that encourage a lot of wonder about nature. All the more reason to provide those opportunities and look for those opportunities which may not be as obvious at first!

It is interesting to see the trends over the past fifty years. During the 1960s and 1970s many old fashioned parks turned into 'adventure playgrounds'. Children played on inventive, original wooden structures and many other materials such as boxes, boards, logs were provided. There were piles of pebbles and rocks, and lots of sand to dig in. "The implication was that the world was full of possibility, and you could change it" (Lurie, 2008, p. 91). Today we have worries about children getting splinters, falling off things and being injured on swings and slides and other climbing equipment. Instead we have rubber surfaces and un-movable objects. Plastic has replaced stones, plants, and grass. The message is that the world is dangerous and that children are fragile and vulnerable and have to be supervised at all times. Many toys are already programmed to make the sounds and movements that children used to have to make themselves, for example, dolls that talk and pee and burp and cars that are controlled with a remote. Lurie (2008) states that this may cause a child to think that excitement, adventure, invention are only available secondhand, on expensive little game-playing devices. Adults may think of these as safer. "After all, whether you are six or sixty, if you never leave the house or turn off your computer, nothing bad will probably ever happen to you – and also, very likely, nothing really good" (Lurie, 2008, p. 91).

The small town of Reggio Emilia in Italy is known internationally for its early childhood programs. The town was devastated by World War II, but the people were determined to create a new culture to resist the fascism which had taken hold. They set up school each day on the courthouse steps so that city officials would have to meet them. Their goal: to create public schools for young children and open to everyone in the community, which would be organized around the values of critical thinking and joyful collaboration. It was, and is still believed, that early childhood is the time when we develop our core dispositions which shape how we live. This included, among other things, the disposition of ecological consciousness. The founders of these schools believed that history can be changed and that quality early education is a must for all children. In these schools teachers organize environments, setting up provocations that invite the children to undertake extended exploration and problem solving. Natural materials are part of the school environment and documentation of children's work, plants, and collections that children have made from outings are displayed (Pelo, 2008).

There is research which supports the value of nature experiences for children. A movement to reconnect children and nature called the *Children and Nature Network* reports research done on the benefits of children's development through connecting with nature. The following are some of the highlights, and the reports can be read in full detail at the following site: http://www.childrenandnature.org/.

- Green plants and natural vistas are linked with reduced stress among highly-stressed children in rural areas, with the results the most significant where there are the greatest number of plants, green views and access to natural play areas (Wells & Evans, 2003).

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- Play, especially unstructured, imaginative, exploratory play—is as an essential component of wholesome child development. Unstructured play, indoors or outdoors, allows children to initiate activity rather than waiting for an adult to direct them. They use problem-solving skills, their imagination, negotiating skills with peers, and others. The outdoors, with its diverse plants and landscapes, invites children to act on their natural curiosity and provides a uniquely engaging environment for unstructured play. Children's natural curiosity leads to scientific learning—not only specific details of nature, but also processes like questioning, hypothesizing and drawing conclusions. For example, the outdoors invites questions such as, "Why is the moss growing here but not over there?" (Burdette & Whitaker, 2005; Ginsburg et al., 2007).
- Proximity to, views of, and daily exposure to natural settings has been associated with children's ability to focus and enhances cognitive abilities (Wells, 2000).
- Based on surveys of teachers in schools with diverse natural settings, children who experience school grounds with such natural settings are more physically active, more aware of nutrition and more likely to engage in more creative forms of play, and they play more cooperatively (Bell & Dyment, 2006).
- Proximity to, views of, and daily exposure to natural settings has been associated with children's ability to focus and enhances cognitive abilities (Wells, 2000). Studies of students in California and across the United States showed that schools that used outdoor classrooms and other forms of nature-based experiential education were associated with significant student gains in social studies, science, language arts, and math. One recent study found that students in outdoor science programs improved their science testing scores by 27 percent (American Institutes for Research, 2005).
- Positive direct experience in the out-of-doors and being taken outdoors by someone close to the child—a parent, grandparent, or other trusted guardian— are the two factors that most contribute to individuals choosing to take action tobenefit the environment as adults (Chawla, 2006).
- In 2006, Cornell University researchers Nancy Wells and Kristi Lekies went beyond studying the childhood influences of environmentalists; they looked at a broad sample of urban adults, ages 18 to 90. The study indicated that the most direct route to adult concern and behavior related to the environment is participating in such "wild nature activities" as playing independently in the woods, hiking, and fishing before the age of 11 (Wells & Lekies, 2006).
- Children do need mentors, however. In other surveys of environmental leaders, according to University of Colorado environmental psychologist Louise Chawla, most attributed their commitment to a combination of two sources in childhood or adolescence: many hours spent outdoors in "keenly remembered" wild or semi-wild places, and a mentoring adult who taught respect for nature (Chawla, 2006).

I believe a sense of wonder toward what is around us can be encouraged by elevating the status of natural play and creating natural surroundings for our schools. Thousands

of adults head to the cottage or to the wilderness to relax and get away from mental fatigue. We see many seniors' complexes built with an emphasis on gardens, shrubs and spaces to interact with nature. There are many wonderful public parks with creative ideas. Why not our schoolyards? We need to trust our children, teach them responsibility for their surroundings and teach them respect for nature. Louv (2008) warns that if each generation takes the natural environment they experienced in childhood as the norm, a very alarming thought is that gradually our children will lose all sense of wonder, appreciation and caring about the environment because of their lack of experience with natural environments. In this future, even if younger parents (and I would suggest teachers) see the benefits of nature play and wish this for their children, they might not know where to start. School is one place, although communities and governments all play a role too. What can teachers do?

- Get started by taking advantage of resources such as PROJECT WILD (http://www.projectwild.org) where the emphasis is on how to think, not what to think about wildlife and the environment and Heifer International (http://www.heifer.org/) whose goal is to help end world hunger and poverty through self-reliance and sustainability.
- Teach young children to "read" squirrel and rabbit tracks instead of fretting over print on a page. Teach them to read and write and think while they explore topics about the environment.
- Plan a "green" schoolyard with students.
- Discover where our food and other products come from such as bananas, coffee or cut flowers. What are the effects of our wants in North America?
- Develop a sense of wonder by bringing the "throw-aways" into the classroom. Sprout the avocado pits that are thrown away, sprout a sweet potato and watch the vine grow and grow, bring a Venus fly trap into the classroom and feed it.
- Use technology for children to explore places they can't physically get to. For example, there are many sites with the sounds and sights of the rainforest or the desert if you can't get there yourself.
- Create outdoor environment indoors – create invitations for learning e.g., birds, nests, twigs, eggs, sketching. Watch and listen to children as they interact with these materials.
- Study nature artists such as G. O' Keefe, Robert Bateman.
- Use drama to become something or somebody in nature – e.g., a seed growing, an animal hiding from its prey.
- Write from the perspective of an insect or animal.
- Invite children to watch the moon and stars and keep a journal.
- Become involved in service learning – ask children how they could help beautify the community or school grounds.
- Make compost and use it for a classroom garden or plants around the school.
- Purchase a loupe (small magnifying glass) for each student – they will love using them to examine and observe things up close.

- Map the flora and fauna of your neighbourhood. Don't be too quick to dismiss this idea if you live in the middle of a city. I see deer, coyotes, racoons and rabbits regularly, and I live in the city.
- Make nature a part of all curricula, not just science. Sing, dance, move and make visual representations of nature.
- Recycle, but not just at school. Change your own habits.
- Use photography to zoom in on nature.
- Do these things, but talk about them – model your sense of wonder as you question, makes connections, and share how being more observant has changed your thinking.

Children's literature is a wonderful way of looking at things we take for granted from another perspective or learning about resources that are not in our own physical surroundings. Literature can also transform our thinking about issues or even introduce issues we weren't aware of. The following are just a few books which can extend everyone's thinking – teachers and students.

Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman (1997)

A community is transformed when a young girl plants a few lima beans in an abandoned lot. This book is told in a series of vignettes written from a first-person perspective of a very diverse group of characters. Some of the characters are young, some are old; some are new to America, some were born there. They all connect to a vacant lot in the neighbourhood in their own way and have their own reasons for coming to the garden. They represent a diverse group of people but come together to form a real community. The garden brings beauty, but also a sense of pride and community. The book can be a springboard to questions such as:

- In what way are we connected to the earth?
- Does it matter where our food comes from and how we get it?
- Is sustainability different than conservation?
- How does what I do affect others?
- How can we respect diverse ways of meeting needs and wants?
- How has technology affected environment?
- Sustainability: Are we are meeting our own needs without limiting the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry (1990)

This beautifully illustrated book can be used to convince children of the importance of rain-forest conservation. Lynne Cherry visited the Amazon rain forest to gather drawings for the book and capture the reality of the forest. The story is about a man who falls asleep while chopping down a kapok tree. The forest's inhabitants – snakes, butterflies, a jaguar, and finally a child—each whisper in his ear about

the terrible consequences of living in a world without trees or beauty, about the interconnectedness of all living things. When the man awakens and sees all the extraordinary creatures around him, he leaves his ax and walks out of the rain forest. A map showing the earth's endangered forests and the creatures that dwell is included at the end. Children can explore the world of the rainforest and extend their learning by discussing things like the effects of global warming on rainforests.

City Green by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan (1994)

A vacant lot fills up with trash. Marcy, with the help of her neighbours, turns it into a community garden of flowers and vegetables. The book provides children with practical suggestions on how to start a community garden and might lead to developing their own neighbourhood project. There is a strong connection to the concept of democracy here. Are individuals and communities involved in making decisions about such issues?

Pearl Moscowitz's Last Stand by Arthur Levine (1993)

In this story a very important tree in an urban neighbourhood is threatened by a city order to cut it down. Mrs. Moscowitz resorts to civil disobedience by chaining herself to the tree when all other things fail to convince the city. The story illustrates how conflict is not necessarily bad, but can be an opportunity for growth and positive change.

*The Streets are Free by Kurusa (1995***)**

This book is based on the true story of the children of the barrio of San Jose de la Urbina, who through cooperative effort, make their dream of a playground reality.

The Secret Shortcut by Mark Teague (1996)

In this adventure, try as they might, Wendell and Floyd cannot seem to make it to school on time. First they are captured by space creatures; then they encounter pirates and a plague of frogs. Finally, they try a shortcut, only to be distracted by quicksand swamps and sleeping crocodiles. The story illustrates how the natural world can evoke imagination in children. This is a children's story, but has a deep message for adults. Are we encouraging the creative, imaginative minds of children as they play outdoors?

CONCLUSION

One of the most important challenges for us, as educators, will be to recruit a new generation of environmentally conscious people – children, teen-agers, college students and other young people whose commitment to the earth grows from

personal experience in wild places in their own neighborhoods, woods, fields, arroyos, mountains and oceans (Charles et al., 2008). Perhaps this early grounding of important environmental and ecological issues will result in making issues like global warming, groundwater pollution and deforestation less remote for them.

Early childhood programs and ecological teaching go hand in hand because young children are forming the understandings and dispositions that will shape how they interact with the earth. "Will they learn that the earth is a resource to be used and abused by humans with little attention to the price of that use, or will they grow a more intimate relationship with the earth that ranks the environment high on the list of 'things to consider' in every decision? Our planet cannot afford another generation of children to grow up disregarding the earth, the sky, the water, and all who live in them. And children cannot afford to grow up ignorant of the earth and its ways, displaced from their ecological home terrain by lack of intimate knowledge" (Pelo, 2008, p. 5).

What is needed for this is teachers who themselves are engaged and curious and willing to listen and think critically, be aware and who will resist following scripted manuals that do not address the needs of children and the needs of our world.

Nature is there, but you have to discover it. We will have to help our children discover it, and discover it ourselves. Nature is not just scenery.

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PART 2

DIVERSITY

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5. INTERWEAVING DIVERSITY

> In order to ensure equity of opportunity to learn, must we treat all learners equally?

Teacher candidates enter the classroom to find this question written on the blackboard. I ask them to contemplate their response to this question and to elaborate their reasoning. Many swiftly move toward the conclusion that treating all learners equally is fundamentally unfair, because learners are not 'equal' to each other – that there are differences among learners that demand differences in treatment so that everyone has the same opportunity to learn. This reasoning launches us into a conversation about how teachers might deal with diversity – a conversation that often leaves becoming-teachers wide-eyed with anxiety as they contemplate the multiple diversities among students with whom they will be working.

While I do not intend to frighten teacher candidates *per se*, I think that teachers must acknowledge and celebrate diversity if we are to truly develop learning-filled opportunities for everyone. To me, then, diversity is not only a generative concept of social studies, but also an idea that lies behind democratic, transformative schooling and all the choices teachers make.

But how am I defining and using the term 'diversity'? Why should diversity be considered a generative concept and why is acknowledgement and celebration of diversity important for learning?

The idea of diversity, or differences among and between human beings, compels us to look at people on an individual level. Diversity of human beings has everything to do with the particularities of each individual with respect to personality characteristics, physical characteristics, age, sexuality, gender, race, class, ableness, skills, capacities, interests, and so on. Embracing the concept of diversity means that categorization is difficult, because each individual personality is actually a 'multiple identity' constructed by the intersections of all of these differences. While I think that the idea of multiple identities is generative because it opens up exciting possibilities for exploring complexity, I also know that this idea can be overwhelming for pre-service teachers as they contemplate the oft-espoused notion that they are to 'meet the needs of individual learners'.

This is one of the trickiest parts of being a teacher in publicly funded educational institutions where the work will always involve engaging with fairly large groups of learners. In these circumstances, teachers must balance knowledge of how to work with groups, with the knowledge that they must see the differences among and

within group members. Teachers need to tackle the thorny problem of seeing and celebrating diversities while creating a sense of connectedness in the communities of their classrooms and schools. And this is the question that bamboozles teacher candidates – how to create 'learningful' opportunities and a sense of connectedness when there is so much diversity. This is the tension – the excitement – the chaos – without which I think our world becomes bland, like spaghetti without any sauce.

Further, teacher candidates can also find themselves caught up in traditional aspects of school culture, which resist the idea of embracing and celebrating diversity. We cannot forget that one of the original purposes of publicly funded schooling was to impose conformity through processes of assimilation. Bring to mind, for one example, words written in the North West Territories, *Report of the Superintendent of Education* (1898):

> One of our most serious and pressing educational problems arises from the settlement among us of so many foreign nationalities in the block or "colony" system. …To assimilate these different races, to secure the co-operation of these alien forces, are problems demanding for their solution, patience, tact and tolerant but firm legislation. …Only through our schools getting an early hold of the children of these settlers can we hope to train them to live according to our social system, and to understand and appreciate the institutions of the country which they are to form an integral part. (pp. 11–12 & 24–26)

Past tendencies toward imposing conformity, along with the penchant for categorization of learners, are problems embedded in the culture of schooling. Teacher educators need to support both pre- and in-service teachers in moving past these patterns and dispositions. The question is: How?

Some scholars warn that in acknowledging human difference, we need to think about the question: 'Different from what?' (Lumby, 2006). The worry here seems to be that we might have some idealized version of normal in mind – that is, a normalized or 'average' identity-type – to which others are compared and seen as different. While this concern about the 'othering' of people is real when contemplating the treatment of groups of people (groups who have been lumped together in categories according to generic differences, like race, gender and so on), I do not think it is helpful or respectful, to ignore the differences among people on an individual level. I do not see the acknowledgment and celebration of the diversity of our multiple identities as othering. We are all, in fact, different from each other. And, interestingly, in this fact, we are all the same – that is, no one is anything other than 'different' from everyone else.

At the same time, I also argue that despite differences, we have an organic similarity – that is, we are all similar because we are all deeply connected within our belonging to our earth community – and the earth community thrives on diversity. I think this idea could prove useful to teachers as they contemplate ways they can celebrate diversity while working with groups, so at this point I will take a moment to discuss the notion of biodiversity, why it is important, and how this idea might

inform our thinking about the importance of acknowledging and celebrating human diversity.

"The sheer diversity of life is of inestimable value" (Biodiversity Unit, 1993), because it takes complex and varied members of our earth community, working together, to ensure the health of our planet. For example, rock, soil, and sand filter undesirable particles from water. Various insects pollinate flowers, fruits and berries, and assist microbes, bacteria, and fungi in transforming plant and animal wastes into organic material that enriches soil. Plants and trees prevent soil erosion, while birds and animals ingest and disperse plant seeds. Air and water circulate heat, nutrients, and chemical elements such as carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and phosphorus which are necessary to sustain life.

Further, "biodiversity bestows the ability to adapt to change" (Science and Technology Division, 1993). When ecosystems are richly diverse, there are many and varied members of the earth community that could adapt and take up the jobs that need doing if the primary doers are damaged or destroyed. On the other hand, if diversity is reduced, the ecosystem is at risk because there are fewer kinds community members available, and they may not be able to adapt enough (or rapidly enough) to take up the duties of those that become damaged or destroyed. Hence, the more diversity found in ecosystems, the greater the capacity for resilience.

When translating these ideas into arguments about the importance of human diversity, I think the metaphor works well. We can argue that the sheer diversity among human beings is of 'inestimable value', because it takes complex and varied members of our human community, working together, to ensure the health of our community. We need to celebrate individual differences and acknowledge that the richness and vibrancy of our lives together would be reduced without this complexity. Further, we can argue that because humans are 'richly diverse', we have an increased capacity for adapting to change. In other words, individual differences between and among people, actually enhances the resilience of human communities.

I think this set of ideas can prove useful to teachers as they contemplate ways they can celebrate diversity while working with groups, because these notions help us see why it is important to resist assimilationist tendencies embedded in traditional school culture. When teachers embrace the idea that differences are imperative for the health of our community(ies), the complexity of celebrating individual diversities while working with groups may not seem so overwhelming. Knowing that differences enhance the capacity for resilience, teachers can think about ways of bridging differences (Harrell & Bond, 2006), rather than ignoring these. But, how can we reduce the anxiety felt by pre-service teachers as they begin to contemplate the multiple diversities among students with whom they will be working? In other words, can teacher educators help teacher candidates embrace the notion that complexity and diversity is beneficial for the health of their classroom community?

The work of 'bridging differences' (Harrell & Bond, 2006) sometimes includes moving out of our comfort zone, to acknowledge that differences among human beings have been at the root of inequitable power relationships. Bridging differences

involves developing an appreciation for our shared humanity while, at the same time recognizing that aspects of human diversity, including race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexual orientation, have been used as an excuse for oppression.

Bridging differences requires *seeing* the differences, *seeking* a contextualized understanding of the differences, and *examining* one's own identity statuses and social locations in relationship to the differences. Bridging differences is a process, not an outcome. The work of bridging differences is ongoing and dynamic. It involves consistent engagement in descriptive, analytic, and reflective processes (Harrell & Bond, 2006, p. 374).

The idea of 'living multiculturalism' is the umbrella notion I use when attempting to assist teacher candidates in understanding the importance of acknowledging learner diversity and considering approaches for bridging differences. Living multiculturalism cannot be encapsulated as a single or particular method, approach or strategy, but rather needs to arise out of sets of suppositions that underpin a teacher's way of living, breathing and thinking. While I know that my capacity to change taken-for-granted notions is limited, I introduce the following ideas during initial meetings with teacher candidates and then attempt to show what each of these aspects of living multiculturalism might look like using various activities and demonstrations throughout the term. I ask teacher candidates to contemplate living multiculturalism by:

- becoming vigilantly aware of personal values and presuppositions, how these influence personal behaviour, and how these differ from others' values and presuppositions
- becoming vigilantly aware of the multiple facets of identity that influence each learner as an individual who deserves respect
- becoming vigilantly aware that each person has different learning needs
- acknowledging and critiquing power imbalances and inequities
- acknowledging multiple ways of knowing, which includes using a wide variety of learning activities, and assessment and evaluation approaches to address a wide variety of learning styles and preferences
- acknowledging, celebrating and respecting difference.

On-campus study is only partially effective in helping teacher candidates understand learner diversity, however, and some aspects of traditional 'student teaching' field experiences serve to reinforce anxieties about dealing with diversity in classrooms.

As an alternative to traditional field experiences, I would like to share a discovery a colleague and I made when we undertook an investigation into the efficacy of intergenerational literature circles as (a) a means of improving literacy across the curriculum using a resource-based learning approach, (b) an integrated approach to social studies concept development and to understanding diverse perspectives, and (c) a method to assist teacher candidates in understanding the complexities of their role as professional teachers.

In this project, teacher candidates enrolled in my social studies method course engaged in field experiences that involved them in working as co-learners/mentors with grade school students in intergenerational literature circles, where all participants explored social studies concepts through discussions of novels they read. While it was not part of our explicit intent to discover if working as co-learners/mentors with grade school students assisted teacher candidates in building their appreciation for human diversity, comments recorded by teacher candidates and voluntarily submitted as part of the data for this project, indicates that they did just that.

For instance, teacher candidates wrote about how their work in literature circles helped them discover that they are teaching individuals, not a homogeneous group. They learned that they must take diversity into account by considering learning styles, skills, interests, developmental differences, ways of representing understanding and so on. For example, two different teacher candidates wrote:

> I feel that I have learned a lot as a teacher over the past few weeks working in literature circles. I have seen what a great range of learning abilities, styles, and interests can exist within one small group of children, let alone an entire classroom. It has made me realize that I will have to be very vigilant in attending to the great and varied needs of my students when I have my own classroom.

> Reflecting on my literature circle experience has helped me to carefully consider the type of students I have worked with thus far as a teacher-candidate I need, at all times, to be aware of who my students are as individuals, so that I can best teach to their needs and abilities and so I can be inclusive of the unique perspectives and varied identities that they bring to the learning process.

While the discovery of differences is not unusual in field experiences, it appears that working in the more intimate situation as co-learners/mentors brought home to teacher candidates, in a very profound fashion, the subjective nature of learning. The following comment by a teacher candidate involved in the project not only illustrates this point, but also demonstrates the preconceived notions that can influence adult judgments about young learners' thinking processes.

> At first I thought that the group was just poor at comprehension in reading because they were making poor predictions that I thought were off topic. This thought soon changed after realizing that the students were placing meaning and importance on different aspects of the novel based on their understanding in relation to their own lives and experiences. Each child experiences different things in life, each situation affecting them in different ways. As a teacher, I need to recognize that each student will be able to relate to the same story in different ways. Each individual will place more value on a certain aspect of the, story more than another.

And, as important as understanding the subjective nature of learning, working in intergenerational literature circles seems to have supported teacher candidates in

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realizing that multiple understandings of material (diverse perspectives) should be welcomed and encouraged. While neither of the teacher candidates quoted below express this idea explicitly, I think this is implied in their commentaries:

It was most interesting, today and over the past four sessions with our students, to see how each student responded differently to the text they read. It seemed that in every chapter the students each picked out something that they found interesting or that aroused questions in them. They responded in different ways with unique insights to the events that unfolded in the story. For example, one student felt that the book was all about death, whileanother student felt it was about sadness and miscommunication. While we all came away with some general understandings and shared common feelings about events which transpired in the novel, we also developed our own individual interpretations of events, and we each found certain aspects of the story more interesting, and more emotionally affecting than others.

I have come to understand many of these things by having the opportunity to work with grade five students during our literature circle projects. I think that taking student's diversity into consideration is important. It is important to think about the different views that students may have on subject matter and why they have these ideas. I believe that it is important to create an environment in which each student feels comfortable sharing what makes him or her unique. We do not want to focus on differences so that children feel alienated or like they do not fit in, we want to teach students how important it is to honor differences.

Finally, I think one of the most powerful ideas discovered by teacher candidates during the intergenerational literature circle experiences was that diversity among learners is not to be feared, but celebrated. In fact, some commented on how the diversity among the literature circle members actually enhanced the learning experience for everyone, for example:

The different reaction to the book that the students had was valuable for the entire group. This discussion went a long way in validating the purpose of a literature circle. Bringing many differing minds together to talk about the same piece of literature only brings everyone in the group to a deeper understanding of the novel as a whole.

I have also seen, however, how students of varying interests, learning styles and abilities can help one another to build background knowledge, create learning connections, and think critically about material they are studying. This is why literature circles are so wonderful…being useful in almost every subject area and it excites me to think of all the educative possibilities it opens the door to.

The idea that diversity among learners actually enhances communal understandings connects back to arguments supporting the notion that diversity is of 'inestimable

value', because it takes complex and varied community members to ensure the health of our community(ies). It appears that the intergenerational literature circle field experience helped at least some teacher candidates realize that the richness and vibrancy of our lives together would be reduced without diversity and complexity. I think this discovery – that a field experience involving a 'nontraditional' co-learning/ teaching approach brought about deeper awareness of the power and significance of diversity – has some important implications for the education of social studies teachers (and teacher education, in general).

Earlier, I posed the question: Why should diversity be considered a generative concept and why is acknowledgement and celebration of diversity important for learning? I think diversity is a generative concept because it is a notion that encompasses individual differences, variety, and complexity while at the same time acknowledging the importance of interweaving differences to support an adaptive and healthy earth community. Celebration of diversity is important for learning because acknowledging and supporting the subjectivity of learning – the individual differences in perceptions between and among people – actually increases capacity for developing complex conceptual understandings. In turn, it can be argued that the capacity for developing complex and conceptual understandings gives human beings increased capacity for adapting to change, thus ensuring the resilience of human communities. What could be more 'generative' than this?

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6. DIVERSITY CREATES DIMENSION

Recently I visited a classroom where a poster on the wall displayed an array of diverse-looking butterflies. Below were the words *diversity creates dimension in our world*. Knowing that I was about to begin writing about diversity, I sighed a big sigh of relief! Finally I knew how I would begin.

That was the easy part. The more I thought about the topic of diversity, the more diverse became my thinking. Within the topic of diversity, there are many diverse issues and where should I begin? Schools are places where diversity abounds. You see and hear diversity within and among students and their thinking, the homes and backgrounds and beliefs from which these students come, the teachers who teach these students, the teaching methods and philosophies about teaching and learning, the access to resources available to schools and classrooms, and the administrators and their expectations of their teachers and students. The list goes on. My dilemma was how to narrow down such a diverse topic.

I thought back to a grade six classroom I taught several years ago and remembered situations in which there were diverse opinions and where students would remind each other – and me – about diversity. Varying opinions about issues or ways to accomplish tasks would often result in someone piping up with "Diversity!" And yes, I had to be reminded too that my way wasn't the only way. At times individuals saw diversity as an unwelcome challenge. *Can't you just tell us how to do this instead of us coming up with other (diverse) possibilities? Can't you just tell us the answer?*

Diversity was a term and a concept used every day and often led to interesting conversations. This notion of 'living diversity' became clearer as I contemplated what to write. I knew that diversity in our world was an important concept to learn about, but also believed that diversity in the classroom could not be separated from this – in other words, the issue was '*living and learning about diversity'*. Students can learn a definition of the term *diversity*, but there's no guarantee that they will remember it, and even if they do, they may not really have developed an understanding of the concept. If we *live* diversity, we are much more likely to develop an understanding which is longer lasting because we will talk about it, explore what it means, and grapple with some pre-conceived notions we may have. As I write my thoughts about diversity, I also gain a better understanding of what I have learned about the concept of diversity in my classroom and from my students. My story tells of one way in which to explore diversity and how it creates dimension in our world (and in

our classrooms). It is a reflection of many years of teaching, but in particular, one year with grade six students. I intend to explore the following ideas:

- There is more than learning *about* diversity; diversity is a concept to explore in the classroom while addressing the diverse needs of students.
- Diversity presents opportunity.
- In a classroom where diversity is seen as opportunity, varying perspectives become the norm.
- Individual differences provide a wealth of ideas and solutions that allow students to compare, make connections, and go beyond just seeing differences.
- Conversation is key in exploring diversity in a constructivist classroom.

The context in which this concept was explored was a project in which my grade six students explored the theme *Unity Within Diversity*. This was an interdisciplinary theme where Social Studies concepts were explored through literature circles. I wanted my students to explore diversity in a deeper way, and at the same time, respect the diverse ways in which they explored their thinking and represented their learning. What made this project unique was that teacher candidates from a nearby university made weekly visits to this classroom and participated in intergenerational literature circles. Teacher candidates explored alternate ways of teaching Social Studies and observed ways in which younger students read and thought about their reading. Since one effective way to explore diversity is through literature, the text we used, fiction, non-fiction, informational, both print and electronic, was an important aspect of our work. To summarize this project, students read historical fiction novels to begin their exploration, but this led to many conversations, inquiry research, and diverse ways of representing their understanding. The approach allowed both teacher candidates and younger students to construct their own understanding of *diversity*.

LIVING IN A DIVERSE CLASSROOM

Let me provide some background context. Exploration of diversity did not happen overnight. During the first few months of school, my students and I spent time trying to create a safe and respectful culture in the classroom. We talked about respect, rights and responsibilities in the classroom and explored the concepts of perspective and point of view. Being respectful of different perspectives was practiced and reflected upon through discussion and writing. This language was not unfamiliar and could be heard throughout the day whether looking at different ways of solving a problem in math or in a variety of social situations. Often literature became the springboard for discussions. A great book to begin the topic of diverse perspectives was Anthony Browne's *Voices in the Park, which* portrays perspectives of four different characters on a trip to the park. Discussions of what the worldview of each character might be followed the reading. Students could relate quite easily to how they might have a different perspective than someone else about the same situation. The discussion

became very interesting when they shared reasons for their thinking. Representation strategies such as a discussion web helped students consider diverse perspectives.

Another story that engaged students in exploring diverse perspectives was *Lady in the Box* by Ann McGovern. In this picture book, two young children see a homeless woman living in a cardboard box in front of a deli very near to their apartment. They are bothered by this and want to talk to her, but know that their mother has told them not to talk to strangers. My students were given a question *Should the children talk to the woman?* and discussed the pros and cons of this issue before presenting their decisions to the rest of the class.

A Discussion Web for *The Lady in the Box*:

NO

Because she is a stranger.
Because they don't know
if they can trust her.
Because they don't have their
mother's permission

Should the
children talk to
the woman?

Decision

YES

Because she needs help.
Because she is cold and
hungry.
Because the shop owner
is being mean to her.
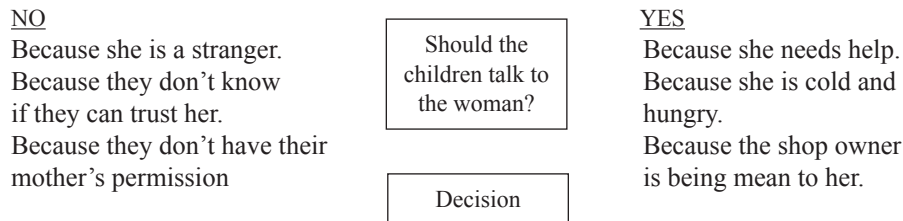
Conversation is key to understanding. However, students need time to practice the skills of having a discussion, but also need the time and opportunity to reflect on the discussion and think about how they enable or discourage a safe environment in which diverse perspectives are respected. We role-played and talked about aspects of discussion such as how to include everyone in a discussion or how to respond to someone who doesn't think like you do. The content of the discussions gave students the opportunity to practice these skills by clarifying, adjusting, and justifying their opinions, and hearing other perspectives. Previous research I had done with grade five students had convinced me that discussion helps students construct understanding and make meaning, and they themselves were aware of this. Those grade five students had reflected in this way, commenting:

It's really good 'cause then you hear what other people have to say and you get something better than if you were just to think of it on your own.

You give reasons for what you think.

You see other perspectives. (Epp, 1999)

LEARNING ABOUT DIVERSITY

A few months into the year, we began the intergenerational literature circles with the teacher candidates and the theme *Unity Within Diversity*. I wanted to get away from the all too common emphasis on 'food and festivals' and 'Culture Fest' celebration when studying different cultures. Of course there would be discussion of similarities

and differences, but the emphasis was more on what we do with differences. "Otherwise students will not become "border crossers" who cannot bridge the differences to embrace the humanness of all people" (Johnson, et al., 2005, p. 167). The essential questions that guided our thinking were:

- What is diversity?
- In what ways does learning about the past help us understand why people have different points of view?
- In what ways does interaction between groups of people affect each group?
- Can these interactions lead to change?
- What are people's rights and responsibilities in a diverse world?

The novels which were chosen to explore the theme covered a variety of topics – slavery, the Holocaust, British children coming to Canada as home children and war guest children, Mennonites living in Russia during the Revolution, and native issues, contemporary and historical. Although the topics covered were very diverse, that was also the connecting factor – they all dealt with diversity and how people handled it. The social studies methods course professor involved in the project and myself chose the following titles:

First Nations/Metis:
Across the Steel River by Ted Stenhouse
Morning Girl by Michael Dorris

The Holocaust:
Behind the Bedroom Wall by Laura Williams
Daniel's Story by Carol Matas

Slavery:
The Captive by Joyce Hansen
Underground to Canada by Barbara Smucker

British Children Coming to Canada:
Home Child by Barbara Haworth-Attard
The Lights Go On Again by Kit Pearson

Mennonites Living in Russia:
Days of Terror by Barbara Smucker

The grade six students and teacher candidates chose a topic that they were especially interested in, were given a novel that corresponded to this topic and met as groups to discuss the books on a weekly basis for about six weeks. Throughout this time, grade six students also became involved in and inquiry research project which grew out of their novel and discussions. Guidelines were given and at the end each group represented their learning in oral, written and visual formats.

Although participants may have read the same thing, they had different connections, questions, and opinions. These diverse connections and questions

depended on their background knowledge and experiences and this is where very interesting conversations happened. Students gave reasons for their ideas and learned how to respect others' ideas. They also listened to new perspectives and at times, adjusted their own thinking. The diverse thinking was viewed as positive. It made discussions more engaging and interesting, and provided support as students tried to make sense of what they were learning. The grade six students reflected and commented:

> If other people are stating their opinions, then you'll get some sort of a different understanding about the book too and they'll take a different meaning from the book too.

> Not everyone has to agree. Everyone has their own opinion. It makes it funner because you hear everyone's opinion and you want to keep on reading and you get more excited every chapter – you want to keep going.

> It's okay for people to have different opinions because it might help somebody more' cause they see other people's opinions and you can choose what you think is right and take a little from this person and a little from that person.

The novels proved to be the starting point. Often the discussions began with a big question someone had. For example, in a discussion around *Days of Terror*, one grade six student asked, "What would you do if someone was going to hurt your family? Would you fight back even if that was against your religion?" Other times, both teacher candidates and grade six students needed to increase their background knowledge regarding an historical event or other details and would either use the Internet or print materials to fill in missing gaps or try to understand the characters they were reading about. Another important activity for all group members was to examine the background contexts of the novel (social, economic, historical, geographical) so that they could see the story in context. Johnson et al. (2005) says that students may think the novels they read are not 'real'. Using the resource-based approach helped students to connect the 'story' to real-life events.

Students in the classroom were diverse. Not all were at the same 'reading level' or had the same interests. They were, however, all capable of thinking and exploring their own passions. Each made his/her own contributions to the classroom community. One student, who was a struggling reader and writer, needed much support, but in the end, participated with his small group in representing his learnings with a mobile. His peers recognized and respected the diversity of their group and helped each other choose representations that suited them.

The literature circles provided a context in which to give students opportunity to practice the skills and strategies that would make them independent readers. I modeled how I would try to make sense of what I was reading (not what to think, but *how* to think) and how this helped me understand what I was reading. In their literature circle discussions, students (university and grade sixes) were thinking aloud, and *struggling* to make sense of it. I do not use the word *struggling* in a

negative sense. Ellin Keene (2008), in *To Understand* says, "We struggle for insight; we savor and learn from the struggle itself; we venture into new learning territory and fight the debilitating influence of judgment" (p. 102). The book discussions would last about forty-five minutes, and often they would lament the fact that they hadn't had enough time to discuss.

Throughout the discussions about books, students have the opportunity to learn about issues such as racism, prejudice and social justice and how people throughout history have dealt with differences (Lobron & Selman, 2007). This was the case with my students and the teacher candidates who covered a variety of' 'heavy' topics in their discussions. Lobron and Selman (2007) describe social awareness as "the knowledge children have that allows them to understand and relate successfully to other people, both people like themselves and those who are from different backgrounds. Some of the key skills involved in the social awareness domain are negotiating with others, resolving conflicts, expressing one's point of view, and listening to the perspectives of others" (p. 528). The literature circle participants were certainly doing this and it wasn't always a smooth and easy

The role of conversation was pivotal in exploring the concept of diversity. By providing opportunities to discuss issues presented in these books, students developed the ability to talk about those issues. Talking about them developed their understanding about them. Johnson et al. (2005) says that readers bring individual values, attitudes and histories to their readings and must be aware of how these may influence the transactions they have with a text. By articulating their thoughts, students began to develop the vocabulary necessary to discuss issues such as racism, etcetera, and to question themselves and each other about their assumption that one's perceptions of the world is the norm. Although students read different novels which focused on different events and issues in history, they were given the opportunity to talk and make connections between them. In a constructivist classroom, when children are exposed to different ways of thinking or different ways of doing things and these ideas are welcomed, diverse ideas become the norm. These diverse perspectives may cause dissonance, but also cause others to question their own ideas and assumptions. This holds true for students, but also for teachers.

Dressel (2003) points out the importance of writing from another's point of view as key to understanding another perspective. Character interviews were one writing activity that allowed students to do this. Students took on the role of a character from their novels and were interviewed by someone else. In turn, each student got to interview a character from another book. This forced them to think about the character in that context and what she/he would have said or done in response to these questions. Not only did this require them to think about their own character, but it also introduced them to others' perspectives. At another time, students worked in pairs to write a "Poems for Two Voices", patterned after poems from *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* by Paul Fleischman (1988). Students who read *Morning Girl* (Dorris, 1992) thought about the main character, a Taino girl who encounters white explorers for the first time. One student wrote from the girl's perspective,

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and one student wrote from the explorer's perspective. They co-wrote one poem to present these voices and discovered that the perspectives were different sometimes, and at times, quite similar. The poem was then read with both voices being heard simultaneously.

The question remains, *Did students deepen their understanding of the concept of diversity?* I believe they did. Our first attempts at defining diversity resulted in one-word responses such as 'differences'. Students brainstormed ideas of where we see diversity. That was the first essential question. When the other questions were first posted, students looked at them with some confusion. At the end of our explorations, responses were much more elaborate and showed deeper understanding as shown by the students' responses below:
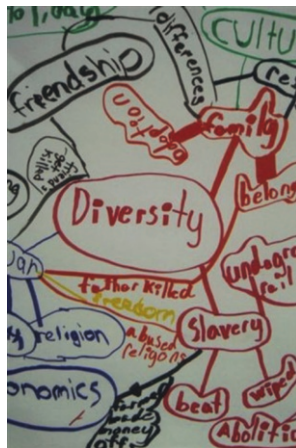
What is diversity?

Diversity is altogether everyone's differences. It is the things that are different even in the smallest ways. Diversity is everywhere. Everywhere you look there is diversity whether it's right before your eyes or somewhere you can see clearly. Everything is diverse.

In what ways does learning about the past help us understand why people have different points of view?

You discuss why people's points of view are what they are.

Perspective means you can be close together but see different things. Like a two-coloured ball: one side is black and one side is white. You're standing close but you see different things.

We talked about how interesting it was that there are so many books about a Jewish child's experience and not from Nazi children.

In what ways does interaction between groups of people affect each group? Can these interactions lead to change?

> Interactions lead to change by people changing their points of view. When a person sees something from another person's angle, their opinion may change.

> Interactions can lead to major change like friendship between races that could never be friends without interaction.

What are people's rights and responsibilities in a diverse world?

> People's rights are to be free, be safe, have food and water, to voice our opinions and beliefs if we chose to, to make mistakes, to be listened to, and to be different! People's responsibilities are to not hurt people or their feelings, to not discriminate people because of how they look or think, and …let people be different!

Teacher candidates also reflected on their learnings and realizations about the diversity of students in the classroom and diversity as opportunity. They commented, for example:

> I feel that I have learned a lot as a teacher over the past few weeks. I have seen what a great range of learning abilities, styles, and interests can exist within one small group of children, let alone an entire classroom. It has made me realize that I will have to be very vigilant in attending to the great and varied needs of my students when I have my own classroom. I have also seen, however, how students of varying interests, learning styles and abilities can help one another to build background knowledge, create learning connections, and think critically about material they are studying.

> I have been helped to see the importance of both teaching about diversity, and teaching with awareness of diversity that exists among students I am working with.

> I enjoy how the different perspectives of adults and young learners can come together, broadening the knowledge of both groups.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

These are my reflections about one experience in exploring the concept of diversity. What have I learned? For one thing, as one teacher candidate put it: *I see the importance of bringing resources that present a variety of perspectives.*

Johnson et al. (2005) suggest "authors, their texts and readers all are situated within particular social, cultural, and historical contexts" (p. 42). These contexts influence authors' beliefs and what is written as well as how it is written. Readers'

responses are also culturally situated and readers' contexts influence how they perceive texts. Through conversation and teaching and learning the language of multiple perspectives, readers become more aware of their own beliefs and question these. If students are given the opportunity to wonder about diversity and ask, "Why?, they may be able to connect and engage with literature and people from other cultural locations because they realize that reality is not limited to what they know. Students need the opportunity to wonder.

Teachers must examine their own beliefs and assumptions. They must become, as Miller (2003) describes, 'co-learners and advocates for diversity'. We have more and more culturally diverse classrooms, and we need to look at this as a strength. Incorporating a student's native language and culture into the classroom, talking about the advantages of knowing more than one language, or looking at the historic roots of each language are only some ways of acknowledging and valuing diversity in the classroom.

> We can ignore or obliterate language diversity in the classroom, or we can encourage in our teachers and students a mental set for diversity. Choosing the latter helps to develop linguistic diversity. Learning to talk in more than one way enables us to view students as resources who can help us learn what it feels like to move between cultures and language varieties and perhaps better learn how to and become citizens of a global community. (Delpit, 2006, p. 69)

Students' abilities and interests are diverse. Using constructivist teaching methods and finding out what students already know about a topic enables learning to proceed from where the child is at. Scripted lessons that are the same for every student in every school standardize learning. Even if policies try to mandate that students are seen through the same lens, we must see them as individuals. Not all students will learn the same things from each lesson or activity they participate in. They will construct their own knowledge and understanding at their level. Diversity adds layers to our classroom, to our own lives, and to the world. We cannot teach about diversity if we do not recognize the diversity in our classrooms.

We are all creative, but by the time we are three of four years old, someone has knocked the creativity out of us. Some people shut up the kids who start to tell stories. Kids dance in their cribs, but someone will insist they sit still. By the time the creative people are ten or twelve, they want to be like everyone else (Angelou, 2008). We must think of their differences as their strengths.

My understanding of diversity evolves continually. Addressing diverse needs in a classroom can a real challenge, but I am inspired by my grade six student who reminds us that our rights and responsibilities are to voice our opinions and beliefs if we chose to, to make mistakes, to be listened to, and to be different … *to not hurt people or their feelings, to not discriminate people because of how they look or think, and …let people be different!* Let diversity create dimension in our classrooms!

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7. A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

Recently, I was again confronted with evidence that people construct meaning in very different ways. I was chatting with a colleague after a hard day. She was ruminating about her move to a new office in another part of the university. This colleague found herself in the unenviable position of having to share an office; but true to form, she was willing to make the best of it. She mentioned that while unpacking her research books, she'd come across a small poster she'd brought with her from her former office. The poster, promoting tolerance of sexual diversity in the workplace, had been obtained from a well-known provincial organization and meant a lot to her. I wasn't surprised as I'd seen the poster before, and I knew my friend and colleague was supportive of all types of diversity. Indeed, this poster, along with several others, had graced the door of her recently vacated office, signaling to all that she was open and welcoming about issues of sexual diversity. I simply expected it would find its place on the door of her new office, but to my surprise, my colleague was casually wondering if she should put the poster up as it might offend her new office mate.

My colleague and I are old friends and we often engage in dynamic debate. What ensued was a robust discussion on the merits of promoting openness and acceptance and how we each understood the basic concept of 'diversity'. She offered arguments about common space, sensitivity, and the need to sometimes navigate through and around conflict. I countered with arguments about inclusivity and questioned why one person's discomfort should silence another's perspective. We ended the discussion with her unsure of how to proceed, and I shaking my head in wonder at the diverse views people can have on a topic. As I reflected on our discussion in the following days, I came to realize that I had been focusing strictly on principle, while she was considering principle *and* also negotiating sensibilities. We never discussed the issue again, but last week I visited her office and to my great pleasure noticed the poster prominently displayed on her office door. It continues to welcome and inspire all who read it.

WHAT IS 'DIVERSITY'?

Diversity is an interesting concept to consider if only because it is so ubiquitous in our lives. We, and all living things, are the embodiment of diversity to the extent that we exist as 'different' in one way or another from others. To be separate is to be

distinct from and to be different is to be unique. This, to me, is the joyous wonder of life itself. How incredibly boring would it be if we were all the same in every way!

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines diversity as the 1) "state or fact of being diverse; difference; unlikeness", and 2) "variety; multiformity" ("American Heritage Dictionary", n. d.). Its etymology or origin is from the early 12th century drawing on the French term *diversité* which itself is from the Latin *diversitas* meaning 'difference' ("Online Etymology Dictionary", n. d.). Students should have little difficulty with the basic concept or definition, as they have been aware of difference for most of their lives. They need only look around them to realize that it is the array of difference that makes the world such an interesting place. Students can be asked to note such differences. For example, they might engage in an inductive activity by introducing broad concepts such as colours, animals, furniture, cars or music and see how many different examples students can generate. A variation might be to have students list as many different things they can think of that are able to fly, live in water, move people around or serve as a home. This activity can work deductively as well. Rather than moving from the general to the specific, one might move from the specific to the general. For example, bouffants, mullets and crew cuts are all examples of hairstyles, while blouses, jackets and vests are examples of clothing. In these ways, students obtain a thorough understanding of the concept 'diversity', yet are alerted to the fact that commonality and connection still exist.

A means of visually illustrating commonality and connection is to show a circular colour wheel whereby colours move about the colour spectrum blending one into the other. Students can pick out the primary colours – yellow, blue and red – while seeing how they blend into each other to create various shades leading to and from secondary colours – purple, green and orange. Students can create their own 'wheel' by placing a broad concept in the middle (e.g., sports that use balls) and then placing examples of the concept around the outside in circular fashion with examples that have common features next to each other. In due course, the examples should blend one into the other to meet again and complete the circle.
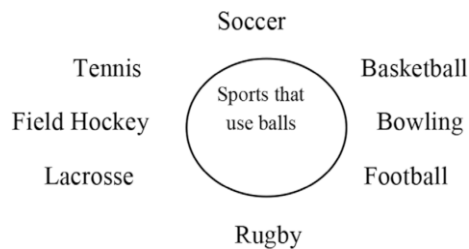

Figure 1. Concept wheel

Students will undoubtedly struggle with this activity initially as they realize that some sports are team sports (e.g., soccer) while others are more typically individual

(e.g., tennis). Some sports use a large ball (e.g., basketball) while others use a small ball (e.g., lacrosse). Eventually students will ascertain their own system. Figure 1 illustrates a system of sports using larger balls blend into sports that use smaller balls. Beginning with soccer, and moving clockwise one meets basketball, then football, where there is a slight change in ball shape, but the size remains relatively large; this is followed by rugby, before transitioning to sports that use smaller balls like lacrosse, field hockey, and tennis. This, and similar categorization activities, allows students to use what knowledge they already have while building on the original concept. In this case, each sport has its particularities, its unique aspects; yet they share commonalities as well—a wonderful baseline in which to grow in conceptual understanding of diversity.

SHOULD WE TEACH STUDENTS TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY?

There are infinite forms of diversity in the world. Scientists have been using the term 'biodiversity' to refer to variations in life form within an ecosystem, biome or the entire planet since the mid-1980s. However, the term is more commonly used to refer to various aspects of culture including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, sexuality, language, politics, philosophy and socio-economic status. It is also often used in reference to aspects of personhood such as sex, age, physical ability, mental and physical health, intelligence, genetic attributes, behavior and attractiveness. Many people choose to view diversity through a lens of positivity, delighting in the infinite possibilities it affords each of us. Indeed, some see it in religious terms, believing that all things emanate from the Creator and are creations of inherent value; while others are more spiritual, viewing diversity as evidence of the unique life force in all things. Some view diversity scientifically, seeing it as a necessary aspect of Darwin's natural selection theory while others view it culturally as a rich, vibrant expression of humanity's infinite capacity to self-create or just 'be'.

These days it is not unusual to hear representatives from social and political entities (e.g., neighbourhoods, cities and nations), institutions (e.g., universities, hospitals), and businesses to speak of trying to 'enhance diversity' or 'become more representative of society's diversity'. These people are invariably informed by the current dominant western cultural values of inclusion, multiculturalism, and social justice. These sentiments are evident throughout the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2004) but are best captured in Article 1:

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations. (p. 6)

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"Respect for Diversity" is also one of six guiding principles in the Global Greens Charter created by Green Party delegates from 72 nations at a meeting in Canberra, Australia in 2001. It states:

> We honour cultural, linguistic, ethnic, sexual, religious and spiritual diversity within the context of individual responsibility toward all beings. We defend the right of all persons, without discrimination, to an environment supportive of their dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well being. We promote the building of respectful, positive and responsible relationships across lines of division in the spirit of a multi-cultural society. ("Global Greens Charter", n. d.)

Teachers who educate for citizenship (i.e., preparing students to share and participate in society as productive and contributing members) are often informed in this way also, believing that it is important to foster a positive attitude toward diversity. They, too, see diversity in the world as a simple fact of life and believe that a dynamic life can be lived through learning about and engaging with all forms of diversity. These teachers see a role for themselves in creating a large and inclusive 'comfort zone' for students – reducing the strangeness of difference while framing it as possibility and opportunity.

A simple way of having students appreciate diversity is to have them imagine a world without it. Students close their eyes and imagine people all wearing exactly the same clothing, hairstyle, and accessories; they picture all houses built exactly alike, and rooms painted in all the same colours. I've seen students go further, producing posters and videos illustrating a homogenous world of single races, ethnicities, and religions. Their experience can be likened to the sepia tinted film used in some video productions where everything looks the same, and students quickly yearn for variety, intuitively knowing that a diverse palette means greater interest and a wider array of choice and opportunity.

The following are a series of related questions and activities designed for students' exploration and embrace of cultural diversity in the classroom or school.

Learning

- Look at a map of the world and test your knowledge of other countries. What languages a spoken in each country? What types of governments do these countries have? Do they embrace and promote diversity? How?
- Survey your class or school to learn about the student body. Find out what ethnicities, religions and languages are represented. Prepare a statistical overview of your class or school.
- As a means of getting at the human stories in your class or school interview one to three students about an aspect of their culture and how it informs their lives. As a set up for the human story, prepare background information about their culture.
- Organize findings into a presentation using written, visual and/or multimedia format.

Informing

- Present your findings to the class or school.
- How is your class/school unique from your perspective?
- How are your interviewees unique? How are they similar to other students in the school?
- What did you learn about cultural diversity in your school?

Action

- Encourage respect for differences in your classroom or school by creating or modifying a constitution or charter.
- Generate a list of ways you can encourage respect for diversity in your daily life. Enact your list and report to the class at a monthly "Respect for All" session.
- Start a club with a mandate to inform others about the positive aspects of cultural diversity.
- Move your club onto a website and inform the world!

For me, educating for citizenship involves celebrating diversity and promoting its positive aspects whenever and wherever possible. To do otherwise would, in my estimation, undermine each student's inherent value and special qualities, causing potentially irreparable harm while creating a world in which marginalization, exclusion, fear, and hatred win the day. This is antithetical to my understanding of what it means to be a teacher, a citizen of society, and a human being. Not everyone agrees.

WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE CHALLENGED BY DIVERSITY?

Diversity itself is not challenging, it's a simple fact of life – there is diversity all around us as the 'normal' state of affairs. Where the challenge arises is with the meaning people choose to associate with particular aspects of difference and how they choose to act in response. Some people feel threatened by aspects of cultural or personal diversity, fearing it might undermine their moral conception of right and wrong, leading to a weakening of social cohesion. Others are afraid the 'excessive' embrace of diversity will erode the dominant position of particular cultural groups and lead to a destabilization of the local and/or national community. Some are angered and frustrated by what they view as a societal move away from individual rights of free thought and expression to social sanctions that demand political correctness and cultural sensitivity—one can just hear it, "Is it me or is everyone just a little touchy?" Still others are overwhelmed with the multiplicity inherent in diversity, constantly feeling off balance and out of step.

It is too simplistic to accuse people who feel this way of insensitivity and exclusivity or call them racist, sexist, or xenophobic. While these accusations may indeed be accurate in many cases, it obscures the real challenges that come with living

in a diverse society, and it minimizes the complexity of feeling and perspective on issues. Do I have to embrace every aspect of cultural diversity? Are right and wrong always relative? Should one person's free expression of support for cultural diversity silence another's rejection or call for limitation? Are we becoming too 'accepting'? These are difficult questions and in Western societies that have embraced cultural diversity they can be political, social and legal minefields.

The best way to engage students in these questions is to encourage discussion and debate within a community of respectful, thoughtful, critical thinkers. The following are a series of starter scenarios for secondary students that can be 'fleshed out' with appropriate background information and thinking strategies by teachers. Students should be encouraged to look at the issue(s) from as many perspectives as possible, weigh the pros and cons of any courses of action, and make recommendations how best to handle the issue(s) at hand. For example:

- A judge hands down a decision banning publicly licensed gym facilities from limiting memberships to a single sex. Many women threaten to resign from their gyms if men are permitted to join. Community groups line up on both sides of the issue as the case heads to Appeals Court.
- Two male students in their final year of high school walk down the hall holding hands to verbal and physical harassment. Several of the harassers are suspended from school, as are the two male students ostensibly for their own protection. Parental outrage on all sides leads to the unveiling of a new school policy banning all public displays of affection between students regardless of sex.
- A filmmaker for a national news organization produces a documentary that equates male and female circumcision rejecting both as abusive. He calls the Canadian government sexist in not outlawing male circumcision as it has for females. The airing of the film results in local religious and women's groups protesting the network leading to the filmmaker's suspension from work.
- The year is 2025 and Chinese has surpassed French as the second most used language in Canada. A Federal MP from Toronto introduces a private member's bill granting Chinese official language status. Uproar ensues from many quarters in the country particularly from Francophones and First Nations peoples while some Chinese-Canadians call much of the outrage Eurocentric and racist.
- A local hospital is criticized for cultural insensitivity over the displaying a Nativity scene on its lawn at Christmas time. The majority of the town's population supports the display but the hospital dismantles it under government and media pressure.

A few years ago, one of the teacher-candidates in the Bachelor of Education program where I teach decided to use the second scenario during her teaching placement. She was teaching a grade 11 law class and the students had been considering a number of laws and policies related to social issues currently in the media. She chose this scenario specifically as there is much student interest in the Marc Hall case unfolding in Oshawa,

Ontario. The case, *Marc Hall v. Durham Catholic School Board*, was initiated by the student against the school board because were preventing him from bring his boyfriend to the year-end prom claiming homosexuality is incompatible with Roman Catholic teaching. In this context, the scenario resonated greatly with students. I observed as she deftly introduced the scenario, considered the multiple issues, engaged in a pro and con exercise, introduced related legal rulings, and deconstructed their balancing of charter rights and freedoms. What stood out for me was the incredible acuity of thought exemplified by the student responses. Though they respected a notion ofcommunity standard regarding excessive displays of public affection, and recognized the vague nature of such notions, the students were wholly unconvinced that because it was two boys holding hands, this met any standard of 'excessive'. In reality, it simply indicated a communal dislike for this particular manifestation of difference. As one student said, and I am paraphrasing from observational notes, "when you have a right to free expression others are sometimes going to get upset, but unless you're actually, really, truly hurting someone…too bad, so sad!"

CONCLUSION

Diversity is a rich concept that is intertwined with all the other concepts in this book. At its core it is the state or fact of being different but its manifestation in life offers not only variety but also great possibility. Students definitely benefit from engaging with diversity in all its forms, exploring the ways each aspect interweaves with the others to inform who we are and how and why we think and act as we do. Diversity also comes with great challenges too. I began this chapter with the story of a debate with a colleague over the posting of a poster promoting sexual diversity. Such are the cleavages that emerge as each of us works to understand and respond to difference at all levels of our lives. To that end, students need to engage in activities that challenge them to critically consider different perspectives as they make judgments and develop creative solutions. It will hopefully make a world of difference.

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8. THE UNIFORMITY OF DIVERSITY
IN CANADIAN CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS

I have noticed that many words used in curriculum documents tend to be devilishly hard to pin down, much like that last pea rattling around on an almost finished dinner plate. You think you have found the definitive meaning of the term, and – presto- it has a different connotation in another section. Of course, this is not always a bad thing. What a sad day it would be if Wittgenstein had his way and all ordinary language concepts (with their myriad of nuances) were codified into a precise single-meaning, standard language of science. All sense of romanticism, privacy, contradiction, mystery and (dare I say) fun would be siphoned off people's thought patterns and expression, replaced by a rather grey and turgid process of communication. However, if taken to the other extreme, it can be maddening to have a discussion on a topic with someone, only to find out you are not talking about the same thing at all.

In Canada, the subject area of Social Studies has been especially susceptible to this shifting sand of concept definition. Much in vogue at the moment, the term "diversity" is a prime example. I have read about it. I have chatted about it. I have, in fact, taught about it in class. However, my notions about it have always been a little nascent in regards to what it truly means. So, in this chapter, I have determined to ferret out its meaning and nail down this term once and for all (at least within Canada's present educational policy). To do this, I have turned to a cross-section of Canadian social studies documents and an unbridled desire to perform a content analysis.

DENOTATION

As usual, when faced with problems of definition, I first reach onto my shelf for my trusty, dusty and dilapidated copy of the c. 1910 *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (thankfully this is not a word beginning with the letter "a" as most of these pages have since parted company with the book). It states definitively that the term "diversity" means "Being diverse; unlikeness; different kind; variety" (p. 335). Rather vague, I muse. I then turn to the second bastion of information: *the Collins English Dictionary* (as seen on the internet). It adds the more philosophical definition of "the relation that holds between two entities when and only when they are not identical" (-----). Again, this statement alone doesn't seem to warrant much study,

so I begin to look at various examples given by these dictionaries: "Charles Darwin saw in the diversity of species…" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000); "there was considerable diversity in the style of the reports" "newspapers were obliged to allow a diversity of views to be printed" (Oxford Pocket Dictionary, 2009).

It then dawns on me that "diversity" as a term really has no meaning at all on its own. To bring the point home, I might compare it to more concrete social studies terms, like "democracy" for example. Here, a picture (fuzzy or otherwise) forms in my mind: I can see the political arrangement, but just need a qualifier (like the adjectives Athenian or representative) to complete the image. However, with the term "diversity," it makes a very weak noun: it is an unfinished thought; it is the air inside a drum; the plus sign without the numbers. For it to make sense, it must always be merely a tool for a larger adjectival phrase. In other words, whenever you see the word, you cannot help yourself saying "a diversity of what???" It is these other words, therefore, that set the tone, subject and driving force for the more complete definition being examined on the page. It is for this reason, therefore, that I will not merely have to look at how many times "diversity" has been used in a document, but also link it to the adjectives and verbs to which it is inextricably connected.

I do one final search before I turn to the curriculum documents. I turn to the Online Etymology Dictionary. When first coined back in the mid-fourteenth century (from the Latin *diversitatem*), it had a very neutral denotation, meaning only something that was different. Interestingly enough, by the late fifteenth century, it had taken on a rather sinister meaning of "being contrary to what is agreeable or right; perversity, evil". This meaning faded by the seventeenth-century and was replaced by a political meaning with the rise of modern democracies after 1790. It was then seen as a virtue in a nation, a way of keeping one faction from seizing power. However, it was not used very widely.

In fact, the modern sense of "diversity" seems to have come into academic vogue only in the 20th century. As the term *pluralism* grew within church administration, its meaning was formally recognized in 1933 as "toleration of diversity within a society or state". The term "cultural diversity" was then coined by anthropologists and sociologists in 1935. Finally, the dictionary states, "specific focus (in a positive sense) on race, gender, etc. is from 1992". Armed with the above knowledge that "diversity" can be used in a great number of diverse ways, I begin my search of the documents.

CANADIAN SOCIAL STUDIES DOCUMENTS

The present-day curricula that Canadian teachers use to teach social studies form an interesting piebald quilt that has been knitted together over a century and a half of our country's history. Suffice to say, education remains in the hands of each province, making for 10 separate programmes of study, and a multitude of documents, each with its own arrangements. For this study, I decided to choose all mandatory, "in-use" Social Studies curricula from each province from Grade 1 – 10 (when many courses become optional). In total, this meant analyzing 57 documents in all (see

Appendix 1).[1] Even here, a diversity existed betweenprovinces, with Manitoba having the most (11 documents averaging hundreds of pages each) and Ontario having the least (2 documents totaling about 165 pages together). I then used the "Search" function of the software program (thankfully most documents were in a pdf format), and transferred to a tally-sheet all sentences containing the term "diversity".

The word counts alone tell part of the story, at least letting me know if and in what provinces this term remains in vogue (see Table 1). Ontario, like its page numbers, has the least amount of hits (I find the term was only used 23 times throughout the documents). Quebec and British Columbia make more mention of "diversity", with 61 hits each. Most other provinces show a greater interest in this word and use it, on average, between 100 and 200 times throughout their programme's documents. The one outlier is the province of Manitoba, whose documents reference the term no less than a staggering 1977 times.

The second thing a quantitative search provided me was support for the Etymology dictionary's claim that the word diversity (in the positive sense) only came into fashion after 1992 (a rather specific date, I thought, with no explanation). With a quick perusal of earlier iterations of the provinces' curriculum documents, it seemed that the term was rarely if ever used before the 1990s.

DEFINITIONS OF 'DIVERSITY'

Interestingly enough, the curriculum documents under this study's microscope seldom provide an operational definition for the term "diversity". Instead, they seem to think that its implicit meaning is just common knowledge. That having been said, there are a few exceptions. Overtly, only two provinces define the term in any authoritative way: *Saskatchewan*'s "Evergreen" curriculum states that diversity is "the differences in ideas, people and ways of living". As well, it goes a little further by arguing that in dealing with the term cultural diversity "it is important to recognize that cultural differences exist and help students develop an acceptance of differing cultural norms." *Alberta* gives a similar definition of the term: "Differences in groups having a variety of languages, ethnicity, nationalities, within a shared space"(Gr 2, p. 34). To a lesser extent, *Ontario* deals with one facet of the term by defining "biodiversity" as "the variety of life found within any given area" (9 – 10, p. 71).

Other provinces take a more oblique approach to handling the term. *Quebec* flips the definition around stating that diversity of social identities is one of the objects of citizenship (p. 99). Other provinces prefer to define the term by example. On top of its official definition, some key manifestations of diversity in the Alberta documents include: First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures; official bilingualism; immigration; multiculturalism (p. 5). *Manitoba* also recognizes that diversity could be broken down into cultural, linguistic, geographic, or artistic terms.

Perhaps the most detailed description of what must be done to support this term in the classroom, all *Atlantic* documents (based, no doubt on the *Atlantic Protocol*) outline eight points including an affirmation of students' identities, needs,

Table 1. Canadian Curriculum Documents Word Count of "Diversity"

	Alta	BC	Man	NB	NFLD	NS	Ont.	PEI	Quebec	Sask
Found										
Gr.1	39 (2005)	25 (2006)	106 (2005), 145 (2005)	39 (1998)	48 (2004)		7 (2004)	35 (2009)	24 (2005)	55 (1992–)
Gr.2			195 (2005)	7 (2005)				33 (2008)		
Gr.3			156 (2004)		0 (1978)					
Gr.4	35 (2006)		138 (2004)	26 (2010)						
Gr.5	37 (2007)		179 (2004)							
Gr.6	0 (1990)		229 (2005)	0 (2006)	33 (2006)					11 (1992–)
Gr.7	25 (2006)		174 (2005)	44 (2005)	45 (2004)			46 (2006)	10 (2006)	4 (1992–)
Gr.8	21 (2007)	27 (1997)	135 (2005)	19 (1998)	16 (2005)	43 (2000)		32 (2006)		38 (1992–)
Gr.9	1 (1998)		302 (2007)	30 (2006)	15 (1996)	0 (1998)	16 (2005)	0 (2009)	27 (2008)	4 (1992–)
Gr.10	24 (2007)	9 (2006)	218 (2006)	3 (1998)	15 (1996)	8 (2003)		48 (2007)		6 (1992–)
Total	182	61	1977	168	172	51	23	194	61	118

andabilities, as well as providing resources that foster diversity, providing equal access to opportunity, equal assessments, and so on (p. 13).

Beyond these definitions, most documents feel fit, however, to include "diversity" as a major section of their programme's documents. The term is included in numerous sections, strands, competencies, objectives, and so on, within numerous curricula across the country. This includes, for example:

Ontario: Diversity of Beliefs and Values (strand)
Saskatchewan: Diversity (key concept/foundational objective)
Quebec: To be open to the diversity of societies (competency)
Protecting cities and cultural diversity around the world (competency)
Atlantic Provinces: Sections include "Culture and diversity", "Equity and diversity", "Cultural diversity", "Respectful of diversity".
Manitoba: Democracy, Diversity, and the Influence of the Past (cluster)
Alberta: Diversity (section title)

QUALIFIERS OR "A TERM IS KNOWN BY THE COMPANY IT KEEPS"

Feeling a little adrift with this term and not quite knowing what the concrete meaning is (as defined by the documents), I decided to examine the qualifiers that surrounded "diversity". These optional modifiers, I believed would describe and provide more accurate definitional meaning. And I was not disappointed. In the end, I found that the word "diversity" and its variations of "diverse" and diversify" were used no less than 1,200 times in all the documents combined. About *15%* of these uses included no modifiers. By this I mean the term hangs in the air with only implicit directions given as to the meaning of the term. For example, on numerous occasions, the reader is informed that students will show appreciation for diversity, and the admonition is left at that. It can be inferred what the writer meant, but it is not the most direct statement ever made.

However, on most occasions, qualifiers are added that give the reader greater insight to what was meant by the term:

Cultural Diversity: About *41.3%* of the time (496 times), when the term comes up, it is accompanied by an adjective that refers to shared similarities between groups of people. Of this, the term "cultural diversity" is used most frequency (40.5% of this section), over double the next contender of "social diversity" (15.3%), "diverse peoples" (13.9%), and "diverse communities or groups" (8.9%). Of lesser usage were the more inflammatory terms "ethnic diversity" (6.3%), "diverse populations" (1.2%), and "diverse races" (7%). Finally, diversity among First Peoples is mention 35 times (7.1%).

Diversity as "Way of Life": A more fluid understanding of the term arises when the documents begin to discuss how people express themselves in different ways (accounting for 7.5% of usage). This would include how a family is

organized, religious beliefs, celebrations and foods. Here "linguistic diversity" accounts for 50% of this section.

Territorial Diversity: Accounting for only 3.7% of usage, in this instance, diversity is seen on a much larger and well-defined scale. Each country, we are told has their own unique way of doing things, forms of government, and legalities.

Individual Diversity: On a much more intimate scale, in this usage (accounting for *8.5%* of the total), we are told of the diversity all individuals, their experiences, personal identity and backgrounds. Of interest is the amount of times diverse gender is mentioned. (11.8% of this section)

Diversity of Perspectives: Throughout almost all the documents this usage was mentioned at least once (building to a modest *6%* of the total word count). In this instance, teachers are instructed that students have diverse perspectives and should be accommodated and tolerated. As well, it is generally acknowledged that everyone has his or her diverse points of view and should be heard.

Diversity of Teaching/Learning Methods: In almost every document (*7.7%*), teachers are asked to use a diversity of methods to reach students' diverse needs.

The last two forms of use make a stark contrast to the very human meaning of the term. *Geographic Diversity* (accounting for *5.5%* of the total) points out that Canada is a country of many diverse landscapes, weather patterns and rock formations. In terms of *Economic Diversity* (making up the final *4.8%*), makes a case for diversification of the economy.

The conclusion that one could draw from these qualifiers is that the term "diversity" certainly has advantages over the old "multiculturalism" term popularized in earlier decades. While the former is clearly linked to the latter (as can be seen by the high percentage of correlation in the qualifiers), Diversity breaks free from specific meaning. It *could* mean culture, but it could also mean a host of other things. This new word thereby leaves a great deal of wiggle-room in which to work.

VERBIAGE SURROUNDING THE TERM

In a last attempt to understand the curriculum documents' relationship with the term, I turn to the action verbs surrounding it in each of the 1200 sentences. As I saw in the earlier section of this treatise, it could be used as a negative, neutral or positive term, depending on how it was used. After a lot of eye-strain, I located 77 action verbs that were used in dealing with diversity. In all, they were used 712 times. In the other 488 instances, the term either stood alone as a disembodied title, or formed part of a passive phrase (i.e., in the PEI document: From Confederation to World War I, an increasingly diverse array of peoples came to Canada. p. 42), not asking students or

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teachers to do anything. Of the other times, it became obvious that the types of verbs used fell into four distinct categories:

Fairly Neutral, student-directed, research terms: Accounting for *52.2%* of the usage, verbs that fell into this category asked students to handle the term in agenerally value neutral way. Most terms are investigative in nature. Most important for this section, the word "understand" is associated with diversity 23.7% of the time, almost double any other contenders. This is followed in a descending order of: recognize (12.1%), explore (8.3%), identify (7.5%), examine (7%), describe (6.9%), explain (5.4%), compare (4.6%), and so forth. In total 33 words are used in this category.

Teacher-Centred Requests: In this much smaller section (6.3% of total usage), the documents make requests that teachers perform certain actions. They either ask teachers to make accommodations for diverse needs within the classroom (28.9%), or are asking for various ways that diversity can be integrated into the curriculum. While in these instances teachers are not admonished to promote the term positively, this certainly seems to be the implication.

Student-directed demand for acceptance: In the second largest usage (40.4% of all verb usage), there seems to be an explicit demand by the curriculum documents of showing diversity in the best light possible. Of the 286 times the 24 words in this category are used, the top three words make up the clear majority. In sentences containing these verbs it is stated that "students are to respect diversity" or "use language that is respectful of diversity" (20.6%), "students are to appreciate diversity" (20.3%) and "students will value diversity" (16.8%). Just as telling are the more infrequently used verbs of support, reflect a pride in, accept, show sensitivity towards, promote and celebrate and the fifteen other verbs used. 3 to 6% of the time.

Student directed Critical discussion: Of especial interest is the amount of space given to a critical discussion of the term diversity. Seen in only 8 places in all 10 provincial programmes (twice in Manitoba and six times in Quebec), it accounts for only 1.1% of verb usage. It is in these places that the recall of facts or acceptance of the term is transcended and critical defense of views, consideration or exploration is even hinted at.

CONCLUSIONS ON A TANGLED ISSUE

Different people may arrive at different conclusions to the statistics I have pulled above and in the tables I include in this treatise. I, in turn, have come to my own.

First, I think that diversity is really a term purposely left operationally undefined to a large extent in the Canadian curriculum. Whenever we read the word, it is just left as an implicit understanding: "You know what we're talking about" would be the unspoken response if questioned. In this way, it can be bent and shaped into

Table 2. Qualifiers accompanying term "Diversity" in Canadian Curriculum documents

	Qualifier	AL	BC	MN	NB	NF	NS	ON	PE	QC	SK	Total
1	Culture	14	20	28	30	40	2	5	27	3	32	201
2	Disembodied	11	15	6	46	23	2	2	43	10	17	175
3	Learning/ teaching	2	3	11	17	18	1	2	12	5	8	79
4	Social diversity	15	0	0	5	13	0	1	15	20	7	76
5	Perspectives	12	10	20	8	9	3	3	2	2	3	72
6	Peoples	5	1	0	23	15	1	0	22	0	2	69
7	Geographic	8	3	6	6	12	3	6	4	1	17	66
8	Economic	2	0	0	3	5	32	1	5	4	5	57
9	Language	4	1	4	9	13	0	0	8	0	6	45
10	Ways of Life	2	0	14	10	11	0	2	2	1	4	45
11	Community/Group	9	1	9	0	10	5	1	5	0	4	44
12	First Peoples	8	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	35
13	Race	0	0	0	13	9	0	0	11	0	1	34
14	Country	5	1	0	5	6	0	0	4	0	10	31
15	Ethnicity	2	1	3	10	5	0	0	7	1	2	31
16	Background	0	1	0	11	12	0	0	4	0	0	28
17	Human Diversity	7	0	14	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	24
18	Gender	0	0	0	10	3	0	0	5	0	0	18
19	Experiences	4	0	0	6	4	0	0	2	0	1	17
20	Identity/Role	0	0	0	6		0	0	1	7	1	15
21	Disciplines	0	0	0	7	4	0	0	2	0	0	13
22	Forms of Governance	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	6
23	Economic context	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
24	Populations	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	2	0	6
25	Legal status	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
26	Global Diversity	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Total	110	60	121	230	215	52	24	183	57	148	1200

pretty much whatever we want it to mean. Originally, biculturalism was promoted in the curriculum; then multiculturalism did the trick. However, as these specific terms become passé, diversity came to have more staying power. To many, it is still equated with culture (as seen by the above stats); however, it can be used to mean many quasi-cultural aspects such as language, economic situation, sexual orientation and so forth. It can also refer to things that break the narrow boundary of culture – such as individual diversity (height, weight, hair colour).

As an optimistic offshoot of this trend toward "diversity" usage, teachers may get a whirlwind of local control back concerning the curriculum. With such a generalized definition of the term, teachers can use it to mean any number of things.

Second, I also believe that the use of verbiage accompanying this term is a telling state of mind of the various Ministries of Education across this country. Just by the sheer amount of use of the word (1200 times) and accompanying action verbs (712), it is not hard to recognize that there is a uniform drive for schools to study this term and what it stands for. Of course, almost 60% of the time there seems to be a simple request by the documents for students to just study this term. However, for a rather shocking 40% of the time, there is an unrelenting drive for students to accept it unquestioningly, to respect, honour and promote this term. In my mind, therefore, I have concluded that while formalized religious inculcation have been thrown out of the Canadian school system, it would be wrong to say that no values are transmitted to students. In fact, I can see no clearer case of an almost secular religious dogma being put forward. The only words not used are worship or venerate.

Now, I see nothing wrong with promoting a concept that has taken strong root in the Canadian society and psyche. However, what I find disturbing is the unbalanced way in which it is dealt with. My first question is how programmed does the country wish our children to be towards diversity? Accepting of different peoples? Religions? Legal systems? Should everyone have her or his own individualized way of doing things with no sense of unity to the country? How should students react to diversity? Acknowledge it? Defend it? Actively try to dismantle any society that doesn't unquestioningly impose this concept?

Of course, this is taking it to the extreme, but what is troublesome about all the 57 documents is that they deal with diversity as an unlimited and vague concept. They do not say how far diversity will be tolerated by Canadian society. What if there are aspects of other cultures that are not acceptable to Canadian sensibilities? This is not dealt with. Should diversity be looked at in any critical way or even asked if it a good concept or not? The only (very veiled) hints of this can be found in just over 1% of the usage (in essentially one document in Quebec). This is quite an unbalance.

I conclude in the end, therefore, that much work needs to be done to define and deal with the term diversity in a critical and nuanced way within the curriculum documents. Unfortunately, this takes a detailed and courageous approach – to deal with the darker, murkier and thornier aspects of this very complex issue. It is far easier just to look at the surface of a swamp and see the shining, clear surface than it is to hold one's nose and plunge in.

Table 3. Action Verbs with the term "Diversity" in Canadian Curriculum

	Associated Verb	AB	BC	MN	NB	ND	NS	ON	PE	QC	SK	Total
	Neutral: Students will…											
1	Understand…	7	2	1	18	24	1	1	20	3	11	88
2	Recognize…	9	4	4	8	6	2	0	6	1	5	45
3	Explore…	3	0	12	1	1	0	0	3	0	11	31
4	Identify…	0	0	1	7	9	0	1	9	1	0	28
5	Examine…	12	0	2	4	4	0	1	2	1	0	26
6	Describe…	0	4	4	4	6	1	1	5	0	0	25
7	Explain…	0	0	0	4	7	0	1	7	0	1	20
8	Compare…	1	2	11	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	17
9	Evaluate…	0	0	0	4	4	0	1	4	0	0	13
10	Give examples of…	0	4	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	12
11	Assess…	1	4	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	10
12	Become aware of…	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	3	2	10
13	Learn about…	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	4	8
14	Focus on…	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
15	19 Misc. verbs	7	0	5	2	8	0	0	4	4	4	34
	(Teachers will…											
1	Accommodate students	1	0	1	4	4	1	0	1	0	1	13
2	Use examples of…	0	1	0	1	3	0	2	1	0	0	8
3	Integrate into …	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
4	14 Misc. Verbs	3	1	2	4	1	1	1	0	1	6	20

											Total
Accept: Students will…											
1 Respect / use language respectful of…	8	9	11	11	6	1	0	6	3	4	59
2 Appreciate…	2	4	6	3	4	4	0	16	0	19	58
3 Value…	9	4	6	6	4	0	0	9	0	10	48
4 Support…	0	0	0	3	5	1	0	7	0	1	17
5 Reflect a pride in…	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	9	17
6 Accept…	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	8	15
7 Show sensitivity towards…	1	3	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	12
8 Consider the importance	0	2	8	0	0	0	0		0		10
9 Acknowledge contributions	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	9
10 Promote…	0	3	0	2	3	0	0	1	0		9
11 Celebrate…	0	0	0	5	2	0	0	1	1	3	8
13 Misc. verbs	7	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	8	5	25
Critical: Students will…											
1 Present and defend views of	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
2 Critically consider	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3 Critical exploration of	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	80	50	88	97	114	15	11	115	35	107	712

NOTE

[1] Some Atlantic provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island) seem to be in the process of revamping their documents at some grade levels. Consequently, I was unable to procure these items for study.

APPENDIX 1

List of Curriculum Documents Used in the Study

British Columbia – Social Studies, Kindergarten – Grade 7 (2006); Social Studies, Grade 8 – 10 (1997)

Manitoba – Social Studies, Grade 1 (2005); Grade 2 (2005); Grade 3 (2004); Grade 4 (2004); Grade 5 (2006); Grade 6 (2006); Grade 7 (2006); Grade 8 (2006); Grade 9 (2007); Grade 10 (2006)

New Brunswick – Atlantic Protocol, *Foundation Document, K-12*

Newfoundland – Social Studies, Kindergarten to Grade – 2 (2004); Grade 4 (2010); Grade 6 (2006); Grade 7 (2007); Grade 8 (2008); Grade 9 (1996); Grade 10 History & Geography (1996)

Ontario – Social Studies, Grade 1 – 6, 7 – 8 History and Geography (2004); Canadian and World Studies, Grades 9 – 10 (2005)

Prince Edward Island – Social Studies, Grade 1 (2009); Grade 2 (2008); Grade 4 (2007); Grade 6 (2011); Grade 7 (2006); Grade 8 (2006); Grade 9(2009); Grade 10 (2008)

Quebec – Social Studies, Elementary (2001); Secondary Cycle One (2004)

Saskatchewan – Social Studies, Grade 1 (2010); Grade 2 (2010); Grade 3 (2010); Grade 4 (2010); Grade 5 (2010); Grade 6 (2009); Grade 7 (2009); Grade 8 (2009); Grade 9 (2009); Grade 10 (1992)

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PART 3

DEMOCRACY

MARG EPP & KIM BEAULIEU

9. DEMOCRACY IN THE CLASSROOM

INTRODUCTION

The following is a series of blog entries on the topic of 'democracy'. The blog may be found at http://pula.learnerblogs.org – we have found this to be an interesting process and we would welcome anyone to join us and keep the conversation going.

February

Comment by Kim: What will we write about? I would like to write about teaching and the need for what goes on in schools to make a dramatic, cultural shift. Primarily and given our conversation today, I am thinking about the need for teachers to move to a place where they are not afraid to take risks; where they move away from the security of 'the expert' and instead see themselves as a learner, with knowledge and ideas and opinions, but a learner. A learner who is willing to admit that they do not know, but they might know a process whereby together they can find things out. Maybe we could align this with the topic of democracy in the classroom and teaching in a democratic way?

March

Comment by Marg: Democracy in the classroom – what a great way to extend this afternoon's discussion and what a great topic – teaching in a democratic way.

It seems odd that teachers would not see themselves as learners because they are surrounded by learning all day, although maybe not recognizing it at all times. Maybe for some, learning for themselves is something you do out of school, not in school. This sounds very much like what some students must feel about the disconnect between real life and school. We've talked about this before.

Teacher candidates (pre-service teachers) often find it frustrating to take on the role of co-learner initially as they participate in intergenerational literature circles with younger students. But can't you be a co-learner and an 'expert' at the same time? I know people who are 'experts' at certain things. However, I respect them because they don't profess to know everything and they always want to learn more. In fact, I have to admit that there are times when I just want someone to show me the 'how to' of something. As teachers we can think of ourselves as the only experts in the classroom or we can view everyone in the classroom, including ourselves, as experts

in something. At some point, we can use someone else's expertise, and likewise, someone can use ours. It's Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' – the point at which someone can do something with the support of a 'more knowledgeable other'. That more knowledgeable other isn't always the teacher, but you have to be a risk-taking teacher to accept that. Also, that support may take many forms.

I recently read the book *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise Into Practice*, a collection of writings by a variety of literacy leaders. Kylene Beers (2007) discusses how literacy demands have changed throughout history and how creative thinking will be the key to success – producing, not consuming information – Thomas Friedman's thinking in *Living in a Flat World* (2005) and Daniel Pink in *A Whole New Mind* (2006). She asks us to think differently about schooling than what it typically looks like now.

- What if we recognized that the world in which we now live is different and education were about preparing students in live in that world?
- What if learning were interdisciplinary and not divided into chunks of time with teachers who don't have time to collaborate with each other?
- What if learning was research-based (learning tied to what students wanted to research instead of what teachers assigned)?
- What if students sometimes worked independently and other times worked with other in their school community, local community, national and global communities?
- What if authentic assessments were more important than standardized tests?
- What if asking probing questions was valued more than getting the correct answer?
- What if students were required to do some service project?
- What if school was a place for students to find their voice, discovered how to think, and saw that what they did and believed and thought mattered?
- What if school was where students learned a lot about being a part of a democracy, a contributing part? (Beers, 2007, p. 11).

Is this what we've been talking about?

March

Comment by Kim: Yes. I think this is what we are talking about. We are not just focusing on the need for the 'power' structures of a classroom to be democratic, but for knowledge to be democratic as well. I have used the 'seminar' approach to teaching Social Studies many times. What I love about that approach is that eventually everyone comes to a place where they bring ideas and knowledge and we all share as equals. I have had students, who are very interested in World War I, teach me so much about the strategies of the war and the battles – something I have never been really interested in. Our group was such a comfortable place to be, that I could admit to them that I had never knew much of what we were discovering

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together. That is such an empowering experience for all…when we are recognized as learners who bring meaning to the world. Some students are very uncomfortable with a teacher as a co-learner…they are still attached to a culture that sees it as the teacher's job to know everything and to bring that knowledge to the student.

What I am wondering is how do we get the other institutions in the education system to evolve to Kylene Beers' vision. Teachers do feel the pressure to complete curriculum in the most efficient manner. So how do we change the politics of education to recognize it is not about content? Mention that to parents and you will see panic. For many, education is about acquiring content. If we move to a model of education that is more student directed how do we account for the content objectives?

April

Comment by Marg: I want to respond to your suggestion of viewing knowledge as democratic, rather than only viewing the 'power' structures as democratic.

I remember, in my early days of teaching, planning ways in which I could get my students involved in being a part of the decision-making processes in our classroom. I think I was considering this at a very basic level at that time. Instead of me, as the teacher, telling students what the classroom rules were, we would arrive at these together. In this way, I thought I was practicing 'democracy' in the classroom. It was only partially successful because I don't think we spent a lot of time at it. It was an activity we did during the first week of school, the rules were posted and then life went on. The rules or guidelines we produced as a group would probably have been useful if we had delved into their implications a little further. However, I have to admit it was probably a token gesture on my part, to help students feel like they were part of a whole democratic process. Although I seemed to be giving students a choice in other areas, e.g., choosing own reading, choosing ways of responding to reading, choosing own topics to research, etc., the interrelatedness of all these actions weren't apparent to me until I read an article by Yeager et al. in *Trends and Issues in Elementary Language Arts (2000 Edition)* titled 'Rights, Respect and Responsibility'. This article affirmed some things I was doing, gave me some insights, and made some very important connections. I'll try to explain briefly what it was about and how it played out in the classroom. I have to admit that I stuck very closely to the suggestions in this article, and in subsequent years was able to make it more my own – or, I should say, our own. In essence, the article showed how literate actions, such as reading, writing and inquiry, could create conditions for establishing critical consciousness. In this approach, all students are treated as knowers and active participants in learning for improvement of self and the world in which all live. This, I believe, but correct me if I'm wrong, is what you were suggesting when you referred to knowledge as democratic.

We began the year exploring the concept of community. This involved small group and whole class discussions, making revisions, considering different points of view. Students generated definitions of rights, respect, and responsibility and we looked

at the relationships among them. This was followed by a lengthy process of small group and whole class negotiation in order to develop a classroom Bill of Rights and Responsibilities. The students and I signed it and it was posted on the classroom wall. Individual copies were sent home to be shared with parents. These rights and responsibilities became a constant reference point throughout the year. I didn't have anyone refusing to sign, but that would have been an interesting twist!

The second part of this process was 'Inquiry as Action'. Actions of inquiry (observing, writing, describing, interviewing, interpreting) and literate actions (constructing and reconstructing texts, note taking and note making) were connected to social actions (rights, respect and responsibilities). The action of observation across content areas helped students develop their understanding of point of view, evidence, and interpretation. It encouraged critical thinking as students considered evidence, not just emotional reactions, to support their own point of view while considering others' perspectives at the same time. An example of one of these literate actions was writing a double-entry journal in which one side was for recording what was observed and the other side was for interpreting what had been observed and described. Understanding how evidence is interpreted from different points of view and for different purposes was critical. We began by observing and interpreting works of art and illustrations from picture books such as *The Three Little Pigs*. Students would draw or write about the event from a particular perspective and share these through discussion. A literature-based study of historical events such as the study of the Holocaust, Chinese immigration to Canada, and homelessness provided a context and a focus to explore concepts such as tolerance and diversity. A resource-based inquiry approach allowed for student choice and subsequent units of inquiry allowed for inter-textual connections and an expanded understanding of historical contexts and character actions as students explored the actions, interactions, as well as lack of intervention into the suffering of both real and fictionalized people. Discussion was a key component.

The third aspect of the process was 'Expanding the meaning of Rights, Respect and Responsibility'. Tolerant actions (e.g., talking through conflicts, helping a classmate) and intolerant actions (e.g., name-calling, put-downs) were listed and the impacts of these were discussed. The definition of responsibility was revised and expanded beyond the classroom walls to a broader context. Developing a service project was an extension and one year we created a class story quilt that was raffled off and the proceeds donated to the children's ward at a local hospital. The important part was that students made the choice. More information about the article is also available in Elementary Justice: Introducing Principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to Children (2002). Saskatoon, SK: PLEA.

August

Comment by Kim: You are so right. I recall in my early high school classes also working with the class to establish the rules. In fact it was during my internship

– almost 20 years ago – that I was encouraged to do this…create a democratic classroom. However, it was clear from my supervisor that it was to be simply a facade of democracy. That my job was to listen, but to 'steer' the students to the set of rules I needed to run an efficient and orderly classroom. Two things strike me. One, the notion of a 'democratic classroom' has been around a long time. Yet it seems to me that we have only really played lip service to it and have not authentically created such an environment; mainly because we as teachers always have an agenda. Whether it is an agenda of control or curriculum…we do not invite divergent thinking. Second, we create a convergent culture because it is safe… and it usually means our classrooms are quiet, orderly and unfortunately devoid of energy. It is interesting to me that authentic learning is filled with energy, and yet our classrooms are not.

I recently heard a speaker refer to the role of teacher as an instigator – one who sets a context, creates some simple rules and then allows the process to unfold – with the teacher on the sidelines as facilitator – where eventually students create their own thesis. To me that is an exciting space. But for a lot of us getting to that place requires taking some risks.

One of the Social Studies classes I taught explored the notion of power and democracy by examining historical events in Western Europe from the Renaissance to the Industrial Revolution. I wanted the students to understand the struggle for democracy as being a real authentic experience. While we worked through the varying concepts of political power (authoritarian, absolute monarchy, democracy, etc.), I made sure that I behaved as an absolute authority in the class. Over the course of the week I would make sure the class rules came from me and me alone and any voice from the class was silenced. When students challenged, I would quip that they were not allowed a voice. Eventually, they would begin quoting the enlightenment philosophers. Some would begin acts of dissention…like hanging quotes from Rousseau around the class or by using the power of the pamphlet to incite others to question and challenge my authority. Eventually the 'revolution' would take place and I would be 'dethroned'. It was always lots of fun and the students loved it and all of them got involved. Yet, the most interesting part was when we picked up the pieces and discussed what we would do now that all power had been removed. Some wanted to reinstate me, some wanted a balance of teacher and student committee, some wanted to get rid of me. Those discussions were absolutely rich with ideas around power and rights and responsibility. They would eventually come to an agreement on how the class would be run and because each class culture was different, therefore the process they used and the product they arrived at varied, but it was authentic to them.

This process enabled four things. Firstly it allowed us to create a democratic classroom around procedures and rules. Secondly, it created a culture where students were invited to bring their knowledge to the community. Students learned that this was a space where ideas were shared, where all were respected and that all of us were on a journey to discover some truths about the nature of humanity. Sounds lofty,

maybe it even borders on sounding silly, but it did create a place that was exciting, fun and filled with energy as we learned. Thirdly, the process allowed students to learn about the importance of collaboration, cooperation, analysis and synthesis. Students were constantly engaged with each other in conversation and they had to thoughtfully work through the events as they unfolded. They needed to connect those events to what they already knew from their experiences and connect that knowledge to the new ideas they were being exposed to. Lastly, students did learn the historical facts spelled out in the curriculum (keep in mind that our social sciences curricula include much more than just historical content, so by focusing on the generative concepts of power and democracy and the process skills of collaboration etc., we were not straying from the curriculum). Yet when we looked at the facts of the French Revolution (for example) students would often tie together what had transpired in the classroom, with the events of the Revolution. Only, I found that now they were able to extend their thinking and reflect and comment on what might have been the underlying causes and effects of the struggle for democracy.

Was it perfect? No. Were there discipline problems, management issues? But honestly, compared to when I taught history from a text (virtual or bound) there were a whole lot fewer issues. Students were engaged and interested and when that happens, they want to be part of the community and the value and respect the space they are in.

September

Comment by Marg: A while back you asked how we account for the content objectives if we move to a model of education that is more student directed. I think you just answered that question when you described the 'revolution' that took place in your classroom where students experienced democratic and un-democratic actions. You were the instigator. You set a context, created simple rules and allowed the process to unfold. Students then had something to connect to when they encountered new ideas. Having those background experiences and the knowledge created through the discussions held in class, deepened their understanding of the concept of democracy and I'm sure that students learned many historical facts in the process. I would venture to say that their understanding and remembering was much more significant than if they had listened to lectures, taken notes about historical events and then regurgitated those 'facts' to get their mark. Not only that, but they would have likely heard only one perspective – the teacher's. The conversation enabled them to hear multiple perspectives as well as explore and articulate their thinking and develop the vocabulary to discuss relevant issues. So…lots of content was covered or rather 'uncovered' as we heard a speaker say recently. Your students were also able to be contributing members of a democratic classroom. Yes, there were issues to deal with, but that's part of it. How I wish my own high school history classes could have been that engaging.

So I wonder… is it possible to ever reach a point where our classrooms are totally democratic?

By the way, I love that story, but I also have a concern about the term 'allowed the process to unfold' because I think that this can be misconstrued, just like many other great ideas in education have been. Take for example, the constructivist theory. There are those who think that this is a free-for-all and students just go with the flow and do whatever they want. Those people might also think that 'allowing the process to unfold' is too vague. However I do agree with you that this is what should be happening in classrooms. I believe there is a structure underlying such an approach but how is it that we can convey this message? Let me give you another example. Literature circles or discussion groups of any type are a great context in which students can practice democracy. They can be student-led and work very well if a culture where diverse ideas are respected is created in the classroom. However, I have on numerous occasions witnessed disasters. A teacher is enthused about getting kids together to talk, but when they go to their groups, there is often chaos because that underlying structure is not there. Students aren't prepared to discuss and so are 'unfolding' without a real purpose and the scary thing is that the teacher doesn't even seem to recognize this. She/he just observes this chaos happening and thinks that this is what literature circles are about, often just giving up and sighing, "This just doesn't work in my classroom."

Earlier you talked about a move to a model of education that is more student directed and what implications this might have for the accountability for covering content objectives. There is too much covering of the curriculum at the expense of real understanding. Again, how can this culture be changed? From our experience with university partnerships, there are so many possibilities and so many difficulties. I am quite optimistic about the changes that our local university is trying to make to its education program, but it's not easy. They have students entering the program, many of whom have experienced twelve or more years of schooling, which held a very traditional 'teachers as the knowledge holder' approach. It is still a mystery to me how some can reflect on this philosophy and come out of it with a new way of viewing education and how others take for granted that this is just the way it's done. It's also a big challenge for new teachers to enter a school environment where 'this is how it's done' prevails. It's hard work doing what you believe is best for the students when around you others *know* (or think they do) what is best. I think it's also important to remember that change doesn't always involve a complete turnaround – or am I compromising when I say that? We seem to take on an 'either or' attitude in education. I am reminded of a comment from a teacher in a session where thinking strategies where being explored and discussed. The comment was, "We've moved towards teaching kids to think, but now they don't know the basics (the example given was that now writing a complete sentence was something students weren't able to do anymore). The implication, I gathered, was that we can't do both. Now, if I were to choose between the two I'd probably pick the thinking, but I don't think

it's a matter of doing one or the other. Aren't both important? Again, there seems to be confusion about the language – I believe in this particular case it had to do with the term constructivism.

Perhaps rethinking how we view the things we already do at school is a first step in understanding and developing a democratic classroom. Take two processes we do at school – reading and writing. How we approach these is significant. In fact, even referring to them as processes may be a different approach for some. If we view them as necessary skills that we must teach at school and we choose what the students will read and write and evaluate them on remembering details and facts from what they have read, often with predetermined answers, there isn't much democratic about that. "Schooling as reading, writing, and a little arithmetic and science… has universal appeal: the same model would serve a democracy and dictatorship equally well" (Goodlad, et al., 2004, p. 55). However, we can approach readers and writers workshop as places to enact democratic habits (Klooster & Bloem, 2007). Students can choose their own topic/reading and express their opinions and ideas within a classroom culture that values everyone being heard, respected and even treasured. Students read and listen to others' ideas (classmates or other writers) and although the work begins on an individual basis, they meet in groups to discuss and explore these ideas. Alternate perspectives are explored. Students ask each other questions. The process helps each individual grow as they collaborate and converse, consider alternatives and reflect. These democratic practices carried out within the group help to make each participant a stronger citizen of the classroom. The teacher has only acted as the facilitator to organize the learning experience. The writer may now decide to publish the paper and thereby experiences another democratic virtue – the opportunity to influence others through a free press. In a similar way, readers interpret their reading in a personal way, but through discussion also explore alternate perspectives and refine their own thinking. Students learn to think and communicate while learning the basic skills in a variety of disciplines and while practicing democratic life in the classroom. Students need to experience this in order to see the effectiveness in their own lives outside of school (Goodlad et al., 2004).

You and I and the others we work with often reflect on our roles as teachers. Are we facilitators, co-learners? A teacher candidate who experienced literature circles as a co-learner with grade six students recently wrote:

> I have also learned that teachers need to take the role of a facilitator in classroom discussions. This may be hard for teachers to do and understand because the traditional view of the teacher is that the teacher teaches and the students learn. However, through my experiences I have found that the students engage in discussion more when the questions and comments are theirs (therefore, the students scaffold their own learning). In [name of town] I often had a planned set of questions that I was ready to ask the students, but within one or two days I found that the students participated and responded

better to their own questions. …I find it is important that the teacher assumes the role of the facilitator (meaning that the teacher says only a few comments in the discussion and is there mainly to direct and organize the discussion). I can see how this can be hard for teachers to swallow sometimes because one might feel that they have so much to say on the topic as a teacher. To state it simply: it is our job to teach, but that does not have to mean that we (the teachers) have to do all the teaching.

Another teacher candidate wrote:

The oral communication with the students allowed the other teacher candidate and myself to demonstrate empathy, understanding, consideration and respect for all of the students. The young students quickly surmised that this was a learning environment, which they wanted to promote and to participate in. They recognized that they were respected and in turn they extended this respect to everyone in the group. A respectful environment is key to promoting risk taking. It is also conductive to students feeling safe enough to access their higher cognitive levels of thinking – evaluation and interpretation.

Quite powerful, I think, for new teachers to be thinking this way. Sounds hopeful, doesn't it?

January

Comment by Kim: One of your last questions in an earlier post is intriguing. You asked, "Is it possible to ever reach a point where our classrooms are totally democratic?" You were making reference to a classroom where not just the rules were created democratically, but knowledge was as well. I am not certain, mainly because I am uncertain what 'totally democratic' means, but I do believe that it is very possible that our classrooms and our schools could move in that direction. There is of course the reality of curriculum, but I think there is evidence to suggest – at least here in our province – those curricula are indeed moving in that direction. The curriculum renewal in our place suggests that curricula will be less about the transmission of discrete content and more about engaging students in the process of inquiry. That gives many of us hope. The other day you provided me with some newspaper clippings that examined the evolution of education over the course of the last 100 years or so. What surprised me was that a lot of the ideas we are talking about have been around for a long time, and yet they still remain in the margins of the institutions. Ultimately you and I and thousands of others can beat these drums of renewal and change and encourage teachers to move to a more democratic model of learning, but what needs to be in place for this (r)evolution to occur?

Firstly we need the people. And these people need to be brave. Cultural change, especially in an institution as conservative as education is a herculean task and the faint of heart will need to be brave. You mentioned that the pre service teachers

clearly see the beauty and the benefit of a student centered democratic classroom culture, and yet many of them may face stiff resistance to this approach. You and I have both been there. You are not a traditional teacher, that should be obvious to anyone reading these posts, and you have expressed to me that at times you were seen as radical, or 'out there'. School culture can be entrenched and they often suffer from the belief that because that is the way it has always been done, than it must be continued. Sometimes, those teachers who step outside of the box will find themselves encountering pressure – both subtle and explicit – to return. Schools do a lot of things right, but they often react very negatively to change. Therefore advocates of a democratic classroom will need to truly believe in what they are doing and then find ways to get support, either through professional development opportunities, or a university class or likeminded colleagues. What is going to really rock you is when your students begin questioning your 'new' methods.

Second, we need to understand our rational for doing this. Why bother with this model? Why do we not continue doing things the way they have always been done? After all, it seems to be working? This is where we need to look at our world more closely. Uruguay has committed itself to providing a laptop to every child in that country by the year 2010. That is a huge expenditure and yet the government is going ahead with it, because it believes it is the best road to economic prosperity and national security. Uruguay gets it. They understand the power of connecting their children to local and global networks of learning. They know that children will find ways to connect with each other and with adults to learn and to share and to grow and that this can happen in an open, organic and democratic way. Let's be clear this is not simply about computer hardware, this is about connectivity and its power for learning. They see connecting children as a powerful agent of change.

Let's look at our schools. Ask yourself honestly what has changed in terms of instructional models over the last 100 years? Have your mother or grandmother describe the type of school instruction they saw used and you will find it is not much different than the schools of today. Yet, here we are in a very different world than even ten years ago. Why is it that Uruguay gets it and we seem so slow to respond to the new century? Thomas Friedman (2005) mentions that in this new century if our children are going to keep pace with an ever increasing flat world where the playing field is quickly leveling, they need to learn to be collaborators, organizers, synthesizers, and knowledge builders. Do our schools do this? Will your classroom be a place where students and teachers learn to build knowledge together?

January

Comment by Marg: I'm not sure I know what "totally democratic" means either, but I think that it is something some teachers strive for in classrooms and kudos to them. You're right about our provincial curricula moving in that direction too. However, if teachers haven't experienced a different way of approaching teaching themselves,

they need to see an alternative in action. It's fine to talk about it, but there is the practical aspect as well. Some are risk takers – others aren't so I believe they need more support. I guess that's our role. Of course, as I mentioned earlier, one of the mysteries is that some people have experienced the same type of schooling, and can break away from it.

Another real challenge is that students don't see a lot of evidence of exploratory, reflective and deliberative talk in the real world. Well, it is there but it's hidden by such examples as advertising, news media, and publishers who create teacher-proof materials. The message is that "we can do the thinking for you". So everyone gets caught up in that. Teachers, particularly, are led to believe that the answer is "out there". They are controlled by those outside forces, and in turn, control what happens in their classrooms.

Thanks, Kim, for the conversation. I am not a regular 'blogger', but it's been good. It's been a great opportunity to extend some of those conversations we have at work. As usual we have more questions than ever, but isn't that what learning is all about? We seem to be wondering about some similar issues of those some hundreds of years ago. This adds a whole new dimension to 'traditional teaching'.

February

Comment by Kim: Thanking you Marg, for joining me on this 'online' conversation. We, as educators, are not often able to afford the time to sit back and reflect with a colleague on our profession and the direction it is going. I have found this to be a very rewarding activity, not only because it was a chance to visit with someone I admire greatly, but also because it was an interesting way to hold a conversation. I was able to read and re-read your comments and reflect and think before I left my response. I liked that pace in this case.

We will leave this virtual conversation open and we would welcome and be delighted if someone picked up a thread and carried on the art of 'quilting' our way through these issues. I thought you might like the metaphor of a quilt as a conversation, since I know you are a quilter.

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10. STUDYING DEMOCRACY AS AN
ENDANGERED SPECIES

You Never Miss the Water 'til the Well Runs Dry

—The Mills Brothers

The right whale, the snow leopard, the California condor and the democratic system have a lot in common these days. All are faced with the daily reality of extinction, and all are looked upon by students as merely facts to be memorized in a textbook. And in studying these examples, students frequently feel no active connection between the things they learn in class and their 'real' lives. Instead, their eyes will pass over the pages and they will later wonder what they have read. This great passivity, this apathy, this overt compliance with dogma has led to learning without mental activity, without challenge and without understanding; inevitably, it leads to the demise of the concept that is trying to be inculcated.

This chapter will look at the term 'democracy', its state in the world today, and its present use in Social Studies subjects. However, it will look at it from a different lens than is commonly used. So often, democracy is studied as a healthy and growing political system that is spreading around the world. This is what's taught to students, along with the morphology of the term and the importance of voting. However, this form of 'rose-coloured', technical teaching fails on two levels when educating students on the subject. First, this obscures the serious threats posed to the democratic system today, both externally and internally. Second, this vision of democracy tends to enervate and disinterest students, leading to a lack of compassion for the subject. In looking at any storybook, television program or computer game of today, it is human nature to yawn at a pleasant, moralistic tale and throw it aside – especially if one can't make any pragmatic connection. Instead, the human psyche is drawn to tales of conflict and defying the odds.

It is imperative, therefore, to grab students' interest and emotions from the outset when studying democracy. I propose, therefore, to turn this concept on its head: To look at it not as an overwhelming, inevitable regime, morally superior to all other forms of government (of little interest to the adolescent mind), but as an endangered species, being attacked and driven to the brink of extinction by a series of predators. Thriving on conflict, students should, therefore, be brought into the middle of this life-or-death struggle, and shown that the actions they choose may save this besieged underdog. To prove the point, let's treat this abstract concept as any other

'Endangered Species', and employ the same terminology, categorization, causes of endangerment and possible aids to its survival.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE ENDANGERED *DEMOCRA* GENUS

A common fallacy perpetuated in the Western curriculum is to examine democracy in the classroom as merely a monolithic entity: '…government of the people, by the people, for the people…'. Unfortunately, it is then left in simplistic and vague terms, with the world split into those countries that are democratic (good) and those that are not (bad). These blurry sightings of democracy not only make it very difficult for students to comprehend in a practical way, but also do not inspire empathy. If you were a teen-ager, who would you root for – the undefeatable-yet-boring hero or the dark-horse rebel? As well, it does grave injustice to a quite complex subject. How engaged would a reader be if historians chose not to subdivide the genus *Homo*, but merely studied *sapiens*, *neanderthalensis*, *floresiensis*, chimpanzees and gorillas as one indivisible group? Perhaps a more engaging and sympathetic pursuit, therefore, would be to understand democracy as a root genus with various species. There are, in actuality, innumerable sub-groups (many the creation of cross-breeding and laboratory experiments) that derive from the genus *democra*. Indeed, it is in examining which species thrive in what location and which are near extinction that may excite and inform students. Listed below are the 5 most recognizable to the amateur 'democratologist' (colloquially known as "d-spotters"):

Democra athenensis – known in the vernacular as 'Direct Democracy' or 'Pure Democracy' (see Polybius, 1966; Hansen, 1999). In this oldest form of the genus, sovereignty is lodged with all citizens who choose to participate. When assembled, they might make laws, elect and dismiss officials, and conduct trials. Government positions are filled through the use of lottery not by election (the only modern relic of this species can be seen in the sub-species *Democra athenensis juridicae* (located solely in the greenhouse environment of the legal system). Present-day examples that still work on a national level exist in small geographical pockets, such as the *Democra athenensis plebiscita*: It has thrived mostly in Switzerland (with 240 referendums in the past 120 years), and as an additive to governments throughout North America (see Kobach, 1993; Mansfield, 1983). Outside of these small pockets (geographically and politically), this species has been on the endangered species (or extinct) list in most countries of the world. Used so little, this species has even been placed on the 'Hypothetical List' by many d-spotters (i.e., Cronin, 1989).

Democra participatorsis – This species emphasizes the creation of opportunities for all members of a political group to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities. Small pockets exist throughout the world, but are quite difficult to locate in large, breeding herds. Creatures of extremes, they are either found in exceedingly low or high altitudes. For example, while the sub-species *Democra partipatorsis grassrootae* prefers the swampy environment of municipal politics

(see Zimmerman, 1999; Gerber, 1999), the *democra partipatorsis deliberae* (which argues that legitimate lawmaking can only arise from the public reflection of the citizenry) seems to only be able to survive in the rarified atmosphere of academic debate (although early fledglings have been nursed by d-spotter Joseph M. Bessette). These two should not be confused with their more distant offshoot *Democra partipatorsis radicalus*, found in the isolated regions of Chile, which seeks to focus on the importance of nurturing and tolerating difference and dissent in decision-making processes. For a full field-guide to these nascent species please refer to Chambers and Kymlicka (2002) who argue that they frequently act as a bellwether for strong liberalism.

Ochlochra mobile vulgus – While having all the earmarks of the genus *democra*, this is a more malignant sub-genus of the *Governmenti* family. Stemming from the original Greek *okhlos* 'mob' and *kratos* 'rule of', it has many pejorative names: 'majoritianism', 'the Bandwagon', or 'the herd morality'. With no formal authority whatsoever, disputes are started and ended by brute force under the motto 'Might Makes Right'. Passion, not logic makes the rules, and it is often associated with demagoguery. This particular *bête noire* very often becomes prey for both anti- and pro-democratic predators alike. For this reason, although its name is invoked readily, this species' lifespan is incredibly short (in fact, due to its efficient extermination by outside forces, d-spotters have not been able to predict its natural age expectancy). So far, it has been spotted only for fleeting periods of time: for examples, see 190 A.D. Rome (Dio Cassius 1927, 97–99), 1789 in Paris (Rude, 1959), 1965 in Montgomery, Alabama (Branch, 2006), and Beijing 1989 (Nathan, 2001). For a handbook of the ongoing extermination of this sub-genus and why it's a good idea, see Kuehnelt-Leddihn (1943).

Based on differing fears of this sub-genus, two distinct branches of the *democra* genus have spawned: one branch, *Democra illiberalii* – is a hybrid species that puts only weak limits on the power of elected representatives, allowing them to rule as they please. This has several sub-species that act in specific ways. For example, the short-lived *Democra illiberalii mccarthiansis* sets limits on some rights and freedoms of its citizens in order to protect the institutions of the democracy. The more stable *Democra illiberali centrala* organizes elected representatives into a party, and once voted into office, all members are expected to follow that decision in public. At the furthest extreme is the other branch, *Democra illiberali totalitae* – in which lawfully elected representatives maintain the integrity of a nation state whose citizens, while granted the right to vote, have little or no participation in the decision-making process of the government. Of all the species shown here, this is the only one whose numbers seem to be prospering. Unfortunately, due to much cross-breeding with other genii (*oligarchsis* and *autocratsis*, for example) it is difficult to distinguish the original democratic features of the root species (outlined in the work of Popper, 1945, 1961).

Democra representae – Finally, this species of indirect democracy rests sovereignty in the hands of elected representatives, with accompanying rights that protect minorities from brute consensus (see observations by famous d-spotter John Rawls, 1993). Although related, numerous sub-species have emerged in

separate locations with different variations that set them apart. Examples include: the *Democra representae republicansis* (where power rests on the rule of laws and a state or country) found throughout the United States and pockets of Europe; *Democra representae sovietae* (where workers in a locality elect representatives into increasingly larger councils) once found in vast parts of Asia; and finally the *Democra representae Westminsterii* (technically a member of the *Monarcha* family, but considered *Democra* due to its bright constitutional plumage and prehensile parliament) still exists throughout the now extinct British empire.

In our present age the first three species mentioned above have all but disappeared from the planet in terms of mass population. Indeed, when *The Economist* (January 2007) examined the present state of democracy in the world using five general categories (free and fair election processes, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation and political culture), only 28 out of 167 countries were rated as "Full democracies" (when speaking of democracy, most surveys and curriculum documents, use *Democra representae* interchangeably with its root genus creating confusion). Canada came in 9th, the United States came in 17th and Britain 23rd. Fifty-four were listed as "Flawed Democracies" (i.e., a variation of *Democra illiberalii*), while another 31 were considered "Hybrid regimes" (see *Democra illiberali totalitae*), and 55 were outright "authoritarian regimes". In looking at these bleak numbers, one may observe that the genus is not as robust as popular perception may indicate.

Traditionally, *Democra representae* has been the species of choice for most hinterland populations due to one important reason: it requires the least amount of participation from citizens (voting) for the greatest payoff (rights and freedoms). However, even here it would seem that this species is especially vulnerable to extinction in this day and age. A sign of this endangerment can be seen at the ballot box where in recent years, voter turnout has shown rapid declines. In an analysis of 20 countries, researchers found an average decline of 5%: from 83% in the 1950s to 78% in the 1990s (Dalton, 1996, pp. 44–45; Wattenberg, 1998; Franklin, 2004). Using Canada as a specific example, this situation seems worse, with numbers tumbling from a 75% turnout in 1988 to 59.1% for the 2008 federal election (CBC, October 15, 2008), the lowest since Confederation in 1867. Canada's largest province of Ontario is at the vanguard of this apathetic demographic – in the past provincial election of October 2007, the percentage of eligible voters casting ballots hit an all-time low of 52.6%, or 4.4 million of 8.4 million possible voters (Elections Ontario, 2007). Most serious for the future of the species, it would seem that even the act of voting is too much participation for most young voters who, on average, register a turnout of 38.7% in Canada (Milner, 2003; Gidengil et al., 2003; Franklin, 2005).

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF ENDANGERMENT?

Having now established that there exists an especial threat of endangerment to the species *Democra representae*, it becomes paramount to find out where the causes

lie. In turning to the many general sources that describe endangered species, one will find four major reasons: Habitat Destruction, Introduction of Exotic Species, Overexploitation and Disease (Facklam, 1990; Adams, 1991; Kurpis, 2002).

Habitat Destruction

Flux is the natural state of the world with changes happening constantly. Minimal impacts are felt by most species when these changes occur naturally at a gradual pace. However, when radical changes happen at a fast rate, disaster may occur. With no time to react, a species will most likely die out. Of course, when looking

An Overdeveloped Canopy of Bureaucracy – a bureaucracy always inflicts some *cost* to democracy, but this cost may be usually borne insofar as it makes social order and the rule of law possible. However, when growing in soil that has become too rich with economic success, this lethargic canopy may proliferate too far, and become a great deterrent to democracy, blocking light and fresh air. In fact, even when economic growth declines, the branches of this pest may prove too difficult to prune back. Expert in this field, Max Weber (1980) notes the signs of degeneration of this democratic habitat due to this bane: when a vertical hierarchy becomes too chaotic; when individuals subvert the spirit of the law for personal gain; when officials try to avoid accountability and seek anonymity by avoiding documentation of their procedures; and especially when nepotism, patronage, corruption and political infighting counter the rules of election, recruitment and promotion. These factors have a gradual strangling effect, first on *Democra representae* who may see the political environs as a dark swamp that cannot be cut back by a single vote. Even in areas where the *Democra participatorsis* may usually dig in and survive – the municipal level – this overarching entity may take over.

Economic Erosion of Social Living – Naturalist Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) remarks that *democra*'s host (the *homo sapien*) is, by nature, a self-centred creature. This runs contrary to the *democra* genus which needs a certain amount of restraint, trust and self-discipline on the part of the host for it to thrive. To make a productive symbiosis, therefore, an environment must be created whereby social living is seen by the host as an integral part of their existence. This allows the acceptance of things non-proximate or unfamiliar that, as isolated individuals, they would naturally reject. In the West, today, the economic situation has perpetuated two myths that severely weaken this relationship. For the *homo sapiens* who have achieved some financial success, the original characteristic of self-centredness emerges and the urge to be involved with a greater circle decreases. The same could be said for those who only find sporadic employment. They feel abandoned by their fellow creatures and, as Milner (2005) baldly states: "these people fail to act as political citizens (vote, or pay any attention to politics) because they have been excluded from social citizenship" (p. 16).

Paralleling the outside system, public schools are not very hospitable incubators for democracy. Beyond the content that is taught about the benefits of the democratic system, the school is set up more as a hierarchical corporation, with the students

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having the least say at the bottom and receiving the least information about changes that affect their environment. Sometimes there is some illusion of democracy – teachers giving students choices (do you prefer *this* homework or *that* homework?). But, on the whole, curriculum is dictated by the central power, and rules are made by local authorities. In the past few decades this control has become tighter and tighter in the West – standardized exams are becoming the norm, accountability the watchword. As well, there is a growing sense of competition rather than social living promoted in schools. Once emerging with their diploma, newly minted citizens have become well-trained in the paternalism of the school system and after-school employment alike.

Introduction of Exotic Species

While native species are plants and animals that have developed in a specific biological-geographic landscape for a lengthy period of time and have reached some harmony with its surroundings, exotic species are those that have been introduced by artificial and fast-acting methods. Sometimes they may pose no problem and eventually meld with the territory. In some unfortunate cases, however, these interlopers may have a detrimental effect on the ecology, causing harmful consequences (Kurpis, 2002). *Democra* becomes one of these terribly threatened 'native' species when exotic elements are introduced into the community. This is especially true when these intruders contain malignant philosophies masquerading as democracy or, like the pitcher plant, let out the enticing aroma of material benefits.

The Stranglehold of Media propagansis – An indispensable form of sustenance for democracy's survival, the native species *Media jeffersonsis* (first planted in the eighteenth century in North America) sees the journalist as a counterweight to governmental power: reporting *must* stand aside from elite control, and give unbiased, investigative news of the political situation so that citizens may make informed choices. As noted by Noam Chomsky (2002), however, this species has been falling prey to the dreaded predator strain of the *Media* genus, *Media propagansis* that sees journalists as agents and adjuncts of the government. Spreading like a form of kudzu over the past few decades, this has thrived as larger newspapers, television and radio broadcasters in North America have been bought up by large corporations with strong ties to the party in power. It then begins to strangle all forms of media coverage that act as a check on the interest of the corporate elites. This is replaced with illusions which will allow the elite to continue in power. Specifically, a thin epidermis is created to give the appearance of even-handedness (i.e., criticizing the inefficiency of a war) while the tap root still whole-heartedly adopts the ground rules and terminology of the establishment (i.e., does not ask if the war is morally wrong and unjust).

Along with the creation of misinformation, this invasive species may be contributing to the spreading disease of apathy (discussed more fully below). This can be observed in the drastic decline of daily newspaper readership of young demographics compared to that of adults as a whole in *democra* breeding areas.

North American surveys have clearly shown that part of the explanation for youth abstention is the decline in attentiveness to politics as reported in the media (see Bennett, 1998, Milner, 2003). Specifically, a survey of first-year college students found that only 26.7% thought that keeping up to date with political affairs was very important or essential, compared to 57.8% in 1966 (Bronner, 1998).

Models of Prosperity without Freedom – Ever since Nixon 'opened China' to the West, the assumption has been that economic liberalization would undermine repressive regimes, making it more susceptible to the *democra* genus. Recent events, however, suggest that autocratic countries such as China have learned how to separate economic growth and freedom, enjoying the benefits of the former without any risks of the latter. In fact, it has been argued that in the early 21st Century, countries with authoritarian regimes may be more likely to be economically successful at a more rapid pace than democratic countries. The Communist Party of China, which presides over the world's fastest growing economy, uses this concept today as justification for its authoritarian rule: PM Wen Jiabao stated in the February 2007 issue of the *People's Daily* (sub-species *Media propagansis pravdaensis*) that economic growth should take precedence over democratic reforms for the foreseeable future (he indicated a possible timeline of 100 years).

How does the young population of China react to this repressive government? In surveying the young urban professionals of Beijing, Chinese resident and reporter for *Time* Magazine, Simon Elegant refers to them as China's "ME Generation" and describes their philosophy as "self-interested, apolitical pragmatism" (p. 34). The quotations he extrudes from them are telling: "On their wish list, a Nintendo *Wii* comes way ahead of democracy" (p. 35); "There's nothing we can do about politics, so there's no point in talking about it or getting involved" (p. 34); "I care about my rights when it comes to the quality of a waitress in a restaurant or a product I buy. But when it comes to democracy, well, that doesn't play a role in my life" (p. 37). What it shows is that rather than merely existing under oppression, because it brings material benefits, the Chinese youth of today actually prefer it. In fact, one spoke in admonishing terms of the protesters of Tiananmen Square, and stated that the crackdown "certainly was needed" (p. 37). If not, there may have been a counter-reaction and the economic boom may not have happened. As things get materially more prosperous in the "happy" authoritarian state, and as the West's economic future looks more uncertain, therefore, it would seem that *democra* must work very hard, as Nixon's experiment begins to have a reverse effect.

Overexploitation

A species that faces overexploitation is one that may become severely endangered or even extinct due to the rate in which the species is being exhausted. Unrestricted whaling for lamp-oil during the 20th century is an example of *direct* overexploitation. *Indirect* overexploitation can also be of great concern. In these cases, animals and plants are not destroyed for their own material worth, but due to the fact that they are

getting in the way of profit-making. This technique, informally called 'shoot, shovel, and shut up' (Bailey, 2003) is quite common among farmers who find an endangered species on their property.

Using Democracy's Name in Vain – Democratic countries frequently do things for various reasons other than the promotion of its governmental system. They may run low on a fuel source and see plentiful amounts in other locations. They may feel that rather than turning to more expensive alternatives or having to deal through a middle-man, it may be cheaper and easier to simply enter this other country and take what they need. They may also see other countries they believe to be of lesser quality beginning to surpass them economically and militarily. To subordinate them to their former status they will invade and destroy the infrastructure of the 'inferior' country.

In these cases, the proper terminology for these incursions would fall under categories such as 'laziness', 'avarice', or 'megalomania'. However, these interlopers frequently refer to the genus *democra* in order to explain any action of this sort (as in, 'making the world safe for…'). This principle of *direct* overexploitation of the term could also work on an individual level. In certain locations, if a citizen says something that may not fit with the official version of how a government should be run, s/he may be accused of being 'undemocratic'. In both cases, it is hoped by the government that, if used repeatedly, the population will actually believe that these unrelated aggressive techniques are actually forms of *democra*. Instead, the reverse usually happens when this term is overexploited – it becomes so watered-down that nobody can spot the real genus any more, and can be easily trodden underfoot through lack of notice.

The Pursuit of Global Materials – In *homo sapiens'* search of profit, *democra* is frequently deemed an inconvenience to progress and done away with by government and individual citizens alike. For example – for forty years, the West fought a pitched battle in the name of *democra representae* against communist countries using the premise that they supported an undemocratic way of life. Recently, however, it seems that the West can turn a blind eye to the worst of undemocratic practices, human rights abuses, suppressions of free speech and religion, as long as it can exploit these undemocratic principles in other countries for material benefit. This overexploitation sets an example for all citizens in the breeding areas of *Democra representae*. While they are taught explicitly that totalitarianism is wrong and democracy is right, the question emerges, "Isn't it wrong to deal with these countries, then?" The response comes at the tag at the bottom of almost every product they buy. Two problems then emerge. First, democracy becomes compromised and harder to defend by governments and citizens. Second, what form of government will be used after an un-democratic creditor comes to call?

Disease

Finally, a species may fall victim to disease, or the effects of pollution that renders it subject to extinction. This is because a species may not have natural protection

against particular pathogens. Dutch elm disease, for example, has been decimating the elm population of Europe and North America from 1970 to 2000. In the animal kingdom, rabies and canine distemper viruses are presently destroying great numbers of carnivore populations of East Africa. The genus *Democra* is not immune from numerous diseases, as well: corruption, nepotism, oligarchic tendencies have always presented a problem but have been endemic as long as the genus has existed. More worrisome is virulent strains of certain diseases that have strengthened in the last twenty years:

The pollution of Youth Cynicism – This seems to form an especially thick pall over the British Isles. The British Electoral Commission recently found that young nonvoters were disproportionately inclined to state that they did not vote because it made little difference who won the election (2002, 18). Similarly, another U.K. survey concluded that "there aren't enough opportunities for young people …. to influence political parties" (Henn and Weinstein 2003). In this way, based on their feelings of futility and corruption of the system, many youth actively dissent. With the feeling that "politics is something that is done to them, not something they can influence" (O'Toole et al., 2003, 359), many youth find other ways to express themselves politically – through graffiti, protests, and violence.

The Wasting Sickness of Apathy – Most dangerous of all causes for endangerment, it is the logical response of youth when all the causes listed above combine together. In his detailed field study of the decline of the *democra* genus in Canada, Milner (2003) describes the situation:

> young citizens so inattentive to the political world around them that they lack the minimal knowledge needed to distinguish, and thus to choose, among parties or candidates. Political dropouts are of special concern, because they constitute a growing group among young people in established democracies who, despite being better educated on average, are less attentive to, and thus less informed about, available choices than were young people in earlier generations. (p. 4)

This cannot be confused with cynicism or feelings of alienation. In fact, a number of Canadian surveys show that young respondents are quite satisfied with the way democracy works in Canada, and have the lowest tendency to cite a flaw in the political process as a reason for not voting (Gidengil et al., 2004; Pammett & Leduc, 2003). Put simply, it seems that the present generation of young (potential) voters simply does not care about anything beyond their immediate vision. Milner (2003) explains that it represents

> a decline in the sense of civic duty to vote. This declining sense of obligation, when set in the context of a wider generational culture given to political inattentiveness, can transform a provisional act of abstention into a habit of political dropping out. (p. 6)

Overall, there has been not just been a drop in voting, therefore, but in all aspects related to areas of democratic citizenship and civic literacy. With only 9% of youth thinking voting is a duty, and a great percentage answering that they were "not at all interested in news about the election," would democracy be enriched by their participation? In comparing the 1956 Gallup Polls to a 2000 Canadian Election Study, Howe (2003) makes the final, gloomy pronouncement:

> it is only older Canadians who will vote simply out of duty …. younger Canadians think differently; without some knowledge to make the voting decision comprehensible and meaningful, they prefer to abstain…They know less about politics and…their impoverished knowledge is more likely to affect whether or not they vote. (p. 81)

In this way, the youth of democratic countries seem to be interchangeable with the Chinese youth described above (according to a recent survey, one in five students at New York University would give up their vote in the next US presidential for an iPod, two-thirds for the price of a year's college tuition and half would renounce their vote permanently for a million dollars. (*The Toronto Star*, December 2, 2007, ID1). As the habits of democracy fade with the previous generation, will the nextgeneration have the will to even sign a ballot and keep the democra genus from withering?

<div align="center">WAYS TO SAVE THIS ENDANGERED SPECIES</div>

Even though things look grim for the near future, the *democra* genus has proven quite hardy in the most unlikely of habitats. In fact, the more inhospitable the territory, the more starkly its visible signs can be observed. What has to be changed, therefore, is the mentality of young citizens. No longer MUST they be taught the wonders of democracy. They have to be brought to a point where they desperately WANT it to be taught to them, and consider it a key nutrient to their survival. This may be aided by the following five techniques:

Integration Rather than Captive Breeding

Captive breeding of *Democra representae* has been an ongoing mandate from most Western governments. Copying many attempts by United States and Europe (Hahn, 1998; Torney-Purta et al., 1999), the Ontario Ministry of Education, for example, has tried to combat its decline by creating a new civics course at the Grade 10 level to deal solely with its study and proliferation. This is a start, in that it allows some interaction with the species. Unfortunately, recent evidence indicates that this kind of arrangement (segregated courses presented in the traditional content-oriented fashion) is not especially appreciated by adolescents. In studies performed in Germany, Holland, the United States and Australia, these 'one-shot' courses are seen as the most boring of all school experiences for students, are rarely discussed at home, and have no appreciable affect on youth's perception of democracy and civic

duty (Händle et al., 1999; Hahn, 1998; Civics Expert Group, 1994; Dekker, 1999; Dekker & Portengen, 2000). In less certain terms, the same can be said for Canadian experiments (Hébert, 2002; Chareka & Sears, 2006).

The first step that has to be taken is the realization that captive breeding only has limited success (for an overall discussion, see Deblieu, 1993). The *Democra* genus does not do well in a penned environment of a single public school course devoted to its study. In keeping it in a corral of this sort, students often fail to see the relation to and impact of this species on their lives. As such, democracy must be integrated throughout the curriculum as an underlying philosophy rather than something that should be looked at on Thursday afternoon between dodgeball and calculus. Teachers have to use its methods to teach. Students must work together, debate, vote on how to proceed, dissent, petition and picket if necessary. Most importantly, they must see that the purpose of learning (like democracy) is not to listen and follow an unquestioned lead, but to take part in their own fate.

Born to Be Wild

In Mussolini's Italy, the trains ran on time; Hitler's regime produced the greatest economic revival in Germany's history; In Mao's China, all are 'happy in their work'. On the grounds of efficiency, Democracy cannot hope to compete with totalitarian states. It is, in short, a wild species. There is continual bureaucratic confusion, indecision from leaders, and continual discord is the normal state of things among the voting population. The trouble with those who endeavour to teach democracy is that they try to present it to students as a tamed creature. More often than not, it is demonstrated in history class that it was domesticated generations ago, with only a few tricks taught to it in recent years. It is then laid out upon students' desks to be taken apart for its anatomy to be studied. This will be of little interest to students. Rebelliousness is what they want to observe! Then why not play to democracy's strength? Instead of stressing constitution, history and institutions to the effective exclusion of different party positions on policies and issues, Delli, Carpini and Keeter (1996) point out that courses should be "taught in a realistic manner, introducing students to the conflictual, often unsettling nature of politics" (p. 279). Teachers must be willing to develop opportunities to engage in political realities, including "partisanship, without advancing one side or the other" (Beem 2005, p. 7). In so doing, there cannot be a reliance on textbooks or outdated material. To counteract the effects of the corporate media outside of the classroom, schools must use comparable techniques – the most up-to-date channels of communication, television, the internet, inviting politician to the classroom to engage in discussion, as seen in Sweden, for example (Milner, 2005, p. 12). Similarly, another study found that students who participated in open class discussions and who learn to communicate their opinions through letter-writing and debate were much more active than those who didn't have these experiences (Andolina et al., 2002). The

key is to get students interested in democracy and to relate to it as part of their own culture and conscience.

Handling the Garden Tools of Democracy

Media propagansis is not going to go away for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it is imperative for young citizens to cut through these strangling vines by acquiring the skills and habits of media literacy (as well as basic literacy): reading newspapers and books, using libraries, deciphering maps, writing letters, detecting bias, and placing television and the internet in context. All should be done with a skeptical eye – not to jaundice the students, but to prepare them for their life as responsible democratic citizens.

Creating a Localized 'Democra' Habitat

Classroom discussion and debate will still be of limited use if students see nothing in their environment that IS democratic. It has to be MADE immediately important to them. It cannot be done so if democracy is treated as a museum specimen. Like a dinosaur on display – it would have more impact if it were chasing you. For that reason, the school system must undertake reform to encourage more broad-based power sharing among its stakeholders. In so doing, students must be allowed to play a stronger role in the decisions that are made within the school grounds. Created at Summerhill by A.S. Neill (1960) more than two generations ago, school meetings (*Democra athensis*), attended by teachers and students alike, decide general laws and behaviour at the school. In present day, mock-elections have been created. This is a good passion play concerning *Democra representae*, but would there not be more meaning if the students did more than go through the motions to create a system of this sort in their schools? This has been tried in small pockets in Ontario (see Milner, 2005). Perhaps with more responsibility, and seeing the action-reaction of the democratic system, students may become more instilled with the need to preserve this species.

  Sustained use of 'Democra' outside the Hothouse Once students graduate to become citizens, many believe that they should be pronounced 'full', the learning should end and participation should begin. Unfortunately, learning and participation are seen as mutually exclusive. This divide must end for democracy to flourish: Civic literacy habits and political knowledge should be promoted through educational – as distinguished from training – programs aimed at adults as well as children (Milner, 2003). Sweden, for example, is known for its creation of adult study circles. Politics, in this instance, is discussed from many angles not just from the partisan perspective. This has been promoted in the West (especially Canada) to a certain extent - through Throne Speeches and commission reports (i.e., The Rae Report, 2005). But talk is cheap; organization, infrastructure and maintenance are not.

CONCLUSION

Of course, this exercise in Linnaean reasoning may be overstating the status of Democracy in the world today with doomsday pronouncements. In fact, many World Wide indicators show that we are, as a whole, much more democratic today than we ever been in any other point in history (*Freedom House' Annual Report,* 2007). In many countries, newfound democratic freedoms are there for a population that reaches out to grasp it. However, I think the more valid point is that, in many established, traditional democracies today, young citizens show a great lack of concern in actively embracing this system. In Canada, the government has tried numerous ways to boost civic interest. Legislation has recently been introduced to boost declining voter turnout such as: setting a fixed election date; extending the hours and number of days of advanced voting; boosting the number of polling stations; extending polling by one hour on election day. Over the past decade, initiatives from a number of public institutions, private foundations and advocacy groups have also won great acclaim for their endeavours to educate the young about democracy, notably CBC's A People's History, and the Historica Foundation's *Heritage Minutes*.

Unfortunately, all these conveniences and palatable tales will do nothing to attract voters or participating citizens as long as, underlying this façade, the general population has no emotional, visceral need for understanding or participation. As described by Dekker and Portengen (2000) when discussing social studies:

> [It] is a low status area of the school curriculum in many countries. Politics is only one of the subjects in social studies and receives attention for only a small part of the few school hours reserved for the subject. Many social studies teachers do not give priority to political topics [and] have limited political knowledge themselves. (p. 467)

In essence, social studies is not seen as important by students because it is not seen as important by educators. As mentioned earlier, Democracy is messy and, if looked at logically, will not capture students or hard-headed curriculum developers alike. All involved must be drawn to it, fascinated by it, on a gut level. That is how it will prosper. Trying to shove it in as something to be memorized in an already crowded school day – then democracy will soon go the way of the dodo.

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11. THE 'AYES' HAVE IT?

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, I made a commitment to integrate democratic principles into the classes I teach and assignments I offer. I also made it a regular part of classroom decision-making. As the school year began, my grade five students struggled; they had become accustomed to the 'teacher as authority' approach to teaching and classroom management. However, with persistence and a concerted effort to develop a sense of community built on trust, our democratic classroom slowly became a reality.

Once, while immersed in a unit on local history, I put forth two field trip options for the students to consider. I turned the decision into an exercise in democracy whereby students were to consider the pros and cons and put forth a case for each option. True, this was a limited-choice option exercise (i.e., I chose the options) but I felt that beginning the road toward conceptual development had to start somewhere! On voting day, we all listened to one final pitch from a representative in support of each option and proceeded to a secret ballot. The vote was close, 18–16 as I recall, and from my personal perspective, students chose what I believe was the lesser of the two arguments put forward. Nevertheless, when balanced against not only the excitement generated for the field trip but also student participation in decision-making, the exercise was a huge success. Indeed, students felt the gamut of emotions often felt by politicians and supporters after a long electoral campaign – euphoria at victory, pain in defeat, desire to try again and in a few cases, withdrawal from the process.

I particularly enjoyed that year of teaching. By beginning to integrate democratic principles into the classroom, I felt I was starting to live up to my promise as a teacher. I was acting as a guide, facilitating the educational, social and spiritual growth of young citizens. It was exciting! All students in Canadian schools are taught about democracy, but far fewer get an opportunity to experience it in the classroom. That's a shame because it is such a rich and dare I say generative concept with infinite possibilities.

WHAT IS 'DEMOCRACY'?

Students may not get to experience democracy in the classroom as often as I believe they should, but by upper elementary school Canadian children are more or less

familiar with some of the basic premises on which the concept is built. Children have often been involved in democratic decision-making such as voting to go to Disney World rather than vacation at Grandma's house, electing a player to be team captain, or having a say on a family move to another city. Without even knowing it, they have become versed on the democratic notion that persons who are members of a particular group (society) have the 'right' to participate in decision-making. Though parents, teachers and other adults may use their positions of authority to silence or negate that right—sometimes with good reason—in kid-world, the notion that each person has the right to have their say by calling 'dibbs' on the television, computer or video game is well established. Indeed, I believe the resonance that democracy has speaks to our deep-seeded desire to be acknowledged and to be valued.

Democracy is a political philosophy and term used to describe a small number of related forms of government that originated in Ancient Greece around the fifth century BCE. The term is a translation of the Greek word *dimokratia* which itself is an amalgam of *demos* meaning 'people' and *kratos* meaning 'rule'. In short, it is the rule of the people, a concept Abraham Lincoln eloquently encapsulated in his Gettysburg Address of 1863 when he spoke of government "of the people, by the people, for the people". While there is no simple definition of democracy, all agree on two basic tenets: 1) Government of the people, by the people, for the people. Abraham Lincoln spoke these immortal words at Gettysburg in 1863, capturing the essence that democracy is a form of governance based on law whereby 'the people' make the laws and lived under the laws, and 2) There is a common understanding, often enacted in law, of who constitutes 'the people' (Dahl, Shapiro & Cheibub, 2003). However, the nature of the laws enacted and the rights and freedoms that flow from them varies widely throughout the world.

In its purest form, members of a society (citizens) can engage in a form of democratic governance known as 'direct democracy'. In this case, all eligible citizens participate in decision-making, and depending on the particular system, can make laws, elect and dismiss officials, and conduct trials. However, at its core direct democracy is when all eligible citizens vote, whether in favour or against, policy proposals and items that will become law. The Athenians of Ancient Greece engaged in a form of direct democracy whereby approximately 30,000 male citizens, through the assembly, *boule* or Council of Citizens and law courts, effectively ran the entire governance system of the city-state. Political participation was a cornerstone of Athenian citizenship, and many were constantly engaged in the public's business for most of their adult lives. Critics of Athenian democracy always note that citizenship eligibility was extremely narrow in that only adult males were considered citizens. Women and slaves were prevented from participating in the city-state's form of 'direct democracy'. Nevertheless, Athens established an early model of direct democracy, and despite its limitations, continues as a reference point for all who strive for increased civic engagement.

Direct democracy has surfaced a number of times in the years since Ancient Athens. During the years of the Roman Republic, beginning circa 449 BCE, Roman

citizens actively engaged in lawmaking, and also had the right to veto legislative made law. By the 13th century, citizen-made law found an outlet in Switzerland, and by 1847, the Swiss added the 'state referendum' – the right to put proposed laws to a statewide vote – into its constitution. Though Switzerland followed the Athenian example of only permitting adult males to participate in the political system for centuries (women did not receive the federal vote until 1971), today Switzerland stands as a modern example of a direct democracy in action.

Direct democracy has also found an outlet at the state and local levels in the United States. While the framers of the American Constitution disavowed direct democracy at the federal level of government, deeming it impractical, a number of states and communities do allow citizens to directly participate in decision-making through initiatives and referenda (Zimmerman, 1999). Similarly, a number of towns in the New England region have a form of 'home rule', deciding on local issues using the town hall meeting as a means of decision-making.

Notwithstanding the challenge of creating a workable and effective direct democracy (a point to be discussed in a later section), there is no question direct democracy has many attractive attributes. Decisions come with enhanced credibility given that they result from the input of all eligible citizens in the decision-making process. The distributive nature of success and failure is also attractive, eliciting a 'we're all in this together' feeling often termed as a sense of community stewardship.

Students, as 'the people' of the classroom democracy, can experience these benefits by generating a classroom constitution based on a model of direct democracy. The constitution can outline the rules and values of the classroom community, areas of decision-making responsibility, and a process for arriving at decisions that respects the individuals in the community. Students can consider appropriate items for inclusion into the constitution, research similar items from other documents (the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms springs to mind), craft and debate language, and vote on acceptance of the final product. When I did this activity with my grade five students, the resulting constitution was transcribed onto student-created parchment paper and prominently displayed on the wall. Over the course of the year, it was referred to many times to settle disputes between and with students, and it served as a guide for governance within the class. Twice there were student-initiated efforts to bring forth changes to the constitution of which one succeeded and one failed. Not every student was happy with every decision, but they did appreciate the structure—rules that were created and respected by all including myself—and they were also grateful for the opportunity to participate in the world of decision-making; something they seemed to understand would be expected of them as adults.

WHERE DO ELECTIONS COME INTO IT?

Until now, I've been considering democracy in its purest, most direct form—direct democracy. However, students are often aware of or have interacted with MPs,

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MPPs, MLAs, senators, ministers, deputy ministers, and prime ministers. Television series and the nightly news permit at least cursory knowledge of American titles and positions such as presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, congressmen and congresswomen, and governors. Students may not understand how these positions fit together to form a working governance system, but they might have at least a sense that the people elect most of these politicians.

Each title indicates a position within a 'representative democracy'. While direct democracy expects the engagement of all eligible members of a society (citizens) in public business, many people are uninterested in politics, feel ill-informed about important issues, or are too busy with other tasks such as catching criminals, operating on patients, delivering parcels or raising children, to engage in decision-making themselves. Some people are all three—uninterested, ill informed and too busy! As well, direct democracy historically has only worked well with a relatively small number of members in the society (e.g., a city-state, small town, or classroom). It's simply impractical to expect everyone in a large city, province, state, or country to attend a meeting; debate; and vote on important questions, issues, and proposals of policy or law. How large would the room have to be? How extensive would the Internet hook up have to be? Perhaps a reliable and trusted infrastructure will be developed someday to engage all citizens in direct democracy, but that has yet to happen. As a result, a form of democracy was developed whereby certain people put their name forward as possible representatives of a specified number or defined group of people (i.e., someone who'll speak and vote on behalf of their fellow citizens). These people, also known as candidates, try to convince their fellow citizens that they have the experience, knowledge, skills, values, and qualities of character to represent the citizens' interests and to make thoughtful decisions in an elected assembly. In short, candidates engage in a campaign of persuasion, trying to convince citizens to vote them into 'office', whereby they hold a position that allows them to represent the voters when called on vote on their behalf in an elected assembly of officials.

Representative democracy as a form of democratic governance addresses many of the issues that make direct democracy impractical (at least in certain contexts), but it too comes with its own particular challenges. In a representative democracy, there might be one person speaking and voting on behalf of anywhere from 500 to 100,000 people or more. How can one person know what so many people think, need, want or believe? How does one person cast a vote when the group of voters who elected him or her may be split among one, two, three or more points-of-view or policy options?

These are important questions, and as a generative exercise in the civics or politics courses I've taught, I ask students to brainstorm possible answers and develop possible solutions for discussion. With regard to the first question, students frequently come to the realization that when dealing with large groups of people, no elected representative can ever truly know the views of each and every person in the group. Some people are vocal in expressing themselves, but some are not. Some people are very honest and truthful while others may qualify, distort or exaggerate

their views. In short, no elected official actually knows the many thoughts, needs, wants and beliefs of all his or her constituents. Nevertheless, a good representative in a working and effective representative democracy makes every effort to find out as much information about the voters as he or she can. How? Students usually generate a list that includes polling; reading and cataloguing e-mail, telephone, and social media comments; holding public consultations; talking to constituents at fundraisers and community events, and talking to voters directly by going door-to-door. The input from constituents keeps the elected official 'in touch' with the general feeling and viewpoint of voters.

The second question is a bit more challenging for students. Elected officials have to balance a number of factors, of which choosing the option supported by most voters is but one. Elected officials have to take into account information they may have access to that the voters do not. As well, they have to consider short and long term pros and cons. These pros and cons can be related to the question or policy at hand, but also to their own political viability within the larger group of elected officials (i.e., if I support Jane on question X, I might get her support in question Y). Finally, elected officials have to consider their own thoughts, needs, wants and beliefs. They may not be able to take a position simply because it is the most popular with voters if it goes against what they know and believe to be right and appropriate.

Here are three possible ways for students to understand the challenges faced by elected officials in a representative democracy. The first possibility involves researching the platform(s) and action(s) of an elected official, analyzing the data, and judging the official's overall performance as an effective representative of the people. The second possibility is to have students develop powerful questions and interview current or former elected officials as to the ways they ascertain the views of their constituents and the challenges they face in representing diverse views. The third possibility is very participatory, and it involves students becoming active in student councils or as student representatives on school or division committees. Candidates campaign on a platform of ideas and compete in elections. Students could run in these elections, and as a year-end project, report on the particular challenges they faced learning what the electorate thinks, wants, needs or believes; and how they balanced the differing perspectives of voters, their fellow elected candidates, and their own thoughts and feelings about an issue.

SHOULD THE MAJORITY ALWAYS GET WHAT IT WANTS IN A DEMOCRACY?

I recall an incident in the grade five class I was teaching whereby a student resented a decision I made, stating, "But sir, we all have to be treated equally. We voted on it!" The situation involved my decision to allow a fellow classmate, a student with a physical challenge who had particular needs, to sit in the front row of a school assembly nearest the door. The student feeling resentment simply couldn't understand why one student would be given such 'preferential' treatment. Following the assembly, I took the opportunity to explore the concepts of 'equality' and

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'equity', trying to help students understand that though all students have equal and inherent value, they do not all have the same life circumstances, and some need specific accommodations to ensure equitable access to the benefits of life. Further, I stated that in a democracy the right to equitable access actually *supercedes* what the majority may say. That just blew their minds! Slowly, using guided questioning, we scaffolded from the reasons why we do not expect pee wee hockey players to play in the National Hockey League to an exploration of why it is problematic for the majority to exclude someone from a group, club, organization, job, etc. simply because of the colour of his skin, her gender, or their religion. As a class we came to an understanding that *because* we are all equal yet different in so many ways, we have to have protections guaranteeing equitable access to the 'game of life'. The student who was so resentful got it.

From earliest times, democratic theorists have been concerned with the possibility that when decisions are made by the majority (whether citizens or their representatives) they would place their interests so far above the minority that they would essentially turn into tyrannical despots. Plato (380BCE, 2000) was concerned with this prospect in *The Republic,* and the phrase "tyranny of the majority" was used in Alex de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835/1840, 2000) and further popularized by John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* (1859, 1985).

On one level, a democracy can operate with the ever-present possibility that the majority may make a poor or ill-informed decision. The option to change the decision or defeat the elected representatives in the next election remains available. However, a democracy without certain restrictions also allows the majority to act in ways that limit the very aspects of democracy that make it vigorous and dynamic (e.g., freedom of expression). As well, an unrestricted majority could act on its prejudices against the very nature of the minority, adversely affecting their ability to survive and thrive in the society. It is these concerns that have led most democracies to constitutionally limit the power of the majority.

In Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has been enshrined in the constitution since 1982. This charter was borne of previous documents (e.g., the Bill of Rights of 1960) to establish the basic rights each person in the society has, and to protect these rights from infringement by the majority. The United States Bill of Rights (1791) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2006) serve similar purposes.

To explore this aspect of democracy further, students could be asked to consider what basic rights are necessary for the maintenance of a vibrant democracy. As well, what aspects of personhood may need to be protected from prejudicial decisions made by the majority of people in a society or their elected representatives? Students could compare their lists with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or a similar national document. As an extension activity, students could judge which countries currently provide the most and least extensive protection of rights in their constitutional documents and consider why certain things may be included (e.g., U.S. Second Amendment protecting the right to bear arms), while others may be

excluded (e.g., protection against discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation remain outside the main body of the U.S. Constitution). Another possibility is to have students research the two sides of a charter case that has previously been placed before the Supreme Court of Canada (for example). Students could hold a mock court case acting as Supreme Court judges, appellants, lawyers for the Crown, defendants, and/or interveners as they argue the case in reference to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. On decision, students could compare their decision with that of the actual court. A variation activity would be to create a new case scenario for the 'court' to consider.

In 1965, Mancur Olson Jr. challenged what he believed to be an overstated concern with the tyranny of majority in his book *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Essentially a political science and economics tome, he asserted among other things that due to a minority's narrow agenda and active political efforts through lobbying, it is more likely to be able to dominate or distort the democratic political process. Though Olson never uses the term, he is one of many who have raised concerns about the "tyranny of the minority". Democracy is a balancing act, and concerns about power and influence tipping too far in either direction have their place. While there have been examples of extreme minoritarianism in global history (e.g., former apartheid policies in South Africa), most democratic theorists of the Olson persuasion are concerned with and opposed to issues such as the apportionment of seats in an elected assembly to particular ethnic groups, affirmative action policies, and a level of political correctness that, in some peoples' minds, limits freedom of expression and religion.

Students would benefit from a debate on these issues. Is it 'democratic' or a tyranny of the minority to apportion a certain number of seats in the Canadian House of Commons to First Nations people? Francophones? Non-Christians? Women? (a numeric majority, but a group of citizens that have historically been disempowered and underrepresented in political fora such as the House of Commons). Are harassment and discrimination policies necessary and appropriate, or a means of limiting freedom of expression and enforcing conformity to a conception of inclusivity? How far does a society have to go to ensure equity of access? By engaging in this activity, within a climate of respect for all, students can generate arguments in support of a particular position, counter arguments, and explore the extent or limitation of willingness to accommodate minorities. It would be interesting to see how students react to the views of the past when, for example, it was believed that extending the franchise to women would destroy the Canadian family.

IS DEMOCRACY ONLY ABOUT THE RIGHT TO VOTE?

There is no question that the right of citizens to vote, whether on proposals of policy in a direct democracy or for representatives in a representative democracy, is the cornerstone of any society calling itself 'democratic'. The struggle for this single right has been at the root of many movements, riots, rebellions, battles and wars

throughout history. In the Western world, untitled men with property have fought for this right; white men without property fought for this right; men of colour fought for it; women, aboriginal peoples, naturalized citizens, youth under the age of 21 years, and prisoners have all argued and petitioned at various times for the right to participate in the making of decisions within their respective democratic societies. Indeed, the struggle for democracy has frequently been framed as the struggle for extended suffrage. However, while some of these battles continue in various societies around the world (e.g., Germany, Iraq, Afghanistan and India), contemporary democratic theorists are raising new issues that they believe affect the ability of democracies to be truly reflective and representative of 'the people'.

Harry Brighouse (2002) writes, "citizens have equal formal rights, but the economic inequalities generated and preserved by the operation of capitalist markets give the wealthy more resources to make use of their formal rights" (p. 52). John Rawls (1993) made a similar point years earlier when he wrote, "…ignorance and poverty, and the lack of material means generally, prevent people from exercising their rights and from taking advantage of these openings" (pp. 325–6). Do economic inequalities within capitalist systems hinder peoples' ability to participate effectively in a democracy? Does poverty 'matter'? The answer in many peoples' minds is yes. They believe that regardless of the political rights officially available to citizens, those who are relatively wealthy, healthy and educated are far more apt to be informed about issues, to vote, to contribute to political campaigns, and to disseminate their views on issues than those who are relatively poor, unhealthy and un- or poorly educated.

It's difficult engaging with let alone caring about public issues if most of your time, energy, and resources are taken up surviving. Few theorists disagree with this assertion, but there is strong disagreement on what, if anything, can or should be done about it. Milton Friedman (2002), the noted economist, believes that economic freedom (and the possibility of inequalities) is an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom that he equates with the liberties of the individual. Stated another way, efforts to find "economic equality" would ultimately infringe on the individual to live a life free of coercion and undermine the democracy as a whole. Ronald Dworkin (1987), an American legal philosopher, took a similar tact using a different topic (i.e., limits on campaign contributions), suggesting that by trying to compensate for unjust differences in wealth we would "…prevent some people tailoring their resources to fit the lives they wanted though leaving others, who had less interest in politics, free to do so" (p. 16).

Many disagree with the points raised by Friedman, Dworkin and others of similar mind. Indeed, the entire conception of the welfare state that emerged in the West out of the Great Depression and World War II is built not only on moral and human rights arguments which justify the mitigation of the potentially deleterious impact of capitalism on citizens' lives but also on the belief that it is in the interest of democracy that citizens are healthy, well-educated and have their basic needs met (Patten, 2003).

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Teachers could provide students with research, information or case studies related to these perspectives and guide students through a consideration of the arguments for and against limitations on lobbying and campaign contributions; or on the 'need' for publicly funded education, health care, and other social programs, and how those arguments impact on the overall 'health' of the democracy.

IS DEMOCRACY AN ALL OR NOTHING PROPOSITION?

Not too long ago there was a minor public uproar when, once again, the Canadian Prime Minister fulfilled his duty and appointed a number of senators to the Canadian Senate, Canada's upper legislative house. Critics of the Canadian Senate called the act "undemocratic," reiterating the oft-shared argument that as a nation that considers itself a democracy, the currently structured Senate is an incongruent affront to democratic principles. A similar argument is often put forth when a new Governor-General, Canada's representative of the Queen, is sworn in. Critics find it incomprehensible as to why the Canadian public continues to tolerate an undemocratic entity such as a hereditary monarch as part of their governance structure.

Castigations of being undemocratic are not new in Canada. Currently, the Canadian Prime Minister appoints the chief justices to the Supreme Court of Canada who serve until resignation, or age 75 years. Political party discipline, a cornerstone of parliamentary democracy, usually demands that the people's representatives (MPs, MPPs and MLAs) vote along party lines rather than in theirconstituents or even their own interests. The Canadian electoral system is of the winner-take-all or first-past-the post variety meaning that the candidate whoreceives the most votes wins the position or seat even if the total votes cast for the other candidates constitutes a majority.

Few would argue that Canada's current governance system contains remnants of structures and processes from its British colonial legacy. These 'left-overs' constitute tradition and are embraced by some, while others view them as irritants waiting to be thrust onto the dust heap of history. But Canada is not unique in this discussion. Great Britain, Canada's imperial forebear, itself has a Senate-like upper legislative house known as the House of Lords, and like Canada, must have its laws signed into effect by a hereditary sovereign. The American republic, borne out of revolution, also has its less than democratic aspects, most particularly the winner-take-all approach to presidential elections. In this case, entire states are termed 'red' or 'blue' based on which party receives the most votes in that state. Then the state sends its entire delegation of electors (the number of which is determined by population) to the Electoral College, who in turn uniformly cast their vote for the red or blue party candidate for President of the United States. Indeed, the list of seemingly undemocratic aspects to the world's democracies could go on, but the question remains: Is democracy an all or nothing proposition? Can a nation consider itself democratic if aspects of it do not measure up to a democratic ideal?

The simple answer would seem to be yes, though falling short of the democratic ideal does lead to some interesting social movements within the society generally, and to some generative possibilities for students in schools. As a deeper consideration of this question, students could research current structures and processes in Canadian governance, assess their democratic legitimacy and propose alternatives that they believe are more democratic. How would these alternatives work? How would they impact on other parts of the system? What would be the process for instituting such a change? The teacher could then layer in arguments for and against these proposals (e.g., direct election of Supreme Court judges, proportional representation in parliament) and have students consider their alternatives further. Once complete, students could present their proposals to the class in oral or multimedia form.

CONCLUSION

Democracy remains one of the most interesting and exciting of all concepts explored in social studies. I've only scratched the surface of the dimensions to investigate and the means through which it can be made generative both for and by students. I return to my memories of those grade five students long ago. Those young citizens spent a year engaged in learning how to make reasoned and thoughtful decisions. Was it perfect? Absolutely not, and I learned many things I would do differently were I to try it again. But in the main, the students learned how to argue for and against positions and they learned how to deal with victory and defeat gracefully. It wasn't revolutionary by any stretch, but it was preparatory for a more complex understanding of the concept, which will hopefully includesome of the conceptual layers discussed herein. I can only hope those students made use of that grade five experience in their later lives as adult citizens.

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12. TO BELIEVE IN DEMOCRACY IS TO BE PROFOUNDLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE CAPACITIES OF HUMAN BEINGS

The concept of democracy, as a human construct, is both embedded and evolving within a particular historical time and space. However, whatever the particularities of the definition of democracy in use, one of the core ideas that is always associated with this concept is the notion that decisions about governing lie somehow in the hands of 'the people' – that is, democracy is the idea that members of a society (citizens) have the right and responsibility to take part in deciding how power relationships should be organized to engage everyone in public decision-making. So, if by definition democracy always encompasses the notion of 'governing by' (or rule by) the people (citizens), then it seems to me that citizen participation – and ideas about what this means – is a constant theme necessary for understanding the concept. While democracy has been used simply as a label for particular kinds of systems of government, to me the concept implies a 'way of living' and 'way of knowing'. In taking citizen participation as fundamental to the concept of democracy, I argue that it is not enough to simply construct or learn about basic democratic structures (i.e., institutional and procedural devices, such as a constitution, rules of order, arms of government, separation of power, and so on). Instead, I believe that democracy is dependent upon the attitudes and qualities with which citizens participate in pubic decision-making in their societies (Kymlicka, 2001). According to my assumptions, there is no democracy without active and critical participation by 'the people'.

To elaborate my understanding of democracy, I will explain more deeply how I conceive of the notion of citizenship and citizen participation. My conceptions have been influenced by notions circulating in the broader Canadian socio-political context – notions which emerged through the struggle to understand the idea of 'citizen' in a diverse, multicultural, and 'democratic' national society.

Canadian political philosophers, (Kymlicka, 2001; Kingwell, 2000) argue that both the private and public sphere of human activity are political and that citizens need to develop and nourish the quality of 'public spiritedness', which "includes the ability and willingness to engage in public discourse about matters of public policy and to question authority" (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 296). To engage meaningfully in public discourse, 'the people' need to learn how to critically consume information and present personal points of view and arguments in a comprehensible and frank way. According to Kymlicka (2001), and I agree, citizens must not engage in public

debate to manipulate or coerce each other by simply stating preferences as truth, or by making threats. Instead, citizens should present reasons for taking particular positions, and such reasons must make sense to people across the spectrum of faiths, cultures and classes. Citizens must also develop the capacity to question authority, as it is their responsibility to monitor people who hold positions of power and judge their conduct. In addition, citizens should understand that while they should struggle to uphold their own personal rights and freedoms, they must also take an active role in upholding the rights and freedoms of everyone. Fundamentally, democracy requires 'the people' to develop autonomy by learning to critique authority, by engaging in well-reasoned public discourses, and by nurturing a sense of reciprocal justice.

With these kinds of expectations for 'the people', I think it becomes apparent why I think that believing in democracy requires that we be profoundly optimistic about the capacities of human beings. To believe in democracy, we must believe that human beings are capable of becoming 'autonomous' by learning to be critical consumers of information and by developing the capacity to see that the rights and freedoms of others are as important as personal rights and freedoms. To believe in democracy, we must believe that people can learn to think reasonably, disagree with respect, negotiate with honour, and respect one another despite differences. Sadly, I do not think that social studies curricula, which represent citizenship education programs in Canada, have reflected this optimism. Kymlicka (2001) notes:

> The aim [of citizenship education] was to promote an unreflective patriotism, one which glorifies the past history and current political system of the country, and which vilifies opponents of that political system, whether they be internal dissidents or external enemies. This sort of civic education, needless to say, promoted passivity and deference, not a critical attitude towards political authority or broad-mindedness towards cultural differences. (pp. 309–310)

My own historical research support Kymlicka's claim and points to some of the assumptions that have (and in many cases, still do) underpinned social studies/citizenship education in this country.

As a social studies teacher in Alberta in the 1980 and early 1990s, I was convinced that schooling/education could play an important role in assisting young people to become the critically thoughtful, autonomous individuals we need as participants who would work toward a strong national and (hopefully, eventually) global democracy. At first glance, I thought that the Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies supported teachers in their efforts to assist young people in developing the necessary critical thinking skills and understandings – after all statements in the philosophy and rationale section of the curriculum document read:

> Responsible citizenship is the ultimate goal of social studies. Basic to this goal is the development of critical thinking [and] the concept of learners as receivers of information should be replaced with a view of learners as self-motivated,

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self-directed problem solvers and decision makers. (*Alberta Social Studies (Senior High) Program of Studies*, 1990, pp. A.1 & B.1)

However, as I became more deeply familiar with the curriculum, I developed the sense that the transmission of knowledge was the actual focus of the program (especially at the high school level), because it became clear to me that there was a far greater emphasis on the 'knowledge' objectives than on the skills/processes objectives. For example, in the Grade 12 Social Studies course, the list of knowledge objectives included a total of eighty concepts that students were expected to come to understand and approximately 190 bits of fact and content. Compared to this, there were only twenty-eight skill objectives specified. In the Grade 12 curriculum, eleven pages were devoted to outlining knowledge objectives, while only six pages were devoted to outlining critical thinking goals, issues and questions for inquiry, and skills and attitude objectives (pp. C35–C55). Based on this comparison, it seemed to me that skill and attitude development – which could contribute to learner capacity to think critically about issues or to question authority – had been seriously de-emphasized and that the sheer amount of mandated content would put pressure on teachers to 'cover' (read: transmit) the material, allowing little opportunity for learners to be self-directed.

The contradictory nature of this curriculum document was disturbing to me, On the one hand the document seemed to define responsible citizenship as the capacity to absorb great amounts of 'information', while at the same time defining responsible citizenship as the capacity to engage in critical thinking and self-motivated, self-directed problem-solving and decision-making,. I wondered if the creators of the Alberta program actually believed that critical thinking is a necessary part of being a responsible citizen, and if so, why they had decided to include so many knowledge objectives? I wondered: How are curriculum developers across Canada defining democracy and 'responsible citizenship', and how had 'responsible citizenship' become the ultimate goal of social studies in the first place?

Ultimately, the posing of these questions led me into graduate studies and eventually into a research program in the academy where I have explored the tensions and apparent contractions about democracy and responsible citizenship that seem to be embedded within social studies curricula at all grade levels across the country. My inquiries have shaped and informed my conceptualization of democracy and citizen participation, and this underpins my approach to teacher education. To provide insight, I will share a bit of the story of my search into the origins of citizenship education in Canada.

As mentioned in another essay in this volume, I am deeply influenced by R.G. Collingwood's (1946/1993) understanding of the importance of history. Collingwood (1939) argued, "we study history in order to see more clearly into the situation in which we are called upon to act" (p. 114), and he contended that the past 'turns into' or 'interpenetrates' the present. Based on my understandings of Collingwoodian thought, I figured that an historical inquiry into assumptions that lay behind the

development of the first citizenship education programs in Canada could assist in understanding the kind and quality of present day programs – that is, by uncovering and understanding the ideas from which citizenship programs arose in the past, I supposed that we might be able to see more clearly into the ideas that lie behind our present programs and perhaps become better able to make suggestions for future curriculum reform.

In exploring the origins of citizenship education in Canada, I learned that the notion of educating for responsible citizenship was affected by two underlying clusters of ideas taken for granted by those who held power in English Canada in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One set of ideas, which I have labelled Anglo-Protestant ethnocentrism (Lemisko, 1998), had to do with notions about the superiority of a particular 'race' or ethnic group and its religious affiliations. The other set of ideas had to do with notions about the natural organization of society and I have labelled 'conservatism'.

Anglo-Protestant ethnocentrism arose out of Canadian historical development, which included the conquest of French Canadian colonies by the English, and the eventual influx of settlers steeped in the loyalist tradition, which rejected the ideas, methods, and results of the American and French Revolutions (McKillop, 1987). These developments resulted in the emergence of a power elite in Canada which was unified by a system of "similar beliefs and common visions derived from their common British and Protestant backgrounds" (Tomkins, 1986, p. 33).

Considering the inheritance of the membership, it should not be surprising that this elite's belief system encompassed notions regarding the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon 'race' and the Protestant system of morality. Members of the Anglo-Canadian elite who worked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century regularly expressed such ethnocentric notions. For example, public school educator John Harold Putman, expressed the belief that Christianity – and in particular the Protestant variety – served as the "ideal conduct" (Wood, 1985, p. 33). James Cappon, professor of English literature at Queen's University, believed that Europeans, and especially Anglo-Saxons, had the most highly developed culture which would, as it spread, assist in the evolution of other cultures. Adam Shortt, professor of history at Queen's, expressed the belief that the "Anglo-Saxon race alone possessed the temperament for democracy" (Shortt, 1976, pp. 75 & 111).

Intellectual historian, A. Brian McKillop (1987, 1979), argues that Anglo-Canadians were anxious to create a sense of national unity, while preserving their cultural heritage, in the context of a society that was composed of an essentially immigrant population, arrived and arriving from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This 'moral imperative' led to the creation and imposition of an Anglo-Canadian nationalist myth based on the criteria of a homogeneity of race, language, and religion. Hence, the thinking of English Canadian educators with regard to citizenship; and citizenship education was potentially powerfully affected by Anglo-Protestant ethnocentrism because this cluster of ideas lay at the core of the myth constructed by Anglo-Canadians in the attempt to give Canadian society a sense of unity.

While the members of the English Canadian elite attempted to create a sense of national unity under the umbrella of the myth of racial homogeneity, they also presupposed differences among members of society based on social rank. Therefore, their belief system also encompassed conservative notions about the internal organization of society.

It was taken for granted that society was organized in a natural and organic hierarchy with individuals occupying social positions based on their native capacities. While members of society were thus not considered as equal – for example, some were leaders and some were followers – each social rank was considered to be equally important to the functioning of society as a whole. Conservatism also encompassed the notion that individuals occupied social positions according to their birthright – that is, members of a particular rank or class inherited the capacities of the rank or class into which they were born. Conservatism emphasised authority, order, tradition, and continuity.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, members of the English Canadian elite regularly expressed such conservative beliefs. For example, John Putman (as cited in Wood, 1985, p. 179) declared, "democracy does not mean that all members of a state are equal either in rank or value as citizens. It does mean or ought to mean that every form of human service is honourable and deserving of recognition". Another Ontario educational leader, Albert Leake (as cited in Tomkins, 1986) argued, "it is high time we ceased worshipping the fetish of equality. we have at least two cases, those who are of the elect and those who are not, those who can absorb the printed page and pass the prescribed examinations and those who for both mental and financial reasons are not able to do so" (p. 138). Leake, along with his colleague John Seath, assumed that "the higher the social class the greater the academic ability" (as cited in Tomkins, 1986, p. 138). It is clear that conservatism, along with Anglo-Protestant ethnocentrism, had the potential to be a powerful influence on the thinking of English Canadian educators as they developed the notion of educating for responsible citizenship. The question is, did these influences become obvious in the programs that were developed aimed at educating for responsible citizenship?

Educators in pre-confederation Canada rarely, if ever, discussed the notion of responsible citizenship as a fundamental goal of education because their notions about teaching and learning were based upon Scottish Common Sense philosophy and Natural theology, which dominated philosophic thought in English Canada during this time period. The Scottish common Sense school presumed that human beings possessed 'faculties of mind' which could be used to grasp truth. Natural theology assumed that the world of nature was the handiwork of God, whose divine plan was revealed, for example, in the structure of plants (Tomkins, 1986, pp. 33 & 35); McKillop, 1979, 1987, 1994) In both Scottish Common Sense and Natural theology, truth was 'certain knowledge' that came from God and both held that truth could not be ascertained by cognition alone. Reason must be melded with religious sentiment and intuition, and reflection rather than speculation or critical inquiry

was the path to certain knowledge. Education, therefore, was not directed towards developing the mind as an instrument for the advancement of knowledge through original investigation or critical inquiry (Tomkins, 1986; McKillop, 1979, 1987, 1994). Rather, education was aimed at "self-improvement", which included the cultivation of pious deferential dispositions and a profound sense of duty, developed by exposure to the "inherited wisdom of the ages and to the major branches of knowledge" (McKillop, 1994, pp. 101–102; Tomkins, 1986). In pre-confederation Canada, educators presumed that the application of traditional knowledge to the mind of the learner was the way to ensure good moral character, and that people of sound Anglo-Protestant character automatically became compliant citizens who would support the traditional social order by fulfilling their inherited social roles. However, during the late nineteenth century, notions about responsible citizenship and citizenship education entered the conversation of Canadian educators when Scottish Common Sense philosophy and Natural theology were challenged by Darwinism and the modernization of Canadian society. Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection was not, in itself, the main challenge to traditional English Canadian ways of thinking. The problem was that Darwin had arrived at his theory using a combination of empirical methods and hypothetical speculation. The notion that knowledge could be arrived at through free or critical inquiry, rather than by simple direct contact with the world, or through revelation, challenged preconceived notions held by English Canadian thinkers. The speculative/hypothetical nature of Darwinism supported attempts to separate scientific investigation from religious or metaphysical constraints and encouraged the emergence of a 'critical spirit' (McKillop, 1979).

The term 'modernization', according to George Tomkins (1986) describes "a society undergoing extensive social change because of the application of industrial technology to extend an individual's control over the environment" (p. 27). Modernization challenged traditional English Canadian ways of thinking as the imperatives of an industrial economy began to make themselves felt in post-confederation Canada. In order to extend humanity's ability to control the environment, it was seen as imperative that new technologies, and new applications of old technology, be devised. This imperative encouraged a pragmatic view of knowledge and scientific research – that is, the most valuable truth was that which proved useful within an industrial economy. The whole notion that human beings could control nature using technology, and that this control was desirable and served as a measure of progress, supported a materialistic or secular view of the world, rather than a spiritual or religious worldview. It was these aspects of Darwinism and modernization that challenged the precepts of English Canadian thinkers and prompted educators to reformulate ways of thinking about the learning process and the goals or purpose of education.

According to Brian McKillop (1994), Canadian educators, from c. 1870s onward, faced a paradox when trying to establish overall educational goals. Education was now seen as "an instrument both of change and of tradition – at once training in

active thinking and a perpetuation of fixed ideas" (p. 149). As educators tried to come togrips with the intellectual and social reorientation that arose from the nineteenth century revolution in science and technology, McKillop (1994) argues they were forced to ask:

> Was its [education's] purpose to retain a social order based on the maintenance and passing on of 'the best that has been known and said in the world'? Or was it to precipitate and discover the solution to social ills through the process of trial-and-error? Was its purpose social control or social change? (p. 149)

English Canadian educators became increasingly convinced that active or critical thinking was necessary in the learning process and that such thinking was a necessary part of the wherewithal required by citizens of a democratic society facing challenges and change brought about by modernization and industrialization. However, they continued to believe that education was an expression of primary values rather than a means to an end, and schooling was considered educative when students pursued intrinsic objectives that promoted the cultivation of morality and character through mental development. Thus, these educators remained convinced that schooling should promote social stability by inculcating Protestant Christian morality and developing sound 'British' character (Tomkins, 1986, pp. 38, 65 & 102; Charles E. Phillips, 1957, pp. 412 & 417; McKillop, 1987, p. 120). Caught up in the paradox of believing that both free and critical thinking and social stability was necessary, English Canadian educators developed citizen education programs that embedded the contradictory notions of educating for intellectual freedom and educating for social control.

The pre-eminent nineteenth century Canadian philosopher John Watson expressed the ideas that influenced English Canadian educators as they formulated their beliefs about these basic goals of schooling. Watson (as cited in Wood, 1985), stated:

> the distinctive characteristic of man was to be guided by his own reason [but, also that] freedom does not consist of doing what one pleases, but in the voluntary, and may I add, the joyous doing of what one ought. We ought to aim at making ourselves and others perfect citizens, i.e., citizens who share in all that tends to make the life of man a perfect whole. (pp. 27 & 33)

Watson clearly argued for the training of active thinking, believing in the importance of the rational mind, but he also seemed anxious about the relativism or egocentrism that may result from the self-activity of the individual mind. By placing the mind's activity in a social context – in the 'service to fellow man', regulated by duty, obligations, or the principles of right behaviour expected from a 'perfect citizen', Watson developed an argument supporting the idea of educating for both critical thinking and social control. His ideas supported the notion that education should train the rational mind for active thinking but this should be regulated by traditional Anglo-Protestant notions of 'perfect' citizenship.

As Canadian educators grew increasing committed to the notion of educating for responsible citizenship, they incorporated into their own ways of thinking ideas about the function of schooling in a democracy that had arisen in the United States. Canadian educators were influenced, for example, by the thought of the American progressive educator, John Dewey.

Dewey (1916) believed that the goal of education was the "realization of the democratic ideal" (p. iii), and he claimed that democratic or progressive education endeavours to "shape the experience of the young so that instead of reproducing current habit, better habits shall be formed, and the future adult society be an improvement on their own" (p. 79). However, Dewey (1916) believed that in learning to criticize the "undesirable features" of their society, these future citizens must learn social control by "referring their way of acting to what others are doing and make it fit in" (pp. 39 & 83). He clearly argued for the training of active thinking, believing that the next generation should be free to criticize and offer suggestions for the improvement of society. However, Dewey (1916) also appeared to be concerned that the uncontrolled "natural or native impulses of the young" (p. 39) might cause social revolution rather than social evolution. By placing the natural impulses and activities of the young within the social context, requiring them to 'fit in', or be "regulated by the life-customs of the group into which they are born" (Dewey, 1916, p. 39), Dewey argued by implication that education was for both intellectual freedom and social control. English Canadian educators found this aspect of Dewey's thought appealing because his ideas supported the notion that education should develop the habit of active thinking, but that this should be regulated by the fixed requirements of the democratic citizenship.

As I discovered more about the origins of citizenship education in Canada, it became clear that citizenship education was born out of the attempt to educate for both critical thinking and social control. Anglo-Canadian educators who first discussed responsible citizenship as a fundamental objective of schooling tried to find some middle ground between these fundamentally contradictory goals. As these educators attempted to formulate their beliefs about the purpose of education, and they developed programs to meet their goals, their thought and action was confined by a cluster of ideas that impelled them to take a paradoxical position. While these educators supported the notion that democracy required active critical thinkers, they also supported assimilationist approaches because they believed in the importance of maintaining social stability, and they wished to preserve their British cultural heritage.

I also discovered that the definition of responsible citizenship and the kind of program suggested by educational reformers, over time, varied depending upon the ideas about the nature of humanity and society that were taken for granted by different factions within leadership groups. This discovery revealed the fact that although educators can make the same statements about the purpose of education – that is, the development of responsible citizens – they attach quite different meanings to this purpose depending upon the presuppositions they held. The following

examples, drawn from a study into educational reform in Alberta (1905 to 1955), will demonstrate this point.

A small group of Alberta educational leaders, including M.E. LaZerte, Andrew Doucette, and Perrin Baker presupposed that society was an amalgam of atomistic and fundamentally rational individuals, who were capable of understanding the cultural traditions from which the present society arose and who were able to improve society by understanding great truths and principles and critically "evaluat[ing] both the old and the new" (LaZerte, 1953, p. 3). These 'liberal' leaders took for granted that individuals were rational and could develop the "power to think" (Doucette, n.d.a., p. 12), and that "given the best laws, with the best governments and the best institutions that human intelligence can evolve, the task of making something of himself remains with the individual" (Baker, 1922, p. 4). Based on these assumptions, this group of Alberta educational leaders defined the responsible citizen as one who had "an understanding of the great truths, …faith in his own judgement, ability to evaluate, and an unwillingness to accept uncritically what he is told and what he reads" (LaZerte, 1953, p. 3). They believed good citizens were "self-reliant, critical and non-conforming [and] equipped with knowledge, with appreciation of our culture, and possessing disciplined intellectual powers [that allowed them] to read intelligently, write clearly, speak effectively, reason quantitatively, think logically, and exercise correct judgements" (Doucette, n.d.a., p. 3 & 12). This group of 'liberal' Alberta educational leaders emphasized personal intellectual growth rather than the development of the individual as a group member. They clearly argued in favour of citizenship education aimed at the development of critical thinking skills and the enhancement of the power of the individual mind.

A second group of Alberta educational leaders, including G. Fred McNally, George L. Wilson, and E.W. Coffin, expressed a point of view which arose from a 'conservative' set of ideas. These leaders presupposed that society was an organic hierarchy "where each one, leader or follower, plays his part, nor thinks for a moment that in the long run he can live unto himself" (Coffin, 1925, p. 7). Based on this assumption, and believing in the importance of maintaining the traditional social order, these educators defined responsible citizens as those who developed "habits of self-discipline and the accompanying understanding of the reasons for regulations" (McNally, 1944, p. 657). They believed that good citizens should "have a knowledge of our institutional life" (Robertson, 1922, p. 67) – that is, at least "an elementary understanding of society and government and [the wherewithal] required for an intelligent reading of a newspaper" (Wilson, 1933, p. 40) – and should work happily in the service to society while enjoying appropriate leisure time activities. G. Fred McNally (1944), as a representative of this way of thinking about responsible citizenship, argued:

> If all were destined to become citizens, the State obviously had a right to expect that each youth would have his native abilities and aptitudes developed to the maximum of which they were capable. Not just the brilliant, the academic

> minded, the financially fortunate, those destined to be doctors and lawyers and the families of the best people, but everybody capable of mental achievement, let it be never so slight. (p. 655)

This group of conservative Alberta educators argued that, as the primary vehicles through which children would receive "the benefit of an inspiration to become a loyal Canadian citizen" (Hill, 1910, p. 48), schools should offer instruction that would do the following: teach students about one's "privileges and responsibilities as a citizen of Canada" (Ross, 1915, p. 25); improve "appearance, manners,. and adoption of Canadian sentiments" (Russel, 1927, p. 35); show "how to make the best use of this leisure time" (Coffin, 1925, p. 7); and assist in the development of capacities of students, let them be 'never so slight', to allow them to fulfil their appropriate roles in the economy and society that had been established in the nation. It is clear that this particular group of Alberta educational leaders believed that citizenship education should focus on the inculcation of particular fixed ideas – such as loyalty, duty, deference and service – and the development of skills that assisted individuals in becoming useful, serving members of society, rather than focus on assisting in the development of critical thinking.

A third group of Alberta educational leaders, including Hubert C. Newland, Donalda Dickie, and William D. McDougall, also presupposed that society was an organic entity wherein individuals "sacrificed some of [their] personal interests and [submitted] to controls" (Newland, 1944, p. 749). However their assumptions were different from the group discussed above in that they believed that society should be an equitable rather than hierarchical organic unit. These 'progressive' leaders argued that, "the significant factor here is the restraint imposed upon the social group [was] by the social group itself in order that the social group may have the power to effect an adjustment which its separate units could not have achieved individually" (McDougall, c. 1942, p. 1). In addition, while these educators accepted the notion that individuals could exhibit some type of rational thought, they believed that socially intelligent activity – or 'true' intelligence – could not be produced without conformity of behaviour and attitudes which melded people together in an organic unity. They took for granted that individuals could in fact be melded together as a cooperative organic unit, and when this occurred, a combined collective or social intelligence would emerge which could then be directed towards social change or social reform.

Based on these assumptions, this group of Alberta educational leaders defined responsible citizens as those who "imposed certain purposeful restraint upon himself (learned self-control) [*sic*] for the corporate well-being" (McDougall, c. 1942, p. 1). They believed that good citizens recognized that "social individualism is a primitive kind of behaviour. [that] civilized behaviour is cooperative" (Dickie, 1940, pp. 70–71). They claimed that a responsible citizen developed "his capacities not only as an individual but as a member of society, [recognized] his collective responsibilities and the privileges which are his by virtue of that association,

[understood the] social purpose of democracy" (Newland, 1968, pp. 1 & 6), and directed his or her "intelligence toward social welfare" (McDougall, 1942, p. 2). This group of 'progressive' Alberta educators argued that the school should take a pro-active role to "not only interpret the basic social purpose of democracy – which was the welfare of all the people – but should also serve to polarize the will of our society to achieve that purpose" (Newland, 1944, p. 749). With the school as the primary vehicle through which children would be "trained to function efficiently in a democracy [and receive] training in group living (McDougall, n.d., p. 2; c. 1942, p. 3), they argued that citizenship education should take place in an environment that would encourage "the integration of the behaviour of the learner into socially desirable patterns [and develop] both attitudes and abilities conducive to the well-being of the social group" (Dickie, 1940, p. 43). It is clear that this particular group of Alberta educational leaders believed that citizenship education should focus on training in social behaviour and the inculcation of particular social attitudes, along with the development of skills and capacities that assisted individuals in becoming useful members of society, rather than on assisting in the development of critical thinking. Like other English Canadian educators, Alberta leaders expressed the belief that schooling should produce responsible citizens. However, it is evident that when they claimed the development of responsible citizenship as the purpose of education, they were not, in fact, aiming at the same objective. Some believed that education should develop the intellectual power of individual citizens through training in critical thinking skills and the analysis of great truths and principles, in order that they might critically evaluate the social order and rationally judge the aspects worth retaining and the aspects in need of reform. Others believed that education should preserve the social order by developing the inherited skills and capacities of individual citizens and inculcating the notions of loyalty, deference and service, to ensure that each became a contributing member of the organic hierarchy. Still others believed that education should assist in the emergence of a new egalitarian and cooperative social order by developing the 'social intelligence' of citizens and inculcating appropriate attitudes and behaviours.

While Alberta educational leaders could be perceived by themselves and others as having a unity of purpose regarding the goals of education in that all made statements about the development of responsible citizens as a fundamental aim, the analysis of the thought that lay behind the statements demonstrates that the apparent unity was a facade. The use of the term 'responsible citizenship', or citizenship education, had a variety of meanings which depended upon the presuppositions (taken for granted personal beliefs) of the person using the term.

These examples from the past offer us insights into why present day social studies/citizenship education programs are infused with contending and contradictory ideas.

When we see that the notion of citizenship education arose during a time of intellectual turmoil – a time when educators were caught up in the paradox of believing that both free and critical thinking and status quo social stability was necessary – we begin to understand why present day social studies/citizenship

education curricula, as grandchildren of such past programs, often have similar paradoxical goals embedded within them. When we see how educators can use the same words to make statements about educational goals, but actually mean very different things when using these words, we can begin to see how and why collisions between contending personal beliefs and views can influence coherence in program development. If we hold that past notions do interpenetrate present notions, it seems we should take lessons from the idea that developers of present-day citizen education programs struggle with similar, and unstated, contradictory personal beliefs about the nature of society and humanity, as did their precursors. We must ask ourselves if these contradictions and paradoxes need to remain embedded within our present educational efforts – that is, we need to ask if the idea of educating for critical thinking and social control at the same time, is a philosophically consistent and 'reachable' goal.

I think historical inquiry allows us to understand notions that have come to us from the past. I think understanding the past allows us to engage in critical analysis of the context from which particular notions arose and to judge whether the notions remain valid in our present circumstances. I do not think that social studies programs can continue to aim at developing intellectual freedom by teaching critical or 'active' thinking skills and, at the same time, attempt to 'transmit' large quantities of factual information or 'fixed ideas' (McKillop, 1987, p. 120). The attempt is philosophically inconsistent because it relies on two opposing views of knowledge. The term 'fixed ideals' presupposes that knowledge is a body of established-for-all-time truth that can be transmitted to learners *in toto*. The term 'active thinking' presupposes that knowledge must be continually reconstructed by learners themselves. We must ask ourselves if we think we are promoting and supporting democracy if we continue to promote citizenship education programs based on two such divergent ways of thinking about knowledge.

We must also ask ourselves if we continue to define responsible citizenship in a variety of ways based on our particular beliefs and assumptions, and if these presuppositions are similar to those held by past educators. Do some present day educators take for granted that society is an organic hierarchy, and that good citizens must be trained to take their proper place within this hierarchy? Do some present day educators take for granted that some learners are born to be leaders and some followers? Do some present day educators take for granted that cooperative social behaviour will assist in the transformation of society, and that good citizens must be trained in appropriate attitudes and behaviours so they will submit themselves to the will of the majority? If analysis of present ways of thinking reveals that the answers to such questions is 'yes', then we can see that citizenship education programs might contain hidden agendas because we hold clusters of presuppositions which are similar to those held by educators in the past.

With this insight into our present situation, we can develop an understanding that defining 'responsible citizenship' (and therefore, defining democracy) is tension-filled, because these ideas are open to widely different interpretations.

While Canadian educators engaged in educating for responsible citizenship might all make statements claiming to be promoting critical and constructive thinking, they might actually emphasize the simple inculcation of some particular variety of fixed knowledge in the implementation of their program. This might take form in teaching 'factual' knowledge – which looks like traditional schooling – or in teaching vocational skills – which looks like practical education. Or it might take form in the teaching of appropriate social attitudes and behaviours, which might look like progressive education, but might in fact be behaviour modification or indoctrination.

It seems clear that if we wish to revise and develop social studies curricula that do not contain contradictory messages about democracy and participatory citizenship, we must engage in a dialogue which aims at uncovering the ways of thinking which influence us when we attempt such revisions. We must make the effort to understand exactly what we mean by uncovering our own presuppositions and we must make the effort to understand exactly what others mean. We must make the implicit, explicit. We cannot hope to bring about meaningful curriculum and pedagogic change until and unless we know what our own presuppositions are and attempt to resolve fundamental differences we have with others through conversations aimed at developing a coherent and collective philosophical approach – in other words, we cannot hope to develop coherent understandings of democracy and participatory citizenship until we practice a way of living and way of knowing that includes active and critical participation in public discourse where people present personal points of view and arguments candidly and comprehensibly.

As social studies teachers and educators of social studies teachers, we need to examine our personal presuppositions and decide if we really believe in democracy – that is, we must decide what we believe about the capacities of human beings. If we believe in democracy, we must believe that everyone can develop her or his capacity for 'public 'spiritedness' and can learn to participate in public decision-making in reasonable and respectful ways. If we believe in democracy we must encourage 'reasoned dissent', supporting learners in pursuing independent inquiries which may well challenge authority, trusting that they will take positions on issues based on the 'good reasons' (evidence) they discover. If we believe in democracy, we must help young people develop their capacity to think critically, negotiate honourably, debate respectfully and uphold personal rights and freedoms while actively upholding the rights and freedoms of everyone. To believe in democracy, is to be profoundly optimistic about the capacities of human beings.

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PART 4

MULTICULTURALISM

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13. LIVING TOGETHER, GROWING TOGETHER

As part of all teacher education programs in Canada, teacher candidates are expected to complete an in-school teaching placement under the tutelage of one or more teacher associates (or cooperating teachers) and a faculty supervisor from the university. The length of the teaching placement can vary from program to program but all must meet at least minimum requirements established by respective provincial governments. A number of years ago I was, in my role as faculty supervisor, scheduled to visit a teacher candidate placed in a grade one class with a very experienced and supportive teacher associate. The teacher candidate had informed me that the students were going to be exploring 'multiculturalism' and that I would be observing as she introduced the concept to the children. I recall thinking that multiculturalism was a fairly sophisticated concept and that it might be a bit difficult for such young students to grapple with, however over the years I had come to learn that amazing things can be taught to youngsters with eager and open minds and I was looking forward to seeing the teacher candidate's approach.

I settled into my seat while the teacher candidate had the grade one students gather on a carpet at the front of the classroom. She brought out a large glass plate and holding it up asked students what it was. Of course, they all knew it was a plate. The teacher candidate agreed and asked the students to use their imaginations because this glass plate was really a wondrous place called 'Togetherland'.

"Where is it?" asked one little boy.
"It's a place far, far away," said the teacher candidate.
"Who lives there?" asked a little girl.

"That's a very good question," said the teacher candidate and all at once she brought out three plastic apples and placed them on the plate. Holding up one of the apples, the teacher candidate asked what type of fruit it was and they all called out 'apple' in unison. The teacher candidate continued, "The apple people lived in Togetherland. They all looked alike, spoke the same language and loved to celebrate the same holidays. The apple people got along fairly well because they understood each other. However, one day visitors arrived from another land." The teacher candidate brought out two plastic oranges and placed them on the plate.

One fidgety little girl said, "The apple people are red but the orange people are orange!"

"That's right", replied the teacher candidate. She continued, "Not only do the orange people look different from the apple people but they also speak a different language and celebrate different holidays. How do you think the apple people felt about the orange people?"

Answers flew from the students, "Scared." "Confused." "Fascinated."

"You're all right", said the teacher candidate. "At first, the apple people were scared and confused by the orange people but they also liked some of the thingsthey brought with them. They enjoyed their foods, clothes and dances but most importantly their ideas! The orange people decided to stay in Togetherland and live side-by-side with the apple people. Soon visitors came to Togetherland from other places as well and they too decided to stay."

As I watched, out came plastic bananas, grapefruits, grapes and lemons and each was placed on the glass plate. The teacher candidate told the students that soon people of many looks, languages, beliefs and traditions lived in Togetherland. Despite the fact that it was sometimes scary and confusing to meet new people, eventually they all became friends and loved that their land had people with so many differences. No one who visited Togetherland would ever get bored because there was always something new to experience.

The teacher candidate continued the story, "Over time, the people of Togetherland realized that their new land was not quite the same as the lands they'd left behind. In their former homes, the people were all the same but in Togetherland people lived side-by-side, respecting each other's uniqueness. The people of Togetherland decided to let the world know that they had found a way of living peacefully together while maintaining some of their cherished differences – those things that make them special." The teacher candidate brought out a piece of rolled parchment paper that read, "We the people of Togetherland, living together with our fellow citizens peacefully and with respect, declare our land to be officially multi-cultural."

The teacher candidate enunciated the final term slowly and clearly. She asked the students to repeat the word after her and the wide-eyed students all made their best effort to say 'mul-tee-cul-chur-ul'. Though some students struggled with the word, most said it quite well, repeating it often throughout the remainder of my stay in the classroom.

The teacher candidate smoothly transitioned into a discussion of how their classroom was multicultural too. She asked students to share what was special and unique about each of them. Vocal students identified physical characteristics like hair, eyes and smiles and, with some prodding, students began to note their differing talents, social characteristics and family backgrounds. The teacher candidate wrapped up the class by noting that each person in the class had special characteristics (e.g., the fast runners, the tall people, the people who say kind things, and so on), that they shared these characteristics with others and that, "We learn to work and play together in our classroom." She concluded by saying that perhaps the classroom space needed its own special name just like people of Togetherland had for their place. This sent a ripple of excitement through the children, with several calling out suggestions.

Soon students were voting on a name and preparing a multiculturalism policy for the classroom.

Later, at our debriefing session, I told the teacher candidate that her lesson served as a very fine introduction of the concept of 'pluralism' – one of the best introductions that I had witnessed. However, it did not introduce or explore many important aspects of multiculturalism (e.g., the importance of history, sense of identity for cultural and ethnic groups, official multicultural policies) or consider the concept in a realistic context. Still, these were very young children and her lesson did offer a solid grounding from which the children's understanding could grow over time. Over the hour we spent debriefing the class, the teacher candidate and I also talked about next steps in the students' conceptual development. I told her I'd be back in three weeks to see how things progressed.

WHAT IS 'MULTICULTURALISM'?

The term 'multiculturalism' generally refers to a state of ethnic and cultural diversity within the demographics of a given social space ("Debate: Multiculturalism vs. Assimilation", n. d.). The social space may be large (a nation-state) or small (a classroom). Official policies of multiculturalism have been passed in many countries with the aim of preserving cultural identities within a unified society. Commonly, this means the extension of equitable status to minority cultural groups that co-exist alongside a predominant, often indigenous group. Multiculturalism policies also frequently include official assistance (e.g., financial support) of cultural events in an ongoing effort to preserve and promote the uniqueness of different, usually minority cultures.

Multiculturalism's origins can be found as far back as the Enlightenment. Voltaire (1734/2007) gave strong indications of the need to embrace pluralism when he stated, "If there were only one religion in England there would be danger of despotism, if there were two, they would cut each other's throats, but there are thirty, and they live in peace and happiness" (p. 20). It became more formalized during the 19th century with the pragmatism movement arising in Great Britain and the United States, which in turn evolved into political and cultural pluralism in the early 20th century. Partially a response to European imperialist expansion into deepest Africa and partially a realization and acceptance of realities stemming from massive immigration from southern and eastern Europe to North and South America, cultural pluralism became part of academic discourse during this time period. Philosophers such as Charles Sanders Pierce, George Santayana, Horace Kallen, William James, John Dewey, W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke integrated concepts of cultural pluralism into their works – ideas which eventually evolved into a contemporary understanding of multiculturalism. James (1909/1996) in particular espoused the idea of the pluralistic society in his book *A Pluralistic Universe,* suggesting pluralism was "crucial to the formation of philosophical and social humanism to help build a better, more egalitarian society" (p. 16).

Policies of multiculturalism stand in contrast to 'monoculturalism', a term that implies a normative cultural unity or cultural homogeneity within a given social space. Groups that seek a form of cultural unity often invoke assimilationist policies to encourage and, occasionally, force immigrants joining the group to relinquish their cultural attributes in favour of those of the dominant, often indigenous group.

Though Canada has never developed an all-encompassing concept of 'monoculturalism' for itself, the historical marginalization of indigenous peoples along with limited cultural spaces for French-Canadians evolved beside Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking, Protestant Christian dominance in most parts of Canada. Canadians of aboriginal, French, Jewish, Chinese, Ukrainian, Polish, Italian, Japanese, Indian, and other origins resisted this dominance by developing vibrant cultural and ethnic spaces for themselves, working to ensure the survival of their heritages and identities.

Multiculturalism was, interestingly enough, assisted by the emergence of the *La Revolution Tranquille* or Quiet Revolution in Quebec in the 1960s. In an effort to address the concerns of clamouring Quebeçois voices who felt marginalized in their own province, the Canadian government of John Diefenbaker established theRoyal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1962 to consider the status of the two 'founding races'. However, hearings undertaken by the Commission across the country revealed that frustrations expressed by French Canadians were shared by Canadians of other origins as well. By 1968, biculturalism was considered passé and the Commission's report instead espoused the need for a policy of multiculturalism.

In 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau made multiculturalism the official policy of Canada. Then Secretary of State, Gerard Pelletier (1972), stated at the time, "the policy called into being a new vision of society; one which refused to sacrifice diversity in the name of unity and which placed the cultures of Canada's many groups on an equal footing" (as cited in Mallea & Young, 1984, p. 418).

The policy became part of the Canadian Constitution in Section 27 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Brian Mulroney's government passed the policy into law with the Multicultural Act in 1988. Australia followed Canada's lead with its own multiculturalism policy and in the years since multiculturalism has gained support and become policy in most states of the European Union. Government multicultural policies may include but are not limited to:

- Recognition of multiple citizenship identities
- Government support for newspapers, television and radio stations in minority languages
- Support for minority festivals, holidays and celebrations
- Support for music and arts from minority cultures
- Acceptance of traditional and religious dress in schools, the military and in society, in general
- Programs to encourage minority representation in politics, education, and in the work force, in general.

The United States, while as culturally diverse as Canada, has never embraced multiculturalism as official policy choosing the 'Melting Pot' as its central metaphor. The Melting Pot implies that each immigrant or group of immigrants to America assimilates and is assimilated into American society. This metaphor has as a parallel belief the need for national unity whereby the United States is a nation of peoples connected together by a common understanding of being 'American'.

CRITICISMS OF MULTICULTURALISM

Not everyone is supportive of the concept of multiculturalism or its status as official policy. Skeptics wonder whether a "multicultural ideal of benignly co-existing cultures that interrelate and influence one another, and yet remain distinct, is sustainable, paradoxical or even desirable when housed by a single nation" (Miller, Vandome & McBrewster, 2010). Critics have identified failings with theconcept of multiculturalism in practice. Coming from diverse perspectives, critiques include those of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (1998) who worries about the"cult of ethnicity" (p. 20), Dinesh D'Souza (1998) who is disturbed by the growth of ethnic studies program (e.g., Black Studies) which he believes undermine universalist values, and Susan Okin (1999), a feminist and political theorist concerned that preservation and respect of cultural diversity not be used as a basis to maintain and support discriminatory gender roles within traditional minority cultures.

In Canada, three noted critics of multiculturalism have emerged. Kenneth McRoberts focuses on the lack of acceptance of multiculturalism by French Canadians, who often view it as threat to their status as a founding people of Canada. Indeed according to McRoberts' *Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity* (1997), many in Quebec view official multiculturalism as a federal effort to dilute the two-founding-peoples philosophy and make the French just another ethnic group among many in Canada. Internally, Quebec is very pluralist, welcoming people from all around the world, but has insisted new immigrants assimilate into a *French* speaking society. The Quebec government terms this its 'inter-culturalism policy'. In his book *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, Neil Bissoondath (2002) argues that official multiculturalism limits the freedom of minority citizens and relegates them to cultural and geographic ghettos. He also argues that cultures are complex and that Canada's focus on festivals and cuisine is a crude oversimplification that leads to stereotyping. Like Susan Okin, Daniel Stoffman (2002) raises concerns in his book *Who Gets In: What's Wrong with Canada's Immigration Program and How to Fix It*, arguing that certain cultural beliefs and practices are simply incompatible with Canadian values and failure to recognize this can have serious implications for Canadian society. Likewise, he is very disturbed by the number of immigrants who are not integrating into Canadian society by learning either English or French.

Critics of multiculturalism have also long been concerned about people who embrace the concept as an equivalency to 'equality', suggesting they are misguided

in this belief as it can inadvertently lead to implicit racist beliefs. For example, the 'equality view' allows someone who is told that all peoples are 'equal' under the law with the same rights and opportunities to also look about and see mostly white people in positions of power and authority. In such instances, someone could easily begin to assume the absence of diversity in positions of power is not the fault of the system—we're all 'equal'—but the fault of unintelligent, unambitious, and untalented minorities who simply 'can't make it'. To counter such narratives, Henry Francis and Carol Tator's work in critical multiculturalism is significant. They recognize the concept's limitations in the absence of a critical eye. Tator (1999) recognizes systemic racism and resulting power disparities stating,

> critical multiculturalism challenges the traditional political and cultural hegemony of the dominant class or group. It calls for a profound restructuring and reconceptualization of power relations between different cultural and racial communities based on the premise that communities and societies do not exist autonomously but are interwoven together in a web of interrelationships. (p. 98)

It is calls for a deeper conception of multiculturalism—a critical multiculturalism— that suggest we who engage with the concept can finally begin to realize the hope many of us had for it initially.

ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE MULTICULTURALISM

Over the years, there have been numerous publications outlining activities which purport to have students celebrate multiculturalism by recreating Christmas in Denmark, cooking foods from the Punjab region of India or learning to dance the Argentine tango. There is nothing wrong with these 'foods and festivals' activities *per se*, though issues of cultural appropriation need to be deeply considered when developing such lessons and, from my perspective, these studies are very superficial and run the risk of distorting students' conception of multiculturalism. I say superficial because they often only scratch the surface of what makes a cultural group unique. Danes are far more than their Christmas celebrations, the Sikhs of the Punjab are much more than their foods, and the Argentines are infinitely more dimensional than a quick lesson in the tango can suggest. As well, these activities only serve to illustrate difference that is only part of the larger concept of multiculturalism.

I am also concerned that contrary to a desire to have students appreciate different cultures, quick, 'fun' activities like those I've noted may simply caricature the cultures and/or 'other' them as foreign, alien or exotic. I am not suggesting that uniqueness should not be noted and appropriately celebrated but teachers need to push students deeper and further in their understandings. For example, it is vitally important for students to not only learn that fish is a staple of the Portuguese diet and to cook a fish dish based on a family recipe brought from Oporto. Students need to more deeply understand the integral place of fish within Portuguese culture.

Specifically, its relationship to Portugal's geography (i.e., it is geographically a small nation with an extensive coastline and some of the world's best fishing grounds), economy (i.e., Portugal has one of the largest fishing industries in the world), religion (i.e., it is predominantly a Catholic nation and fish has come to symbolize Christ, the Saviour, due in large part to the miracles he was to have performed), and history (i.e., fish became a staple of the culture because meat was less available due to limited grazing lands as well as being difficult to store. Further, under papal decree meat had to be relinquished in favour of fish during periods of Christian Friday fasting). As a teacher, I would also want students to note that many cultural practices travel in the same way as the recipe travelled via family migration from Portugal. All families have cultural aspects that are grounded in other places, moving with the flow of people as they travelled about the Earth looking for safe and economically viable places to live. As well, cultures and their practices are grounded in the past and passed from generation to generation, changing as circumstances required. In short, students should come to realize that in some ways, Portugal or China or Peru are here in Canada and that the past is also the present. With this understanding of cultural context as related to place and time, I believe that students are better informed and possibly more appreciative of the food they are sampling, which in turn provides a much better grounding for an evolving conception of multiculturalism.

The following are a number of generative starter ideas that teachers can use to introduce, explore and deepen students' understanding of the concept of multiculturalism and the issues involved:

Learning

- Research the evolution of Canada's multicultural policy and its enshrinement into law highlighting important cases along the way.
- Explore the differences between pluralistic and particularist conceptions of multiculturalism. Which is better? Why?
- Examine how recent terrorist activities have impacted on multicultural attitudes in Canada, the U.S. and around the world
- Explore how multicultural attitudes are reversing in certain countries around the world (e.g., the Netherlands, Denmark, and France). Why is this happening?

Informing

- Survey your class or school to ascertain how many people are new immigrants or the children or grandchildren of new immigrants. Using multimedia presentation methods prepare a report for the class/school to illustrate how multiculturalism has or has not been of benefit to you and your family.
- In a series called "Facing the Past" learn about Canada's past approach to new immigrants or Canadians of non-British origins (e.g., Chinese head tax; Ukrainian

and Japanese internment; residential schools; Doukhobors) and how that has shaped Canadian conceptions of multiculturalism today. Share the results at a parent night presentation.

Action

- Debate the benefit of a multicultural society as opposed to a melting pot or a monoculturalist society in a class, grade or school wide Debate-Off.
- Review a book or article supporting or criticizing multiculturalism. Create a blog to post the results.
- Invite a Canadian or provincial politician charged with the multiculturalism portfolio to speak to your class via videoconference. Prepare powerful questions to explore the issues.

CONCLUSION

To continue the story of the teacher candidate that opened this chapter…I returned to her classroom three weeks later to see how the study of multiculturalism was progressing. As I waited for her to finish speaking with her associate teacher I wandered about the room looking at the students' posted work. As I passed a bulletin board I noticed a bright yellow sign that read "Living Together, Growing Together". Peppered over the board were little booklets created by the students. Inside each one was the student's name, a coloured drawing of the student along with family and friends, and various captions that said, "I am Tamil", "My family is from Italy", and "I love Canada". While some may critique this teacher candidate's approach to teaching the concept of multiculturalism, I had to appreciate the effort she made to have young students delve a little deeper into their respective cultures and identities.

Multiculturalism remains one of the most accepted of concepts in social studies and a cherished policy in Canada, signaling for many our transcendence beyond the tribal and national rivalries that have cursed many countries around the globe. Yet it remains fraught with controversy and criticism. I've introduced only some of the many dimensions of this concept, which are all ripe for investigation and exploration by students at various levels. However, to be truly generative, teachers must be open to assisting students in learning about the history of this concept and about the issues surrounding it, including those that challenge what has become a taken-for-granted notion for most Canadians.

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14. THE TIGHT FITTING SUIT OF MULTICULTURALISM

When I was a man much younger than today, I bought my first suit (with a little help from my parents). It was purchased for one of those unusual school occasions which called for a formal outfit. Bought off the rack at the best haberdashers in our town, it truly represented the early 1980s. A perfect blend of polyester, cotton and flax, this gorgeous baby-blue-with-white-flecks vision could cast a soft sheen under certain lighting. While I tried it on, I was shown the cutting-edge features of the three-piece ensemble. The slim-cut pants had western-style belt loops. The jacket had two buttons, two rows of pockets that ran alongside each lapel, and the back sported a single rear vent. More radical still was the four-button technique used on a vest that was meant to be 'worn low'. Throughout, the interior was a full paisley lining that felt like it was made of silk. I wore this suit for years accompanied with a button-down collar and a skinny leather tie (just to be NewWave).

As the years of my life began to stretch out, unfortunately, the same could not be said for my suit. First, people made guarded comments on its colour, its shiny look, its shrinking arm and leg lengths. Even when I left the vest at home, I could not escape the sinking feeling that it had become dated. It was developing somewhat frayed edges and, colour-wise, it became more baby than blue. Further, as time passed, it seemed to be more difficult to maneuver around a crowded room or at a buffet table (even though stains seemed to slide right off). Then, at one fateful event, it happened. During an overly-enthusiastic rendition of the dance tune 'YMCA' at a relative's wedding, I tore a new vent right in the middle of the acronym. The time had come to move on.

Since then, I have purchased and discarded many suits (I presently have close to half a dozen in my closet). They are more reflective of the age (and weight) in which I live. The new suits are made of finer material, globally-manufactured, and can be used in more circumstances than weddings, funerals or on disco floors. However, while my needs and size have long broken out of the tight-fitting boundaries of my first suit, I will always look back fondly on this rather outmoded and size-challenged relic as the progenitor of my wardrobe.

In many ways, when one studies the use of the term 'multiculturalism' in the Canadian curriculum, the same progression seems to have occurred – and coincidentally – over the same span of time.

FIRST BLUSH

Even as a very young child in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Quebec, I was vaguely aware of the changes going on in Canadian society. The Bi and Bi [Bilingual and Bicultural] Commission had reached a head and had submitted its final report in 1969. In short, the Commission's (1967–1970) findings re-buttressed the original notion that confederation was based on "an equal partnership between two founding races" (p. xxi). To this end, it was recommended that greater efforts be made to accept both French and English as official languages and to acknowledge the importance of both cultures. I remember my sainted mother at the time cursing a blue streak about giving in to terrorism, carving up the country, bringing in unnecessary complications. As she had come from an English-Canadian father and French-Canadian mother, I often wondered in later years if she saw the irony.

While all political parties at the time were more accepting of the Bi & Bi Commission report than my mother – it was seen as a step above the divisively unilingual, unicultural approach that had shaped Canadian sentiments – this acceptance seems to have been a very short-lived, intermediate step toward another new paradigm for Canada. One of the Bi & Bi's ardent supporters, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, became, in fact, one of the great rebels that led the country away from this perception. Although Trudeau acknowledged that two cultures may have been instrumental in forging the country, he made it clear that Canada had evolved from this Victorian perception. While he pursued one Bi (bilingualism) through the Official Languages Act of 1969, Trudeau spent the rest of his political career arguing against the other Bi (biculturalism) in favour of *multiculturalism*.

With passion, the Liberal Government of the time drove forward a series of measures that guaranteed the existence of multiculturalism in this country. First sanctioned as a policy in 1971, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* of 1982 firmly entrenched the multicultural paradigm by stating that the document itself "shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians" (sec. 27). Finally, enacted between 1985 and 1988, the *Multiculturalism Act* proved the capstone of this movement. Janice Gross Stein (2007) boldly states that we are unique among Western liberal democracies based on our constitutional commitment to this policy (p. 2). In this, Canada has moved along a very different trajectory than other 'melting-pot' nations. However, Stein also touches upon something I would like to examine more closely in this small study. She notes that "these new, explicitly liberal conceptions of rights changed Canadians' views of themselves, their history, their country, their nation, and their identity with consequences that are still unfolding" (p. 1). While the Canadian government may be seen as the key instigator of a 'multicultural ideology' due to its emphasis on the social importance of immigration (Wayland, 1997), the stitching of this ideology is

fast coming undone as aspects beyond culture bulge at the seams of the present curriculum documents.

THE SACRED CURRICULUM AND THE STUDY

As I grew up during the 1970s, the influence of multiculturalism was strong in my school and became stronger as the years passed. Even for a relatively rural school with only small deviations from the perceived cultural norm, we students were inundated with buzz-words, case-studies, stories, catch-phrases and admonitions regarding multiculturalism. Looking back at the books and curricula at the time, I can see why. With so much promotion of the policy/ideology, it was truly the 'new wave' of that era. If one didn't wear the clothes of multiculturalism, one might as well have sported a ducktail and a pair of white bucks. In many ways, I had been led to believe that multiculturalism was 'who we are' and that this would be the 'way we will be' for the foreseeable future.

The question I have asked myself for this study concerns the wear-ability of this suit. If Multiculturalism is still seen as an enforced policy and ideology (and one now generally accepted by most Canadians), how vehemently is it defined, promoted, and inculcated by each province through its curriculum today? In an effort to understand this, I performed a content analysis of all Canadian Social Studies curriculum documents (Grades 1 to 10), because I thought that the nature of social studies, as a subject studies in schools, would mean that I would find most examples of use of the term 'multiculturalism'. In the end, I analyzed 51 documents gathered from across the country. Some provinces provided ample verbiage: for example, Manitoba and Saskatchewan contributed ten grade-specific documents, while Alberta, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island each provided eight. Others were a little thinner on the ground: British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec all encapsulated all ten grades in just two curriculum documents each. Most of the documents were recently published (ranging from 2004 to 2010), while a few lagged from the mid-1990s. These are all listed in the Reference section.

THE DOUBLE-KNIT SUIT, THINLY WOVEN

Upon doing a simple tally of the number of times the term 'multiculturalism' appeared, I found that it popped up 167 times throughout the thousands of pages of curricula I perused: a sparse showing. This was indeed a revelation for me, as I had thought to see it on every other page and in every other outcome. As well, the number of times the term was used in a document varied wildly. Sometimes, like in Manitoba, the term was used fifty-five times in crucial areas of the curriculum. In others, like Quebec, it was barely mentioned, and then relegated to the back of the book.

Table 1. Term Usage of Multiculturalism in Contemporary Curriculum Documents

Province	As a Title	General Use	Objective	In Resources	Times Used
Alberta		6	4		10
B.C	3	5	8	2	18
Manitoba	2	19	23	11	55
N.B.		1	3	1	5
Nfld	1	4	9	2	16
Ontario		1	5		6
PEI	3	8	19	7	37
Quebec				2	2
Sask.	1	11	3	3	18
Total	10	55	74	28	167

In searching further, I looked for some form of operational definition of the multiculturalism in the documents. I discovered only three official explanations for the term:

- In Alberta: "The policy of recognizing and promoting the cultural diversity of a population sharing a common territory" (Grade 4) p. 12.
- In Ontario: "The preservation of distinct cultural identities among varied groups within a unified society" (Grade 1 – 8) p. 81.
- In Saskatchewan: "Is a policy supporting the existence of many distinct cultural groups in one society" (Grades 1 – 9) p. 28.

In the Alberta and Saskatchewan definitions, it became clear that the term is a policy or mandate rather than some philosophical premise or action. The implication, of course, is that this is the bailiwick of the government and should be taken as a fact of life (an unquestioned part of society). As well, the Alberta definition has no strings attached to this policy. It simply states that the policy will recognize and promote distinct (or diverse) cultures in a certain geographical location. The Ontario definition makes no mention of any policy. Instead, it is seen more as an action verb, "the preservation of…". Who is doing the preserving? In a sense, this brings all citizens more into the mix – is it our responsibility to save these distinct cultural identities from extinction? This is left up in the air. Finally, both Ontario and Saskatchewan contain one small aspect that gives their definitions a much more double-edged quality. The former refers to this term within "a unified society" whereas the latter mentions "one society". This goes beyond mere territory and implies a dance between maintaining a culture while acknowledging it as a subset of a larger part.

POCKETS OF TERMINOLOGY

Beyond the simple definitions, it is also very interesting to examine the location of the term and the implicit messages they send to the reader. In reality, only two provinces actually deal in earnest with 'multiculturalism'. Both Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island have a unit entitled "Canada: Reflections on a Multicultural Mosaic" (Grade 6). Presumably, both lifted this title from the Atlantic Protocol (1998) that set forth a general curriculum skeleton for the Atlantic Provinces to follow. In more of a vein of recommendation rather than command, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, P.E.I. and Saskatchewan contain introductory sections that discuss "Multiculturalism Education," "Multicultural Content," and "Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism," respectively. Many of these are repeated verbatim at each grade level of the provincial documents.

Beyond these titles, however, the use of multiculturalism is found in the documents in certain small areas of concentration. In Alberta, for example, all learning objectives connected to the term multiculturalism are found solely in Grade 4, in Newfoundland and P.E.I., mostly in Grade 6, and in Saskatchewan in grades 5 and 8. Only British Columbia and Manitoba seem to scatter 'multiculturalism' objectives around in various grades and units.

What this immediately brought to my mind was a ghettoization of the term. It has found a comfortable niche in certain corners of each document and will stay there. The objectives cling together like iron filings to a magnet. However, without seeing what the objectives say, I felt that the term then starts out from a disadvantage. It is seen as something that can be dealt with once and, once 'covered', can be forgotten. It has not been seen as an entrenched and pervasive part of the documents.

HOW DENSE IS THE MATERIAL?

When I focused in on the 74 objectives found in the 51 social studies curriculum documents, I found that the turn of phrase used in the objectives had a tale to tell. In short, four distinct categories of objectives became clearly recognizable.

Cognitive Objectives

About fifty-seven percent (57%) of the objectives fell into what Bloom et al. (1956) would describe as the cognitive domain – that is, the objectives referred to skills that revolve around knowledge, comprehension and critical thinking about a particular topic. Not surprisingly for the jaded curriculum specialist, the bulk of these objectives rested at the least sophisticated levels of the cognitive domain (Bloom et al., 1956) which includes simple recall and simple comprehension. Almost fifty percent of the objectives that I categorized into this domain came from Knowledge

Objectives section of the curriculum documents. Many of these objectives stated that students would be able to *define* terms or, for example, could *"identify* contributions to Canada's multicultural society by regional, linguistic, ethnocultural, and religious communities (e.g., Aboriginal peoples, Franco-Ontarians, Métis, Black Canadians, Doukhobors, Mennonites, local immigrant communities)" (Ontario, 2005, p. 46) or "*describe* the effects that migration has had on the development of Canada (e.g., its multicultural character, rural and urban resettlement, interprovincial movement, the brain drain)" (Ontario, 2005, p. 76). Another twenty-six percent of the objectives in this domain were in the category of Comprehension. Here students were to distinguish between multiculturalism and the melting-pot, understand the term, or "*explain* the concept of multiculturalism as it applies to race, ethnicity, diversity and national identity in Canadian Society" (PEI, 2009, p. 24).

The remaining twenty-four percent fell into the higher categories of Bloom's taxonomy, including Application (4.7%) where students had to demonstrate awareness of, Analysis (7.2%) where students had to examine the term, and at the pinnacle of this domain, Evaluation (11.9%) where students had to appraise Multiculturalism.

Affective Objectives

Only 13.6% of the 74 objectives could be categorized into the affective domain, or skills that target the awareness and growth in attitudes, emotion, and feelings (Bloom et al., 1956). Like the cognitive, these skills fall into a definite hierarchy in terms of lower and higher order thinking. In practicing basic thinking skills, students are directed to *focus on* (1.4%), and *reflect upon* what is meant by "Canada's multicultural mosaic" (2.7%) in certain documents [italics added]. In a more general fashion, 5.4% of objectives state that students will *study* multiculturalism. However, the term "study" in these contexts seem to be amorphous in intent.

It is only in the higher level thinking skills in this domain where there appears to be any intent to incite any feelings of acceptance of multiculturalism as an ideology, belief or policy. On one occasion, the curriculum states that: "For this outcome students will *formulate their opinions* and present their ideas on how cultures from other parts of the world have contributed to Canada's multicultural mosaic" (PEI, 2011, p. 174). In two final instances, students are charged to "*appreciate* the historical roots of the multicultural nature of Canada" (Manitoba, 2006, p. 49). These seem to be the only instances where multiculturalism is presented to students as something to be internalized and embraced.

Teacher-Centred Objectives

A small number of objectives (6.8%) were directed at teachers. Here, the goal was not to ensure student learning, but represented, seemingly, a desire to have a certain activity performed in class. Examples include:

- Observe and note student vocabulary, content, and responses given about Canada's multicultural mosaic during the mosaic activity (PEI, 2011, p. 177).
- Use a jigsaw strategy to trace how Chinese became full participants in Canada's multicultural nation (British Columbia, 2006, p. 182).
- Clarify also that the Charter (Section 25) protects the rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, recognizes the multicultural character of Canadian citizens (Section 17), and applies equally to female and male persons (Section 28) (Manitoba, 2006, p. 227).

The second example is especially unusual for contemporary curriculum documents, in that most objectives tend to shy away from pedagogic issues to focus on outcomes.

Activity-Centred Objectives

This final group represented a sizeable percentage of the whole (23%), but are disproportionately located in the Prince Edward Island and Manitoba documents. Here, as with the teacher-centred objectives, the document does not indicate a learning outcome for students, but instead asks that students be put through an experience or undertake some action. For example:

- Students host a multicultural lunch featuring foods from various cultural communities… (Manitoba, 2004, p. 124).
- Collaborative groups of students read and respond to a quotation by Pierre Elliott Trudeau regarding the multicultural nature of Canada (Manitoba, 2006, p. 172).
- Have students write a letter to their parent(s) describing what they have learned in grade 6 about culture and the importance of multiculturalism in Canada (PEI, 2011, p. 177).
- Students prepare and present a persuasive speech to prove the following statement: "Canada has always been a multicultural country" (Manitoba, 2006, p. 87).

In this way, these two provinces go beyond the mere transmission of aspects of multiculturalism. Instead, they wish to place the students in a position that would enable them to potentially become more accepting of multiculturalism.

CREATING A VERBAL ENSEMBLE

When the term "multiculturalism" is used in almost all the documents, I found it difficult to see it in isolation. Sure enough, it was, in most cases, followed by a great number of associated terms. Most frequently, it was juxtaposed with the words 'pluralistic', 'inclusive', and 'diversity'. In fact, in many instances, multiculturalism has been subjugated to these terms. Some examples include objectives from Alberta ("Some key manifestations of this diversity include: multiculturalism", 2005, p. 5), British Columbia ("describe examples of different approaches to cultural diversity in

Canada and in other cultures and societies studied, such as segregation, assimilation, integration, and pluralism, e.g., multiculturalism policies", 2006, p. 101), and Manitoba ("Educators also need to consider the social dynamics and patterns of intercultural interaction in the classroom in developing inclusive, multicultural, and pro-social justice learning experiences", 2005, p. 21).

In other instances, multiculturalism is added to a list of other human attributes that may have at one time encompassed the term, but are now listed separately. These would include such physical characteristics as race and ethnicity, as well as those aspects of metaphysics such as Ideology, Religion, Spirituality, and Philosophy. Language (most specifically bilingualism) is also a partner to the term. Gender, lifestyle and ability are also included in a few areas where multiculturalism is mentioned. Finally, a great deal of social justice words are found abutting the term (most specifically Anti-discrimination, Equity-focused, Anti-biased, Social Justice, Anti-racism, Human Rights, and Democratic). Most telling is the section on Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism in the Manitoba documents. Here it clearly explains that multiculturalism alone should not be taught to the students, as it would prove to be inadequate. Instead, the two must be taught together, the latter tempering the former:

> It should not be assumed that simply providing students with learning resources that are multicultural or that deal with issues of inequality or diversity is sufficient to create an inclusive social studies classroom. To have a positive effect, as well as an anti-racist/anti-bias impact on the classroom, multicultural materials need to be part of meaningful learning experiences that encourage students to critically explore and analyze the significance of the issues discussed or information presented, personally and collectively. (2005, p. 19)

Clearly, while the term appears in most documents (with the notable absence in the Quebec documents), its former supremacy has been overtaken by newer terms.

A NEW SUIT?

I find it humorously coincidental that my first suit was purchased around the same time that multiculturalism became a policy in this country. Like the suit, the policy was seen as something cutting edge and shiny for the period. More importantly, the creation of these two things was seen as more than mere material actions or possessions. Both were taken on hope that they would become more. My suit represented a new era in my life, a growing up, a passage to adulthood. As well, the policy of multiculturalism was seen as a national 'growing up' to the realities that were unfolding within its borders. It represented a maturation. Those who created it, I think, hoped that it would soon cease to be a mere policy and would be embraced as a mind-set of the entire population.

As time passed, however, I grew some more. My suit couldn't hold me, and I could not be frozen in a blue suit forever. To do so would be to give up on the process

of living and evolving: to forever be a man-child of sorts. Multiculturalism should be seen in the same light. To be stuck on this policy as the end goal is to stop growing and start stifling.

When one looks at the curriculum documents, it is quite clear that the provinces have begun to burst out of the seams of this tightly circumscribed definition. It cannot deal with the multitude of differences that its citizens now present to the country. Of course, none would have the temerity to overtly say they are evolving. Instead, they refer to Multiculturalism as a policy and discuss it in its historical context. They ghettoize the term in sections of the curricula, or place it in specific grades. This may be juxtaposed to the hundreds of times and in the multitude of places the term 'diversity' finds a home. This is because this latter term has let the seams out a little to give breathing room to its meaning. With the opposite problem of 'multiculturalism', 'diversity' will have to be tailored somewhat or remain a loose fitting muumuu of meaning.

In future days, multiculturalism may continue to lose cache and become increasingly locked into that period of history when it was first enacted into law. It will be seen as a quaint expression and give way to more expansive terms. However, like my suit, we should not look back with a chuckle or a shake of the head, but with respect for the progenitor of what we have become, and hopefully, where we are going.

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15. BEYOND FOODS & FESTIVALS

As I enter the school gymnasium, the enticing odours of assorted ethnic foods waft on the air, and a fusion of Celtic piping, Indian sitar and Jamaican steel drums blare from cd players, creating a cheerful cacophony, while young people dressed in colourful costumes beckon visitors to gather at their displays. Once again, it is 'multicultural' day at a Canadian school.

In many ways, these kinds of celebrations have become part of the fabric of Canadian social life and schooling since passage of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act by the federal government in 1988. According to this policy, we announce our commitment to recognizing Canada as a multicultural society that not only tolerates but officially encourages the practice and celebration of pluralism. While this can be seen as laudable, we must think carefully about whether our proclamations lead to actions that address social inequities and the effects of power relationships. If we superficially acknowledge multiculturalism by celebrating the 'observable' artifacts of culture – for example, foods, costumes, and music – but avoid meaningful explorations and inclusion of multiple perspectives and knowledges, we do nothing to build the deeper respect and understanding needed for societal transformation.

Indeed, I am concerned that we are becoming too self-satisfied in our collective belief that we are becoming increasingly multicultural because we happily acknowledge that there is an increasing number of 'visible minority' immigrants. If we hold that issues of multiculturalism are tightly linked to and reflective of recent immigration trends, we can become blind to the historical reality of our nation. We might pat ourselves on the back, holding up our social 'mosaic' as much better than the 'melting pot' to the south, ignoring past (and present) examples of colonization, intolerance and assimilation. Instead, I think we need to understand multiculturalism within the Canadian context as an idea that evolved over time, with tensions continuing to exist between those who are willing to rejoice in and respect cultural diversity[1] (a diversity which has always existed in Canada) and those who wish(ed) to assimilate or eradicate it. While I do not wish to completely disparage celebratory events saluting cultural diversity, I am afraid that explorations of the concept of multiculturalism in schools rarely go beyond celebrations of ethnic foods and festivals. I think this is problematic for several reasons.

First, I think it is extremely difficult to develop deep respect and understanding of multiculturalism if the term only evokes ideas related to those material (or observable) aspects of cultural expression, including traditional celebratory

costumes, housing, or food. When the focus is on these tangible features, learners can discover that some cultural groups eat foods they considered to be 'strange' or 'yucky'. This encourages the notion that members of 'other' cultures are strange or exotic rather than recognizable and deserving of respect. Without development of deeper understanding of the unobservable or non-material aspects of culture, including beliefs, values, and norms (those hidden, but reoccurring patterns of thought that lie behind cultural behaviours), cultural behaviours and artefacts can seem bizarre and unfathomable to 'outsiders'.

Secondly, 'foods and festivals' or 'celebratory' multiculturalism does not generally attend to development of deep understanding of where and how cultural differences arise. Without a meaningful exploration of the connection between the environment in which a culture originally evolved and the tangible and intangible aspects of that culture that have developed, learners may not see the geographic embeddedness of human cultures and, hence, might develop superficial ideas about sameness and difference.

Thirdly, I do not think 'foods and festivals' multiculturalism is generative. I argue that if the multiculturalism is only ever connected with ethnic celebrations, it is treated as a reductive concept where all members of a cultural group are covered with the same blanket. Also, when multiculturalism is used synonymously with 'visible minority', cultural differences among those who look the same – white, red, brown or black – are erased. In this perception, multicultural education in schools often becomes a way of giving a nod to ethnic and racial diversity (Fleras & Elliott, 1992), while continuing to marginalize and maintain status quo power relations. For these reasons, I prefer a critical (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2001), radical (Ghosh, 2002), or generative use of the term multiculturalism, which does the following:

- explores the multi-layeredness of culture by deliberately focusing on the idea that cultural attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours are shaped not only though connectedness to environment, but also though the intersections of race, gender, class, ableness, sexuality (and etceteras)
- acknowledges the power relationships that exist(ed) and evolve between and among societal groups and,.
- acknowledges the privilege of 'whiteness', and works to understand how beliefs and perceptions shaped by dominant culture effect personal and group behaviours.

In thinking this way, I argue that multiculturalism becomes a generative concept because the approach encourages us to openly question the sources and origins of personal and group assumptions, which can lead to understanding, exposure and acknowledgement of power relationships so that we can challenge the status quo and work actively toward the realization of social justice (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). Critical multiculturalism goes far beyond 'foods and festivals' and generates possibilities for transformative learning.

These ideas may be interesting and glibly shared on a theoretical level, but how can these ideas be tackled when exploring issues related to multiculturalism with

teacher candidates in social studies methods courses? While I am able to spend some time asking teacher candidates to challenge cultural assumptions and explore how power relationships and the intersections of gender, race, and ethnicity (for example) shape individual and group identities, the learners enrolled in my courses expect me to focus on ways to teach social studies concepts and skills. As a teacher educator, I have grappled with balancing what I think important to explore as becoming social studies teachers with the more pragmatic desires of teacher candidates. Without claiming any special expertise, I have decided to share lesson/seminar ideas I have developed over time, which I hope help teacher candidates see the value in taking a critical approach to multiculturalism, while at the same time offering some practical ideas for teaching social studies content.

To begin, I ask teacher candidates to brainstorm a group definition of 'multiculturalism' and we discuss what might be the main goals or purpose of including multicultural education as a part of social studies education. Teacher candidates generally come to the conclusion that multicultural education should increase learner awareness of diversity among individuals, groups, and communities with the goal of encouraging understanding and respect for similarities and differences among cultures. We explore reasons why development of understanding and respect is important (not just an axiomatic part of Canadian life), and I offer the idea that development of respect for cultural difference can assist in creating a sense of belonging for all students, which in turn facilitates greater equity of opportunity for all students to have positive learning experiences in school. During this discussion, I introduce teacher candidates to the idea that simple celebrations of ethnic diversity (foods & festivals) cannot help develop the deeper comprehension required for creating a sense of belonging and interconnectedness. I suggest that there are some practical approaches they can incorporate into their practice; namely, by including critical ways of teaching and learning about connectedness and cultures; and by teaching and learning from multiple perspectives.

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CRITICAL WAYS OF TEACHING & LEARNING
ABOUT CONNECTEDNESS AND CULTURE

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Exploring Origins: Similarities & Differences

The first issue we explore is how we can teach/learn about cultural similarities and differences in meaningful ways. Learning about cultural differences without deeper understanding of where and how differences arise can reinforce stereotypes and marginalization. In turn, learning about similarities can become trite if pre-service teachers simply adopt cliché phrases such as, 'we're all the same under the skin', without a more complex understanding of what this means. With this in mind, I begin our exploration by asking teacher candidates to approach the study of similarities by starting with an examination of basic human needs.[2]

As part of the learning experience, I ask pre-service teachers to brainstorm, in small or large groups, lists of 'things' all human beings need to survive. Once we have dispelled the notion that money is a basic need (which usually brings out some chuckles), and that physical requirements are not all that human beings need for quality survival, ideas are listed, and then clustered and labelled. During this exercise, interesting perspectives emerge about that which is necessary for human survival, but no matter where the brainstorming discussions lead, the pre-service teachers I have worked with eventually arrive at categorized lists which demonstrate understanding that all human beings have these same basic needs:

- Physical Needs – e.g., food, water, shelter, clothing
- Social Needs – e.g., nurturing, belonging, learning a role
- Psychological/Intellectual Needs – e.g., esteem, intellectual stimulation
- Spiritual Needs – e.g., addressing the mystical – ways of answering questions such as the following: Why are we here? What is the purpose of existence?

In developing deeper understanding of basic needs shared by all human beings, teacher candidates develop an appreciation of the similarities among humans that goes beyond simplistic clichés. With their more complex understanding of the concept 'basic human needs', I ask teacher candidates to contemplate various strategies they could use to help young learners build their comprehension of human similarities and connectedness.

Once we have explored the similarities between members of the human community, the question which must be explored is as follows: If all humans are the same because we have the same basic needs, why are we culturally different? To explore reasons for this, I engage teacher candidates in a visualization exercise that asks them to imagine the ways in which cultural differences could have emerged in the past.

I begin by making the claim that from the beginning, environment has shaped culture – that is, groups of people developed different cultures because of the different places where they originally lived – and similarly for all people, connectedness to their environments profoundly influence the tangible and intangible aspects of their ways of life. To envision my meaning, I ask teacher candidates to visualize two different natural environments and then hypothesize the ways in which each environment could have impacted what people ate, how they got what they ate, the shelters they built and so on. For example, I paint a word picture describing an upper latitudes inland plains region, where the dominant fauna are large, shaggy-haired nomadic herd animals and where the relatively extreme climate, with very cold winter temperatures, hot summers, and low precipitation, means that trees are generally only found along river banks and in coulees. With these bits of information in mind, teacher candidates are then asked to visualize how human beings living in such an environment met their physical needs – that is, what would they eat; what would they wear; what about shelter? Conversations usually revolve around use of the nomadic herd animals for food, which meant hides for clothing (which would be

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needed, especially during the cold winters). Teacher candidates also conclude there is a need for shelter from hot sun and cold winds, but they realize that wood is not an easily available building material and decide that a mobile shelter is useful for people whose primary food is nomadic herd animals. Keeping these ideas in mind, they decide that shelters would be made of hides with some wood bracing that could be carefully taken down and re-erected in a new location.

For comparison, I then paint a picture of a temperate costal environment, with a salt water ocean and rain forests as the dominant features and again ask teacher candidates to imagine how about humans would meet their physical needs in this environment. Teacher candidates typically come to the conclusion that life would be somewhat easier for people living in a temperate rainforest by the ocean. A wider variety of foods, including fish and various kinds of more prolific vegetable matter would be available without having to travel very far. Shelters could be more permanent and constructed mostly out of wood. While winters would not be as cold, teacher candidates usually conclude that clothing to ward off rain and chilly humidity would be necessary and could be made of a variety of materials.

Through this visualization exercise, teacher candidates draw conclusions about why there are differences between cultural groups. It quickly becomes evident to them that, although all humans have the same physical needs, there are cultural differences because groups of people meet their physical needs in different ways based on resources available in their environments.

I think this is a good place to start because it helps learners at all ages and stages of life to understand why groups of people eat particular foods (for example). Instead of thinking of this as 'yucky' or 'strange', we can see that those food choices actually 'make sense' because this was what was available in the original environment inhabited by that group of people. Learners can see that traditional foods eaten by members of their culture are related to their culture's original environment, and so it goes for all cultural groups. Hence, different food choices become recognizable, and we can respect cultural groups for their wise use of environmental resources. I ask teacher candidates to think carefully about these ideas when they teach about culture in order that they might help learners in their classrooms come to understand that human beings are the same because we have the same physical needs, but also different because we meet our physical needs in different ways because of the different environments in which our cultures originally emerged.

However, this is only the beginning of the picture that I would like teacher candidates to visualize. If we only examine cultural differences by realizing how physical needs were met in particular environments, we are only getting at 'observable' or tangible cultural differences. With this in mind, I continue the visualization exercise, asking teacher candidates to think about how hunting large nomadic herd animals, as compared to fishing from more permanent villages might effect the social organization of the two groups of people living in the two different environments described above. This conversation leads to a speculative discussion about whether the two groups would meet their social and psychological

needs in similar or different ways. We discuss the question: Would different ways of organizing social groupings (arising from the different ways food was gathered) mean that members of the two groups developed different ways of deriving their sense of belonging and self-esteem? We speculate about ways that families or kinship groups might organize themselves; ponder whether the roles of men and women would be affected by different food gathering requirements; and put forward ideas about how individuals might garner respect within the two environments.

I then ask teacher candidates to explore how differences in environment might influence the ways in which groups of people might meet their spiritual needs. I ask them to ponder whether the group living by the ocean might honour similar or different deities as compared to the group living in the upper latitude inland plain; and if they think that embeddedness within a particular environment effects ways in which people originally contemplated the mystical and make meaning about existence. Again, I ask teacher candidates to think carefully about these ideas when they teach about culture and I encourage them to help learners in their classrooms come to understand that human beings are the same because we have the same physical, social, psychological and spiritual needs, but also different because we meet these needs in different ways because of the different environments in which our cultures originally emerged.

Sometime during this process, teacher candidates usually bring up the idea that direct connections between particular environments and particular cultures is often difficult to perceive at this point in history. This leads to a discussion about the ways in which interactions between cultural groups (including, for example, peaceful co-existence, mutually beneficial trade, conquest, assimilation and colonization) also influence and shape cultures over time. In my opinion, these ideas do not undermine the notion that cultures are different because of their different original environments, but rather the discussion adds to the understanding that culture is a complex concept, and multiculturalism cannot be fully appreciated through simple celebrations of ethnic diversity. In this work with teacher candidates, I ask them to take hold of the idea that, in some ways, cultures are like people – if we do not try to understand the events and circumstances that have affected them over time, we cannot hope understand their beliefs, actions and behaviours in the present. I ask them to approach exploration of culture and multiculturalism with these sets of ideas in mind.

While I think the visualization activity described above could be used in social studies classrooms with younger learners, my main purpose is to help teacher candidates explore their own thinking about where and how cultural differences arise. My hope is that in deepening of their personal understanding of the connectedness of environment and human culture, teacher candidates will approach teaching and learning about cultures with more respectful assumptions. Further, I think that this activity highlights the notion that culture is complex and that teaching and learning about culture must include study of both the material and non-material aspects of culture which, I hope, encourages teacher candidates to go beyond 'foods & festivals' multiculturalism in their own practice.

GETTING "INSIDE"

Another issue we explore is how we might teach/learn about cultures from the 'inside' – that is, how we can try to see the world through the eyes of the people who are members of a particular cultural group. While I absolutely acknowledge that it is not completely possible to see the world through the eyes of people who belong to a culture different from our own, I also argue that we can try. Because I think that all human beings are connected within the web of life – that we all have the same fundamental needs – I am convinced that we share physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual longings that are recognizable to one another. So, rather than teach/learn about cultures as though they are specimens under a microscope, I propose to teacher candidates that learning about culture must not only include explorations of tangible and intangible cultural features, but also must include attempts to 'get inside'.[3]

As part of this exploration, I suggest that teacher candidates should gather stories told by members of the culture and not simply rely on stories told about the group by outsiders. For instance, I demonstrate how cultural myths, legends, contemporary narratives, art, and music can be revealing of cultural perspectives ifwe approach these sources asking, "What do these representations tell us about the following:

• What do/did this group of people think/thought important?
• What do/did they value?
• Which work is/was done, and which jobs are/were most valued and why?
• Who does/did what work, and why?
• What games do/did children and grownups play – what songs do/did they sing – what jokes do/did they tell?

And, a question that will likely spark the need for further research:

• Why do/did they do this work, play these games, sing about these events, and/or tell funny stories about these situations?

Again, I use this approach because I think getting 'inside' discourages the notion that members of other cultures are strange or exotic. When we try to understand both the observable unobservable aspects of a culture from the perspective of members of that culture, I think cultural behaviors and artifacts become recognizable as we begin to see our connectedness; and this in turn, enhances our capacities to value and respect each other despite differences.

TEACHING AND LEARNING FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Another approach which I hope helps teacher candidates see the value in critical multiculturalism involves demonstrating and discussing ways teachers can incorporate multiple perspectives when exploring social studies topics and concepts. I ask teacher candidates to contemplate the argument that teaching/

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learning from multiple perspectives increases awareness of cultural diversity while helping all learners feel as if they belong because they 'see themselves' in the discourses of schooling. In addition, I ask teacher candidates to take note of the fact that inclusion of multiple perspectives actually goes beyond study of ethnic cultural diversities, encouraging exploration of the multi-layeredness of culture. Including multiple perspectives helps teachers focus on the idea that cultural attitudes, beliefs, behaviours are not monolithic or reductive but shaped and experienced by race, gender, class, abledness, sexuality (and etceteras). Further, the examination of multiple perspectives acknowledges and allows insights into the tensions, conflicts, and challenges that have arisen and continue to arise out of imbalances in power relationships that exist(ed) and evolve(d) between and among societal groups.

To provide some practical ideas about teaching/learning from multiple perspectives, I have often coupled discussion of this issue with an exploration of the benefits of using a resource based learning approach. For instance, I have asked teacher candidates to examine a wide variety of materials I supply as examples of resources that could be used to develop understanding of a particular social studies concept, topic, or current/ historical event [e.g., film clips, picture books, novel excerpts, primary source documents and artefacts, excerpts from textbooks, photographs, webpages (and etceteras), created by or representative of various people, including men, women, rich, poor, (and etceteras)]. Teacher candidates are asked to imagine what their understanding of the concept or event would be if they were to base their understanding on use of only one of the sources supplied, as compared to what their understanding is if they used many or all of the resources.[4] Conversations arising from this activity often go to the ways in which bias and perspectives are shaped by personal points of view and by the kind and quality of sources of information available. By simply examining the impact that inclusion of diverse resources can have in representing multiple perspectives, teacher candidates see a way to build in the representation of multiple perspectives in teaching/learning social studies.

Throughout the term, I attempt to reinforce the idea by providing examples showing when and how multiple perspectives could be explored when addressing particular social studies concepts or topics. For instance, teachers in Canada are typically asked to help grade three or four students to develop their understanding of pioneer/settler *lifestyle*. I have used this concept to illustrate a moment when and how several perspectives should be included. While most teacher candidates can articulate the notion that pioneers/setters were immigrants (demonstrating their recognition of diversity), it is often the case that 'lifestyle' is studied as a reductive concept – in other words, the concept is studied as if every pioneer/settler had a lifestyle exactly the same as every other pioneer/settler. To engage teacher candidates in pondering ways to include multiple perspectives when planning a

unit with pioneer/settler lifestyle as the conceptual focus, I ask them to address questions such as the following:

- What were there differences in lifestyles between different groups of settlers – i.e., between French, Irish, Germans, Swedes, Afro-American, Zulu, Chinese, Koreans, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, Muslims?
- What were the differences in lifestyles or points of view among pioneers/setters who were women, men, children, elders?
- What problems and issues were faced by pioneers/setters who were differently abled?
- Were there differences in lifestyle experiences if the pioneers/settlers were wealthy or poor?
- How did First Nations people view the lifestyle of pioneers/settlers – e.g., how did First Nations people feel about the way European pioneers/settlers used the land or conducted trade?
- Did differences in perspectives and lifestyle experiences cause difficulties or conflicts to arise? If so, how were these handled?
- What resources can be used to help young learners explore such differences?

As part of this unit planning demonstration, teacher candidates examine a sample of fiction and non-fiction resources they could use to represent a variety of Canadian perspectives – some of the print materials they consider are as follows:

- *Spirit of the White Bison*, (Pemmican Publications, 1985) by Beatrice Culleton – First Nations and Métis perspective
- *Living freight,* (Orca Book Publishers, 1998) by Dayle Gaetz – poor, orphaned female forced (bride ship) perspective
- *Sparks Fly Upward*, (Clarion Books, 2002) by Carol Matas – Jewish perspective
- *West Coast Chinese Boy,* (Tundra Books, 1991) by Sing Lim – Chinese perspective
- *Silver Threads,* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2004) by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch – Ukrainian perspective
- *The Shaman's Nephew: A life in the far north,* **(**Stoddart Kids, 2001) by Simon Tookoome – Inuit perspective
- *By the Skin of His Teeth*, (Beach Holme, 2004) by Ann Walsh – 19th century perspectives in racial (Chinese) and gender clashes.

Teacher candidates often question the capacity of young learners to synthesize information from a variety of sources, which works as a good lead for future classes that explore skill building in social studies. Teacher candidates also question the capacity of younger learners to deal with controversial issues, which leads to interesting discussions about how young learners constantly face real life conflicts and challenges arising from biased assumptions, which in turn leads to discussions about our obligations as teachers to assist young people in developing their critical

thinking capacities by acknowledging rather than ignoring multiple points of view. In this, I remind teacher candidates that if we want all learners to feel like they belong in our classrooms, we must recognize that when 'the story' is told from one, rose-coloured point of view, we deny the lived experience of many students. To be inclusive – to help everyone feel that he or she belongs – we cannot smooth over conflict and controversy. Rather, we must help even the youngest students learn to think critically and help them begin their explorations into how personal and cultural perspectives and suppositions are shaped and evolve over time.

FINAL WORDS

Multiculturalism, as a term that labels differences between groups of people, does not need to be reductive; and multicultural education in schools does not need to be a way of giving a nod to ethnic and racial diversity (Fleras & Elliott, 1992) while marginalizing and maintaining status quo power relations. Multiculturalism becomes a generative concept when critical approaches are used in teaching and learning about connectedness and culture, when origins of similarities and differences among groups of people are explored, and when we try to see the world through the eyes of people who are members of a particular cultural group. Multiculturalism is a generative concept when critical approaches are used in teaching and learning from multiple perspectives.

Critical multiculturalism goes far beyond 'foods and festivals' and generates possibilities for transformative learning, through which we can challenge the status quo and support the realization of social justice.

NOTES

[1] To distinguish between the concepts "Diversity" and "Multiculturalism", I think of multiculturalism as a term that labels differences between groups of people, while I think of diversity as a term that labels differences between individuals (that is, between individual plants, animals, minerals, gases [and so on] and individual human beings).

[2] In addition to building understanding about cultural similarities, building a more complex understanding of 'basic human needs' is helpful for pre-service teachers as 'human needs' is foundational concept in most elementary social studies curricula across Canada.

[3] Considering that I find appealing Collingwood's contention that human beings can use the questioning, re-constructing, reflecting-on-thinking method to come to understand both personal experiences and each other, it should not be surprising that I think Collingwood (1939) offers us hope that we can develop some understanding of each other if we use this approach to get "inside other people's heads, looking at their situation through their eyes" (p. 58) – a process he called 're-enactment'.

[4] This activity can be done using a modified jigsaw approach.

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16. "HEY MISS, WHAT'S AN 'OTHER'?"

Becoming an educator was never a linear path for me. Even to this present day, my journey continues to be filled with circles, zigzags, and the not-so-occasional tangent. Throughout these experiences, the concept of a multicultural education has always chased me—or perhaps I have chased it.

"HEY MISS, WHERE ARE YOU FROM?"

I was born in Canada to immigrant parents from India and China, and by growing up in a large metropolitan city, I have always been surrounded by individuals from a wide range of racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. These differences were never an issue, and always more of a given fact: an unremarkable part of daily life. My classmates and teachers were first and foremost individuals before they were ever relegated to the colour of their skin, the language they spoke at home, or the country where they were born. Looking back, I still struggle with whether this type of environment was actually desirable.because while growing up exposed to diverse individuals taught me at a young age that differences are to a certain extent 'normal', that diversity always went unexamined. The implications of being a non-white person were never discussed, never explored, and always overlooked during my K-12 public education. As a result, you can imagine my surprise several years later into the future when I stepped back into a school, this time in the role of a teacher, and suddenly found that questions about my ethnicity, culture, nationality, and language simply became routine. By working in the same diverse communities that I had grown up in, I noticed that these questions were always asked by racialized students. These same students were also the ones that would come early to class or hang around afterwards for no other reason than to chat. While I am now certain that my status as a 'visible minority'[1] has shaped the way I have been perceived, treated, and judged my entire life, my race, as well as the race of others, were never salient to me until I became a teacher.

It began with my first teaching placement in a school community primarily composed of immigrant families in a neighbourhood where several public housing units were located: in other words, what is infamously referred to as an 'inner-city' school. I still remember the day on which I received the notice with the name of this school where I would be assistant teaching for one month. My classmates all started to excitedly share their placements with one another, and when I shared mine, I

got a few blank stares and one or two scrunched noses. "Oh", some of them softly replied. Being unfamiliar with the school name, I didn't know what to make of these reactions. A quick search on the Internet immediately led me to a recent news article titled, *The worst school in the city*. I blinked in disbelief as I read about their poor test scores, frequent visits from the police, violent mishaps, low socioeconomic status of the surrounding neighbourhood, and the high numbers ofimmigrant students. I'll be honest; I wasn't sure if I could handle it. I felt overwhelmed and scared. I even thought about requesting a change in schools, but knew that the likelihood of being able to switch was virtually non-existent. I remember taking one really deep breath and bracing myself for the worst. What followed, however, has shaped everything about the teacher I am, and continue to become today.

Right off the bat on the first day of my placement, I remember feeling nervous, excited, anxious, and prepared (or so I thought). During first period, a Grade 11 academic English class, an announcement came on to remind all Grade 10 and 11 students to come down to an assembly in the cafeteria at 10:30am. As soon as the P.A. system went off, all the students asked, "*What assembly?*"

My mentor teacher went on to explain that the city councillor was visiting that day to give a congratulatory speech to them.

"*For what?*" they all asked suspiciously.

She explained that their school demonstrated the biggest improvement in scores on the provincial Literacy Test, jumping from a 49% pass rate to 67%. Now when I first learned about this piece of news in the department office that same morning, I was ecstatic! I was happy for the school's progress and glad that they were being honoured by a city representative; however I had no idea of the surprise that lay in store for me.

Immediately the students retaliated, one by one, to the announcement:

- *67%? Only 67% of us can read and write? That's not something to be proud of.*
- *If it were any other school, they wouldn't go visit them. But because it's us, people think that 67% is amazing because it's us and we're stupid so 67% is good for us, but not for most people.*
- *I'm not going to the assembly. I don't want to listen to some white guy think he's doing some great act of charity by coming here and talking to us stupid kids.*
- *People always feel sorry for us. Remember that newspaper article? We're the worst school in the city, you know.*
- *When my friends from other schools find out I'm getting 90s, they say 'Well that's because you go to that school, so it doesn't count.' And that makes me so angry because I work hard but it doesn't matter just because I go to a bad school? It isn't fair.*

As the emotional comments continued to flood the room, I felt my jaw dropping in progressively larger increments. I was in complete disbelief. What was going on? My eyes stung with tears as some of the kids shared some of the obstacles they faced on a daily basis simply due to the fact that they attended this school. I felt guilty for

not only knowing exactly which newspaper article they were referring to, but having given that same article credit just a few days prior, in enabling me to judge a school that I really knew nothing about.

Upon hearing these comments, my mentor teacher did something that the majority of teachers, in my experience, would not have done; she stopped the lesson and pursued the conversation. She asked them why they felt angry and why they thought the school had its reputation. She challenged them to view the situation from another perspective and asked them what actions they could engage in to fight these negative stereotypes. And above everything else, she listened. And in listening, she validated the fact that what her students were feeling was not only real, but that it was also important.

The month that followed consisted of a huge learning curve for me, made up of mistakes, obstacles, second tries, triumphs, and many lessons learned: the biggest of which is the fact that language is powerful. And because it is so powerful, it becomes problematic when terms such as 'good school' and 'bad school' are embedded into dominant discourse. What exactly is a 'bad school'? What do you picture when you hear that phrase? More importantly, who do you envision? Terms such as 'inner-city' and 'at-risk students' are loaded phrases that are often used to mask stereotypes and generalized notions about specific groups. Kids often catch on to a lot more than we give them credit for, and when there are negative connotations surrounding everything that their identities are related to, they internalize these harmful feelings. So the next time you hear someone, be it a colleague, student, or friend, use the terms 'good school' or 'bad school', I invite you to ask them what they really mean. These dialogues are not confrontational and not intended to be tense, but instead constructive and collaborative discussions.

How many times have you, as an educator, heard a student use inappropriate language? Of these times, how often did you stop to talk about what you heard? It's easier to pretend you didn't hear it. Or maybe the lesson was already running late and there just wasn't enough time. Perhaps sending the student straight to the principal's office seemed more appropriate. I get it. Schools and classrooms are not quite like they are portrayed in the movies *Freedom Writers* or *Dangerous Minds*. The realities of day-to-day teaching are not all that glamorous, but they are important.

I remember teaching a Grade 9 French class and facilitating a listening exercise. There was a picture of two kids in their textbook, one White girl and one Black boy, whose conversation they had to listen to and then answer comprehension questions. One minute into playing the recording, I heard one of my students exclaim, "*You know it's not real because the guy doesn't sound Black.*" I froze, finding myself in one of those critical moments that I am certain every teacher has found him or herself at one time or another; do you or don't you say something?

I stopped the recording. All eyes turned to me. I addressed the student. "*What did you say?*" The student hesitated, then explained that because the male voice wasn't using slang or bad grammar, the voice actor probably wasn't Black as suggested by the picture in their textbooks. Silence flooded the room. *Do all Black people*

use slang or bad grammar? Do people who are not Black ever use slang or bad grammar?

We spent the remainder of that period debunking students' preconceptions and misconceptions about racial stereotypes. White and non-white students shared their experiences, their stories, and asked questions to me as well as to one another. We busted myths, we defended our feelings, and above all I think what we learned was more valuable than whatever was in the rest of that French audio recording. School is a site of socialization and when it comes down to whether or not I get through my lesson plan in one period versus making sure a student knows what it means to be racist, I believe the life lessons embedded in the latter should always supersede the curricular content of the former. It is one of the main reasons why I will strive to create a taboo-free environment in my classroom. School plays a critical role in preparing our future generations to be good citizens, and teachers play a pivotal role in their development.

"HEY MISS, WHAT'S AN 'OTHER'?"

The quest to teach students about multiculturalism has been fraught with obstacles and criticism. Take for example, the infamous foods and festivals trend, which is a popular strategy used by schools and teachers to address the different cultural backgrounds of its student population by hosting an event where everyone is invited to bring in food, wear clothing, and even showcase artistic talents from their respective cultures and ethnicities. These celebrations have become commonplace in Canadian schools, and they do have their merits in bringing people together to learn about and be exposed to different people and backgrounds. Nevertheless, they have been criticized for being superficial in their efforts to teach lasting and valuable content about multiculturalism.

Where did this concept come from? Why is it of particular importance in Canada? Above all, what obstacles are commonly faced when trying to embrace this notion? These are important questions that a 'Multicultural Day/Night' event may not necessarily be able to adequately explore without added intervention from teachers during class time.

One challenge that I, as a teacher, have encountered with these events is their finiteness: in other words, the fact that they typically only last one day out of an entire school year. I once had a conversation with a colleague who is Hispanic and has naturally long, curly dark hair, which she attributes to her South American background. On the school's Multicultural Day, however, she would wear her hair naturally as opposed to straightened, which was typically the case. She explained to me that she keeps it straight because it softens her impression as a stereotypically unruly and boisterous Latina, but that on Multicultural Day, she feels that it is more acceptable to embrace her natural hair. This seemingly minor and casual conversation resonated with me because it pushed me to question how successful we really are

in being multicultural if people still feel that there is a distinction between when individuals can be who they are and a time when they cannot.

As a teacher, I continue to remain reluctant in designating specific days to concepts such as Black history, women's rights, and of course, multiculturalism. While I completely understand the intent to celebrate and pay homage to certain individuals, historic events, and revolutionary ideas, I am hesitant to package these ideas into boxed days. I worry that these important causes become occasions as opposed to parts of our everyday lives. This sentiment does not imply a lack of support for these events, but it does beg educators to be more critical of what is accomplished through foods and festivals, and how it can be sustained though the other 364 days of the year.

Though I maintain that a multicultural education is something that does not necessarily have to be added on to a teacher's existing workload, I believe that when the opportunity arises, topics such as racism and discrimination should be explicitly addressed. I believe in a taboo-free classroom because it's important to address the topics that are too often steered clear of and met with discomfort. After all, these are the topics that teenagers need the most guidance with.

In my first year of teaching, I remember trying out an out-of-the-box activity with my Grade 12 'Individuals and Society' class. A chapter on Cultural Conflicts signalled the perfect opportunity to highlight key issues relating to multiculturalism. When my students starting arriving that period, I asked them to help me push the desks off to the side until there was nothing left but a slew of scattered chairs in the middle of the room. As the number of puzzled faces came through the doors and the bell rang, I told my students that they would not need their books or pencils today (Cue a handful of cheers). I told them the topic of today's lesson was 'Cultural Conflicts' and asked them what came to mind when they heard this title.

War.
Hate.
Racism.
What is racism? A moment of silence.

Students discussed how it's when you don't like or you make assumptions about someone based on appearances. I wanted more from them, so I asked them what racism took into account—did you look at whether they were wearing brand name clothing, or if they had tattoos or piercings? Students shook their heads. One offered that you judged them based on their background. I told them that my background is that I was born and raised in Toronto, but is that something people would assume by just looking at me? Again, students shook their heads. Another student suggested that it was a person's culture that formed the basis for acts of racism.

"What exactly is culture?" We talked about how language, traditions, religion, food, values, beliefs, and clothing are all parts of one's culture. How many of these elements are things you can know by simply looking at someone? Sure, they could be wearing an item of clothing or a symbol indicative of their culture, but not always.

A Jewish student talked about how he doesn't wear a kippah. A Christian student pulled out the cross on her necklace. A Sikh student looked up at his turban. Culture is a network of elements and is not always tangible or visible.

I emphasized the word, *racism*, and asked them again, what is it based on? Eventually, I heard murmurs whispering, *"race"*. I exclaimed, *"Exactly!"*

But why was that so hard to say? As a class, we discussed how race can be simplified to the colour of a person's skin, and that it was proven long ago that it doesn't have any biological grounding, meaning that a person from China could share 99% of the same genetic material as a person from Brazil. Subsequently racial classifications such as white, black, brown, yellow, red, and so forth, are now recognized as being social constructs as opposed to biological ones. In order words, these are social categories that humans made up to label one another. We examined how the lack of scientific evidence for race was critical in dismantling the increasingly popular belief that certain traits could be generalized to entire groups of people. I asked students for some examples listed below:

Muslim people are terrorists.
Black people are criminals.
Asian people are bad drivers.
Aboriginal people are alcoholics.
Brown people smell bad.

As each of these stereotypes was volunteered and written up on the blackboard, the classroom stirred with sounds of recognition, a few uncomfortable giggles, finally followed by silence. At this point I asked students to stand up. I explained that in the four corners of the room, I had placed signs with labels: white, black, Asian, Middle Eastern, and in the middle of the classroom, 'other'. I asked students to go to the part of the room that they felt most identified who they are. This instruction was purposefully vague and open to interpretation. A few minutes later, students had settled down. I asked them to look around and to share any reactions or feelings.

Immediately a student standing in the corner wanted to know why one of his friends had chosen to stand against the wall in between the 'black' and 'Asian' corners. I asked the student if he wanted to share; he explained that even though he knows that the colour of his skin is black, his hobbies all consisted of what would be considered stereotypically Asian: computer games, watching anime cartoons, and eating Chinese food. I told him those were great reasons for choosing to stand there. "*Anyone else?*"

The only student standing in the middle of the room chimed in. He had pulled the sign reading 'other' up off the floor and held in up in his hands, asking, *"Hey Miss, what's an 'other'?"*

I told the class that the categories around the room were not random. I had taken them from a survey that was recently administered to local school communities. Several students nodded, mentioning that it is a popular question that is asked at the beginning of a lot of forms and surveys. This answer, however, did not satisfy

this student, who wanted to know why most groups were named while, he, who identified as a Latino, had to settle on being categorized under the label, 'other'. We talked about the possibility of these questionnaires being tailored to the populations where they were distributed and our thoughts on why this information was even requested, and how it would be used.

My Grade 12 students talked about how they had to answer this question on some of their university/college applications and how this made them feel uneasy. *Why?* Students talked about how their grades and their accomplishments should be the only things considered, and that the rest is irrelevant. A student standing in the 'white' corner piped up and agreed. He talked about how he's lucky to stand where he is because white people don't face any racism, except, he says, when it comes to those identification questions on applications where he feels like they always want 'diversity'. On one hand, white students felt like this question worked against themand on the other hand, non-white students didn't want to be selected because of their skin colour. In both cases, this question was unanimously disliked.

I asked students to think of the most powerful people in Canada: the CEOs, the politicians, the philanthropists. We live in one of most 'multicultural' countries in the world, but would you know it by looking at our leaders? *"Is it simply a coincidence that most of these people are white?"*

We talked about the smaller number of qualified non-white individuals, but that led into a conversation about how certain qualifications and education are not equally accessible by all. We examined factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, and English as a first, second, or third language. We explored the possibility of family businesses and empire inheritances, in addition to other explanations on why there weren't as many non-white individuals in positions of power.

Another student spoke up, *"Hey Miss, maybe it's because white people don't have to deal with any of that,"* as she gestured to the stereotypes on the blackboard. The bell rang. No one moved.

I thanked my students for their participation in class, and wanted to leave them with some food for thought. I told them that sometimes the identification question is used to promote equity, and that equity is the belief that in order to treat people equally, you have to treat them differently because of the various obstacles they have or have not encountered in their individual lives. After all, not everyone starts off on the same playing field. I assigned a one-page reflection due for the next class and dismissed them. On their way out, two students asked if they could erase what had been written on the blackboard. I nodded, wishing it could be that easy.

"HEY MISS, WHAT ARE YOU?"

I've only just scratched the surface.

Four years of teaching later, and I know I still have a lot more to learn. These initial experiences from the start of my career heavily impacted me, and motivated me to return to my studies and complete research on how racialized teachers

understand their work with respect to the role expectations that are cast to them as 'visible minority' educators. In listening to the experiences of other racialized teachers, I developed a clearer understanding of the role of race in education. Numerous teachers spoke to me about how they were expected to be specialists in multicultural education simply because of the colour of their skin, or in some instances, suspected that they were hired to fill that role. I came to understand how the capacity to teach students about multiculturalism was surely accessible to all educators, but was first and foremost born from an individual consciousness of race, power, and social inequities. The challenge then became the unformulated path to acquiring this awareness.

I believe the act of becoming a teacher entails the simultaneous commitment to learning forever. What we can teach and how we relate to our students is directly related to what we know, understand, and believe ourselves. Teachers must reflect on their own attitudes toward race, equity, and multiculturalism since this will determine the ideologies with which they enter the classroom and interact with students. Whatever it is that we want to transfer on to our students must first and foremost, begin with us. We should not be afraid of learning from our multicultural classrooms. Students should be challenged to comment on what their gender, sexuality, ability, class, and race has afforded them or cost them, and how these categorizations are governed by the norms of society. So much of what we teach depends on who we are. Providing students with a multicultural education does not mean being able to complete a checklist of required elements in the curriculum. It does, however, mean helping kids recognize that there are people in the world who benefit from racism, and that power relationships do exist and do play a role in who gets hired for a job, in which parents are heard in the school system, and in who makes the big decisions.

As Social Science teachers, what do we do when all our resources only depict dominant perspectives, when Black History is confined to the lessons of one month or when a student uses the generalized 'they' when referring to people of a certain skin colour? Issues of culture, race, and difference need to be explicitly addressed and openly discussed in a world that is becoming more globalized with every passing day. One of the most common responses to multicultural education from teachers is not there isn't enough time, or that there aren't good resources, or that they just don't know how. While I hope this book can help with the latter, I hope it also highlights the fact that the former two are not necessarily add-ons to the work that one already does.

Multicultural education is not a lesson plan, or a unit, or a one day per year event; it is the language we use to teach, it is the dialogue we choose to initiate, and it is an individual consciousness of how the social differences in our world impact our lives. Dear educators, I understand that it is not easy, but I promise you that it is worthwhile.

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NOTE

[1]   I have made the conscious decision to refer to certain terms within the confines of quotation marks because of their frequent, yet uncritical usage in popular discourse. These loaded terms come with heavy implications, and as teachers, I believe that so many of the lessons we impart to our students are embedded in the words we choose to use.

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PART 5

SOCIAL JUSTICE

LYNN LEMISKO

17. UNPACKING PRESUPPOSITIONS
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

What is meant by the term 'social justice'? Why have we added the word 'social' to the concept 'justice'? Is there some fundamental difference between the notion of 'justice' and the notion of 'social justice'? If citizens of a democracy are expected to uphold personal rights and freedoms while actively upholding the rights and freedoms of everyone, is the embracing of democracy not enough ensure 'social justice'?

To the last question posed above, my simple answer is: "No". While I think that democracy does encompass the notion of justice, I also think that the idea of democracy, with its requisite focus on the right of each citizen to have voice in public decision-making, is mostly about 'individual justice' rather than 'social justice'. While citizens of in a democracy need to uphold personal rights and freedoms as well as actively upholding the rights and freedoms of everyone, I call this 'reciprocal' justice – that is, a kind of justice which involves the idea 'I uphold your rights and freedoms and in turn you uphold mine'. I have no problem with this kind of reciprocity, but I do not think this is what social justice is about.

If democracy is about individual rights (justice for individuals), then social justice is about group rights (justice for groups). And for me there is a fundamental difference between the general notion of justice and the notion of social justice. While each person in a democracy like Canada may well have protection for her/his personal rights and freedoms, this protection of individual rights does not actually ensure that an individual will receive just treatment. This is because there continues to be inequity in the treatment of people related to their group associations, including race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic class, abledness, sexual orientation, and so on. So, although individual rights are protected under the law, the upholding of these rights is not evenly distributed. White people, wealthy people, and heterosexual people are more likely to experience favourable treatment as compared to people of colour, poor people or gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and trans-gendered people. Because of the imbalance in power among social groups, the protection of individual rights does not ensure justice for the members of particular social groups. This is what social justice is about. Social justice includes the understanding that protections of individual rights and freedoms is not enough. Social justice requires understanding of notions of 'collective' rights and freedoms – of believing that we must ensure that everyone receives just treatment, no matter to which groups individuals belong.

Social justice requires that citizens have both a sense of 'reciprocal' justice and a sense of justice; this includes taking an active role in reducing harm to or exploitation of others by confronting the societal power structures (stories and discourses) which reify or normalize status quo hierarchies. Social justice in a democracy requires that 'the people' learn to critique authority, engage in well-reasoned public discourses and nurture a sense of justice that encourages active participation in public decisions that challenge and change societal institutions, systems, and ways of thinking that are unjust. Hence, social justice requires 'social action' and is, therefore, a 'generative' concept – generative of transformative societal change.

Educating for social justice may seem, at first glance, fairly straight forward – that is, simply nurture a sense of justice that encourages learners to take action toward eliminating injustice. One of the profound difficulties that arises is in helping teachers and learners see that their sense of justice must encompass social groups, and that social (or group) action is necessary, conflict arises because dominant ideas in circulation in our society are based on taken for granted notions about the efficacy of acting and behaving as individuals. For example, in discussing the 'myth of classlessness', Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) demonstrate how the assumption that 'success is due mainly to individual prowess and effort' shapes dominant ideas in North American society. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) show how a generally held assumption – that all members of society have equal access to material resources and equal opportunity for wealth, education, and occupation – underpins the common sense understanding that all any individual person need do is show some effort, and success will follow. Coupled with, or flowing from this assumption, comes the idea that lack of economic, occupational, and/or educational 'success' is a result of lack of individual effort. This is a myth, however, because this assumption does not take into account the fact that access to material resources and opportunities for wealth, education, and particular occupations have as much (or more?) to do with historically constructed positions of power and privilege as with individual effort.

We can see then, that educating (or acting) for social justice is not as easy as asking teachers to help nurture a sense of reciprocal justice among learners. I think that educating for social justice requires the uncovering and challenging of personal and societal presuppositions, and as a teacher educator, I argue that this process should be a key ingredient in all teacher education programs.

ANTI-RACIST & ANTI-OPPRESSIVE EDUCATION

Uncovering, confronting and challenging dominant, taken-for-granted notions (presuppositions) is painful and unsettling because it involves "unlearning what we had previously learned is normal and normative" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 8). But I think that learning about ways in which we are complicit in the normalizing practices of dominant (white, patriarchal, middle-class, heterosexual, and etceteras) culture is absolutely necessary if we intend to promote social justice. As teacher educators, we need to learn ourselves and then help teacher candidates come to

understand that the very ways in which we 'normally' think and do things in schools sets up conditions for oppression. This confrontation is not easy, but as anti-racist/anti-oppressive educators explain (Kumashiro, 2001, Schick & St. Denis, 2003), education should not be about repeating what one already knows, but rather should involve "learning to desire the discomforting process of unlearning [that is]… learning something different, learning something new, learning something that disrupts one's commonsense view of the world" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 8).

So how can teacher educators help teacher candidates disrupt personal ways of thinking and challenge dominant ideologies? First, I think it needs to be emphasized that there is no 'quick fix'. Disrupting patterns of thinking and doing requires multi-layered and ongoing approaches. Schick and St. Denis (2003), for example, explain how they ask teacher candidates enrolled in their anti-racist educational foundations course to examine the ideological assumptions shaping discourses that construct and sustain various form of oppression (racism in particular) through intense discussions of a set of readings that explore how the production of dominant identities rely on producing/marginalizing 'The Other'.

Using cooperative learning approaches, Schick and St. Denis (2003) ask teacher candidates to attend to the construction of "class, gender, sexuality, disability, and race as intersecting and interlocking identity formations," and to deeply examine the production of whiteness in the Canadian social, economic and historical context (http://proquest.umi.com.cyber.usask.ca/pqdlink?did=579671351&sid=1&Fmt=3 &clientId=12306&RQT=309&VName=PQD). While Schick and St. Denis (2003) discuss the ways in which teacher candidates often resist the anti-racist teaching they encounter, the two professors also report the ways in which the approaches that they use over a thirteen-week course do engage many teacher candidates in thoughtful and critical analysis of personal and societal presuppositions. The following excerpt offers the idea of writing autobiographies as an anti-racist/anti-oppressive instructional approach, as well as indicating the power that such an approach can have in transforming ways of thinking to support social justice. Schick and St. Denis (2003) write:

> In the major course assignment, students write autobiographies in which they are asked to engage in reflective social and political self-analysis. Employing information from their own histories, students are expected to write a reflective and analytical essay—and not a chronological report—that incorporates a minimum of 10 course readings. They are encouraged to comment on their own social production, exploring how their own families achieved and are achieving what is commonly understood as respectability. As they come to understand that identifications change with education, place of residence, language spoken, and the Anglicizing of immigrant names, they also see how they are produced as white and how that identification can shift and change. Students are encouraged to comment on what their gender, sexuality, ability, class, and race afford them or cost them and how these identifications

depend on the production of normative social practices and histories. Students analyze the basis on which privileges are both denied and assigned and the effects that this has on the reproduction of inequality. …. Most welcome the opportunity to gather stories from their families and to analyze their findings in a larger social and cultural context. Students routinely report that in the challenge to think about their social, economic, and historic production, they see that identities are produced through stigmatized and marginalized others. (http://proquest.umi.com.cyber.usask.ca/pqdlink?did=579671351&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=12306&RQT=309&VName=PQD)

Using autobiographies as a tool for uncovering and disrupting personal and cultural presuppositions is mentioned by other anti-racist/anti-oppressive and social justice educators (Kumashiro, 2002; Maina, 2002). Based on his understanding that resistance to anti-oppressive education can arise from teacher candidates' subconscious desire for learning that 'repeats' or affirms their identities, perspectives and presuppositions, Kumashiro (2002) offers an interesting twist on the autobiographical essay approach, suggesting that the autobiographical essay assignment could ask teacher candidates to develop two parallel analyses, one which "draws on readings in which they see themselves mirrored, and one that draws on readings that they believe differ from their own experience," [and another piece] in which students reflect on what different insights were made possible by each of the two routes of analysis, whether some of these insights are more desirable or comforting that another, and why" (pp. 73–74).

SOCIAL STUDIES & SOCIAL JUSTICE

While I am convinced that uncovering and disrupting presuppositions through self, social, political, and historical analysis are critically important in educating for social justice, I also think that pre-service teachers need practice in examining the ways in which teaching and learning in subject areas/disciplines can be oppressive and counter to notions of social justice. My efforts in working with teacher candidates has involved the examination of social studies as a location for educating for social justice.

Along with the examination of personal assumptions, teacher candidates need to explore ways in which they can contribute to 'changing the story' when examining the past and present with learners. Teacher candidates need to learn that they can "look beyond" (Kumashiro, 2001, p. 6) the official knowledge of mandated provincial curriculum and traditional pedagogical approaches to add complexity and complicate, or trouble, dominant perspectives. I have worked with teacher candidates to help them understand how use of a resource-based learning approach can add voices, experiences, and perspectives of 'others'. For example, in exploring Canada's participation in World War I or World War II, teacher candidates explore how adding the voices of women, individuals in Ukrainian or Japanese internment camps, conscientious objectors, and Aboriginal Peoples works to broaden and

thicken perspectives on the events. Including formerly marginalized or silenced voices is not only important because it facilitates understanding of multiple perspectives, it is also important because the inclusion of these voices has the power to challenge and change the 'usual' story (usually told from the perspective of dominant culture). Including multiple voices builds understanding about the ways in which the disadvantages of some social groups, in comparison with the privileges of other social groups, have been historically constructed. Teacher candidates can learn that an anti-oppressive approach engages learners in critically thinking about how the stories we tell can either shape and perpetuate the status quo or combine in ways that trouble and contradict official versions. This involves helping learners pose questions such as the following:

- Without these voices, what story about Canada is told?
- When we add multiple voices, how does the story change?
- What stories support oppression of certain groups?
- What stories support notions of social justice?

One of the more difficult approaches to 'looking beyond' involves teacher candidates in examining resources, curriculum documents and practices for their silences – that is, what is left 'unsaid?'. That which is left unsaid arises from the taken-for-granted notions of dominant culture. These implicit notions are hard to uncover because societal or cultural presuppositions are so deeply embedded within our thinking that we do not recognize that which is left out. When educating for social justice, teacher educators need to help teacher candidates learn to focus on both what is explicit (said or visible) and what is implicit (not said or invisible).

I have asked teacher candidates to critically examine social studies curriculum documents and suggested learning activities and resources using this double focus. For example, we have examined together a learning activity connected to exploring the concept 'interdependence' that is suggested in the Saskatchewan *Grades 1 – 5: Social Studies: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (1995). The explicit purpose of this activity, titled "Doing without" (p. 28) is to have learners identify some specific technologies and contemplate what life would be like without these. However, what is silenced or unsaid in this learning activity is a set of classed attitudes about easy accessibility to wealth and resources. Two of the scenarios that teachers are to ask grade four learner to examine read are as follows:

Fireplace
You have just moved into a house with a fireplace. You're anxious to have a warm fire, so you put on your coat, grab the chain saw and head out the door. Using the remote control, you open the garage door, pull out the sled and hook it up to the snow machine. Putting the saw in the sled, you start the machine and drive to the woods, where you begin to saw deadfall for the fireplace.
Breakfast

> You wake up one morning feeling energetic and decide to have a "healthy" breakfast. You take two apples and a banana, peel them, and put them into the electric blender. Turning on the switch, you watch as the fruit is spun around and cut into a mash. Opening the fridge door, you take out some milk and add a cup to the fruit mixture. You turn the blender off and pour your favourite morning drink into a tall glass. As you sit down at the kitchen table, you pick up the remote control and turn on the tv.

In critically examining this suggested activity to find the 'unsaid' about socio-economic class, I ask teacher candidates to read the scenarios, think about the implicit assumptions that underpin the descriptions, and prepare to discuss questions such as the following:

> What is assumed about accessibility to the resources and technology discussed in the scenarios?

> What is assumed about what the families of grade four students must/should have if they need to imagine 'doing without'?

When asked to find 'what is silenced', teacher candidates typically note the degree to which this learning activity is based on the assumption that all students have ready access to resources (like 'woods, apples and bananas, homes with 'garages') and technologies (like chain saws, remote controls, snow machines and electric blenders). They note that what is unsaid is that there are many children whose families do not have these material goods and that these children do not need to imagine life without such resources. Typically teacher candidates also mention their dismay that they did not recognize, at first glance, the way in which such an activity can work to exclude a particular group of learners. This sparks a discussion about how schools are not welcoming places for poor and low-income children. "Like culturally different children, school is a much stranger and more threatening place for them than it is for children from middle-income families or children of the elite" (Cameron, 2003).

SOCIAL ACTION & SOCIAL JUSTICE

If one of the more difficult approaches to educating for social justice involves honing our capacities to uncover both what is said and not said in social studies resources, curriculum documents and pedagogical practices, I think teaching for engagement in social action is one of the more straight forward approaches to educating for social justice. While I admit that educating for social justice by helping young people learn strategies for social action can be seen as controversial, I am convinced that schools are places where active, participatory and dissenting forms of citizenship should be learned and practiced. If this is to actually unfold, then teacher educators must work with pre-service teachers in helping them learn more about ways in which they can take action to ameliorate the injustices they encounter. Social action projects,

as part of social studies methods classes, can work to empower teacher candidates as participatory citizens, as well as providing sound examples of the kinds of approaches to social action they can teach younger learners.

Developing and implementing social action projects involve engaging with a wide variety of knowledges, processes and skills including, for example:

- critically analyzing issues, power relationships, historical constructions of inequities
- brainstorming ideas and approaches for tackling particular issues
- predicting benefits, drawbacks and consequences of particular forms of action
- engaging with concerned others in collective problem solving
- organizing a group (or locating an organization) in which to work collectively toward resolving social injustices/inequities
- honing communication skills (from letter writing, poster making, to using various technologies – photography, film, internet, and etceteras)
- debating, reflecting, negotiating, critiquing, persuading and decision-making

Ideas for meaningful social action projects easily arise out of topics and issues that are embedded in social studies curricula at all grade levels, particularly when teachers become sensitive and alert to their own presuppositions about power and privilege, and when they are willing to look beyond the 'usual story'. When teachers are imbued with the courage to explore and examine conflicts arising from social inequities, they can help students learn "how to discuss and debate these emotionally charged and messy issues [as] a crucial first step toward working with others to solve collective problems" (Kelly & Brandes, 2001, p. 438).

Educating for social justice must involve uncovering, challenging, and changing deeply embedded societal/cultural presuppositions, and this cannot be done quickly or easily. Teachers need to be encouraged to critically reflect upon materials and pedagogies to more deeply understand practices that marginalize or privilege students and the social groups to which they belong. Space and time must be opened up in classrooms for patient exploration of uncomfortable and unsettling ideas. Educating for social justice requires space and time be offered in classrooms where teachers and students can design and implement meaningful social action projects together. Educating for social justice means that we must struggle with our desire to repeat that which is familiar and 'look beyond' to disrupt common sense notions, which can open up frightening but invigorating possibilities for learning something new.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Similar to educating for democratic citizenship, educating for social justice involves the belief that everyone can develop her or his capacity for empathy and public spiritedness and can learn to participate in public decision-making in reasonable and respectful ways. To educate for social justice is to be profoundly optimistic about the

capacities of human beings and to be profoundly optimistic about the possibility that socially just action is generative of transformative societal change.

Educating for social justice includes remembering that we are not strangers here – that all human beings are deeply connected to the environments in which they live(d) and in this, we are all together. When we remember we are not strangers here, developing "that mystic sense of limitless belonging" (Capra & Steindl-Rast, 1992, pp. 15 & 57, in Selby, 1998), we not only become empowered to take meaningful action toward protection of ecosystems; we also remember the connectedness necessary for living in just relationships with all members of our earth community.

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KURT W. CLAUSEN

18. THE BROOM AND THE WATER
IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

There is an old adage that asks 'what's worth more, your money or your time?' To the modern legal system, this question has come to dominate the entire question of justice. I believe that this is the result of the modern religion of materialism – by this I mean: The only thing that can be trusted is physical results. If it cannot be touched, weighed, or counted, it does not really exist.

Enlightened philosophy in most civilized countries have outlawed torture and execution so the only remaining response one can give when asked if justice was done is to view it in terms of dollars and cents or time served.

This is especially difficult to deal with when one is trying to understand the term 'Social Justice'. Of course, one could go straight to the denotation of the term from any dictionary at hand. For example, *The Handbook of Social Justice* states on its dust jacket that the expression:

> … refers to the concept of a society in which justice is achieved in every aspect of society, rather than merely the administration of law. It is generally thought of as a world which affords individuals and groups fair treatment and an impartial share of the benefits of society. … It can also refer to the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within a society. (Kakanowski & Narusevich, 2010)

However, when seeing how this term plays out in reality, things are not as clear-cut. In fact, to the person on the street there is very little notice given towards social justice issues, except for those that are pointed out by the media. Personally, I think this concept must be broken down into two halves: the 'social' and the 'justice' aspects which bisect in some places, diverge in others.

Let us deal with 'justice' first. Seen generally as a concept of moral rightness based on ethics, rationality, law, natural law, fairness, religion and/or equity (Konow, 2003, p. 1188), it is said to be quite distinct from other human instincts of charity, benevolence or compassion. Allegorically depicted as Lady Justice (after *Iustitia*, the Roman Goddess), the judicial system is intended to be driven solely by a desire to reach a fair decision (symbolized by the balanced scales in her hand), impartially unmoved by politics, kindness or empathy (symbolized by her blindfold), and to punish the culpable (symbolized by the sword in her other hand) (Hamilton, 2005; Fabri & Langbroek, 2000).

Divorced from the term social, however, what becomes of justice? The Puritan writer John Bunyan (1678/1883) gave a very apt analogy to this issue, one that I first read several years ago, and which stuck with me ever since. In his allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, his main character, Christian, meets up with the Interpreter:

> Then he took him by the hand, and led him into a very large parlor that was full of dust, because never swept; the which after he had reviewed it a little while, the Interpreter called for a man to sweep. (p. 110)

It becomes quite clear that this parlor is, metaphorically speaking, the heart of man, and the dust his original sin. The broom is seen as the law and should be the primary means of ridding the soul of inner corruption.

For me, there was a much stronger contemporary social message that accompanied this essentially individual analogy. Could not the parlor represent the state of the world itself? There are a lot of dirty things going on. Corruption, inequality, persecution, violence, rape, murder, and injustices exist everywhere. The broom must be seen as the cleansing agent of these foul things. But are the courts of law by themselves a truly satisfactory cleanser? Every day, all sectors of society exhort citizens to believe this fact. If you are wronged, take it to court. If you see something suspicious, call the police, but don't get personally involved. The most important message that is put to the public is: 'don't take the law into your own hands.' Taking the law into your own hands is formally defined as, "to do something illegal in order to punish someone because you know that the law will not punish that person" (Cambridge, 2006). Justice must be left for the courts to decide. This is highly supported by all forms of media. Superheroes aside, I have rarely watched a film where a vigilante does not wind up being punished as severely as the perpetrator of the original crime. And if they are not dealt with by authorities, the movie tells the public in no uncertain terms that this anti-protagonist will spend a lifetime tortured by inner demons.

But what does this say for people's relation to the justice system? The underlying message is that ordinary citizens should go about their private concerns and leave the law-making and meting out of justice to the professionals. It is almost as if we are extending the *parens patriae* clause in the law (whereby the state can become the protector of children against abusive or negligent natural parents). The call here seems to be for the extension of the net: protecting us all, and in so doing reducing us to the status of children within society. All people should bring all problems to the court, including money matters, theft, abuse, marital problems and race issues.

However, returning to Bunyan's analogy, helps in pondering what kind of job the broom does on its own. The tale continues:

> Now, when he began to sweep, the dust began so abundantly to fly about, that Christian had almost therewith been choked. (Bunyan, 1678/1883, p. 110)

In other words, the broom by itself is quite ineffective. Bunyan draws on scripture to show that "instead of cleansing the heart (by its working) from sin, doth revive, [Rom. 7:9], put strength into, [1 Cor. 15:56], and increase it in the soul,

[Rom. 5:20], even as it doth discover and forbid it; for it doth not give power to subdue" (p. 110–111). Essentially, when the broom does its thing, a great stir is created, but people are blinded to certain issues. Without a binding agent, each speck of dust is dealt with by itself. The broom tries to shuffle it away from the ground and out the door, but it flies up, out of reach and eventually settles somewhere else. Thus, while change occurs, the ordinary citizen never feels a sense of justice or relief.

If murder takes a life, can it be restored? Even if the murderer is given a twenty-five year prison sentence, the victims are not relieved, and citizens are nagged by the thought that there will just be another person in the prison system taking up tax money. Larger social issues, like the Canadian example of Native residential schools, have come to play a great role in our modern psyche thanks to the media. Taken from their homes and culture, many aboriginal children were forced to go to boarding schools run by the Christian Churches throughout Canada. Sanctioned by the government, these schools had free rein to govern themselves as they carried out assimilation, intimidation and in some cases sexual interference. After years of pressure, when cases were brought to trial and decisions were made in favour of the aboriginal plaintiffs, the only result was an apology and the awarding of monetary compensation. All of these decisions and remunerations leave the victims, the guilty and the spectators with a feeling of ennui and disillusionment.

How does a system become so? With no connection to the everyday citizen, the courts become a self-perpetuating mechanism. Judges, lawyers, bailiffs all become people just doing another job with little care for justice as the outcome. The larger concerns on their minds are the overcrowded prison systems and the long docket list. And as the courts become more centralized, these lists become greater, the prisons more overcrowded. In essence, and to return to the Bunyan analogy, I feel that what has made the parlor of our lives incapable of being cleaned is our sense of *anti-social justice* that we cling to. This is the belief that some power beyond ourselves will solve the problem – the legal system, the government, the penal system, the youth courts, and so on. It is through this series of buck-passing that no dust can be swept away.

What is the solution to this dusty problem? Again, I return to Bunyan (1678/1883), who wrote:

> Then said the Interpreter to a damsel that stood by, "Bring hither water, and sprinkle the room;" the which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure. (p. 110)

Now, Bunyan has a clear message here that was inextricably tied to his faith. He saw the water as the Gospel. In mixing it with the Law, sin becomes subdued and the soul can be made clean. To make his point, he cites the Biblical passages John 15:3, Ephesians 5:26, Acts 15:9, and Romans 16:25, 26 (see p. 111). In this, I would see a more ecumenical message. I see the concept of 'social' as the great binding agent:

> Social refers to a characteristic of living organisms (humans in particular, though biologists also apply the term to populations of animals and insects). It always refers to the interaction of organisms with other organisms and to their collective co-existence, irrespective of whether they are aware of it or not, and irrespective of whether the interaction is voluntary or involuntary. ("Social" as defined in *Wikipedia)*

So, whether or not we deny it, the impulse of our nature is to get involved. To not do so is to deny our humanity. The dust is free to fly in the air when we as a society lack a centre or understanding of why these problems are being dealt with in the first place. The water is the unifying force that acts as a bridge between the broom and the dust. And that 'water' is our social nature and our involvement as citizens.

My point here is that 'social justice' may stand for creating a just society for all to live in harmony and equality. However, it cannot be dispensed by a seemingly inhuman system perceived as being disconnected from the human experience. For that reason, it is just as important for social justice to be seen from the other side – justice being dispensed *by* society as well as *to* society.

Until recent times, the entire justice system needed involvement from all areas of society. I draw the readers' attention to a number of examples. In the Brehon (or Celtic) Law system, the honour system played a great role as there existed no police force and a very limited pool of law-givers and dispensers. As Shakespeare would say, "who steals my purse, steals trash, but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed" (1901, p. 84). For in this system, honour – to a larger extent, a spiritual, duty-bound component -plays a role. If a man should kill another, he would not go to jail (no jails existed), nor would he be executed (which would start just a clan feud). Money could be exchanged based on the honour of the person he killed. However, an interesting clause did exist whereby the killer could become the victim. He could take on the dead man's family as his own, care for them, protect them, feed them and help them prosper. In so doing, the restitution paid to the dead man is that of empathy on the part of the attacker.

Another ancient tradition of Celtic background was that of the Hue and Cry. When pursuing a thief or other criminal, the High Reeve could raise a posse by shouting that a crime (murder, robbery, assault) was being committed. All within listening distance were them obligated by honour to join the pursuit until the perpetrator was caught or the hunt called off.

When did the change take place? When did justice switch from a social invention to an anti-social process? For this, I turn to the sage thinking of the Marquis de Sade. Originally, to execute a criminal was a social thing, and an event that was held with both attraction and repulsion. It was a long process, taking time to perform the various torments to the body: drawing, quartering, pulling apart by animals, beheading, and etcetera. This had a series of repercussions. In the criminal's torment, it formed an unspoken bond between the tortured, the torturer and the onlookers. This was

a performance in the theatre of justice. At no deeper level could all stakeholders be more involved. Like a living sacrifice, it was to be performed rarely. However, with the invention of the guillotine, the rules changed. It became mechanistic. Who was killing this person? A machine – not us. What was lost was any involvement or culpability in the eyes of the onlookers. With their hands washed, citizens could now look on executions as mere spectacle sport. And the given the notion that the guillotine was humane, where was the harm? In the film Charade (1963), Inspector Grandpierre states emphatically: "I have always imagined that the blade, coming down, causes no more than a slight tickling sensation on the back of the neck. It is only a guess, of course."

Of course, there was harm – it made death easy. At the height of the terror during the French Revolution, 300 people were killed in 3 days (unheard of in past generations). This could be achieved based on the removal of citizen involvement from justice. This mentality, although not as dramatic, has persisted to this day in the form of buck passing.

Of course, some honour-bound actions are still on the books in almost every country of the world. For example, there is a clause in most criminal codes that allow for a so-called 'citizen's arrest' in which any person can bring a felon to justice through their own powers. They cannot, of course, try this person – arrest them, then just hand them over to the authorities to do the rest. The question remains, how often does a citizen arrest happen?

The final example I will give of involvement in the law is the modern day jury. A rarity for most, but a serviceable relic of the English tradition. Having just recently sat on a jury, I could see how it was a return to the pre-Guillotine days. As all the potential jurors sat in the waiting room, I could see the anxiety written across everyone's face. This process was a disturbance, something that took them away from their 'normal' lives. For the first time, except for those who had done military service, most participants here saw this as a force greater than their family or economic necessities driving their actions. I talked with a number of them and their reactions differed greatly. Some had a grim determination, others a lighthearted interest. Many sat, thinking hard on how they could get out of this duty. However, as the day drew out, many became resolved to their fate and began talking about the snippets of the case that we would potentially sit on. This led to discussions about law in general, about society and civil codes in general.

In the end, having been placed with this group of strangers to serve on the jury, I must reaffirm my belief in this form of 'sociable justice'. Given the situation, most people think carefully about the enormity of the situation in which they have been placed and will be determined to "do the right thing". This, of course, depends on their definition of right. At least, however, they all seemed more than eager to act rather than remain passive.

Of course, when we deal with these issues, I believe it is enormously important that we should be educating for social justice. And this must go beyond the most recent spate of inclusions in curriculum documents that call for social justice

'*for*'—for minorities, for women, for people in need. I now believe that as part of education, students should be taught about social justice '*by*'. Students must come to see themselves not simply as consumers of social justice ("I want my equal rights"), but as people who engage in ensuring that social justice becomes a reality. In doing so, the definition then begins to expand past the mere concept of courtrooms and hand-outs from the system. Instead, students will see social justice as actions that take place in the home, the street, the school and the community. With this type of education, using John Bunyan's terms, students will realize that the water and broom are necessary components for social justice, and that the heart of a nation cannot be separated from the rest of the body and still continue to beat.

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19. THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD…?

Social justice is a concept of great interest to contemporary social studies educators. Indeed, it has seemingly become one of the accepted tenets of the educational enterprise in Canadian schools. On the surface this bodes well for society, but this also has serious implications if it is not critically approached in teaching practice and as an issue to consider when developing policy, designing institutions and adopting processes and procedures generally. Teachers also need to realize that social justice does not have a single, unified meaning with corresponding approaches to make it manifest. Only by exploring the concept in its many dimensions can students be prepared to consider its use as an effective measure against decisions taken. In short, a more explicit, thoughtful and generative approach to teaching the concept needs to be considered.

A number of years ago, I was teaching a senior civics class. The topic at hand was homelessness and we were considering what, if anything, could and should be done about it. One aspect of the discussion focused on whether or not individuals, community groups and governments have a responsibility to assist people who find themselves homeless. If they do, why? If they don't, why not? The students in the class seemed to agree that all people have value has human beings. As one student stated, "*even* the homeless are people". However, having inherent value did not, in many students' minds, necessarily extend to an all-encompassing responsibility to assist in their care. I introduced the phrase, "There but by the Grace of God go I." Student responses suggested they understood this phrase, but they quickly turned any moral obligation for assistance over to churches and other religious or charity based organizations. Most students were comfortable with a certain amount of government assistance to the homeless, but only if, as one student stated, "…to keep them off the streets." But students were almost unanimous in their rejection of any notion of their individual personal responsibility to assist the homeless.

At first, I was stunned, thinking these young people sounded insensitive, heartless and self-interested. I initially considered them unwitting victims of the individualist-libertarian worldview that permeates much of contemporary popular discourse—only interested in themselves and what society could offer them. What I came to discover as the discussion continued was that many students felt disenfranchised from decision-making processes that unfold within churches, community groups and governments, and that they had developed a posture outside these formal institutions. Students did not see themselves as part of the

church, community group or government, but rather as quite separate from them. With this, the 'other' (those in power) were perceived as having the authority and means todo something about homelessness, but not the students themselves. For some, disempowerment (or alienation) was so ingrained that they rationalized their viewpoint by expressing concern that 'doing something' would infringe on individual rights. That in an effort to assist the less fortunate, groups of people, including churches, community groups and governments, would infringe on a person's choice to live outside society's conception of what is appropriate or infringe on personal decisions that may or may not be wise or helpful in the long term. In short, to do something was to infringe on a person's individual 'right' to be poor. It is certainly a viewpoint and an issue of concern that philosophers, politicians, community leaders and families have struggled with for centuries. However, I was left with the feeling that both students and myself need to gain a much deeper understanding of what 'social justice' is.

WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Social justice is a concept that comes in two parts – social (adjective) and justice (noun). Each part has to be considered when unpacking its many possible meanings. On a basic level, justice is concerned with the 'proper' ordering of things based on a foundation of moral rightness. Theories of justice vary greatly but to be considered just – to be considered morally 'right' – includes an examination of decisions and actions through lenses that take into account ethics, rationality, natural law, religion, equity and fairness. The 'social', as adjective, is to consider justice within the context of a society – whether it be large (e.g., the world) or small (e.g., classroom).

Studies at UCLA (Wolpert, 2008) and Emory University (Brosnan & de Waal, 2003) suggest that a desire for fairness and equity may be an instinctual or basic need in all cooperative animals, including humans. As such, social justice also refers to a state whereby justice is achieved in every aspect of society. It affords individuals and groups fair treatment and a balanced share of the benefits of society. It seems likely that most people wish to live in a just society but different political ideologies have differing conceptions of what constitutes a 'just society' making social justice both a philosophical problem and important issue in politics, religion and civil society.

A closely related concept is distributive justice which is concerned with the 'proper' allocation of things between different individuals – things like wealth, power, reward, respect. For people who subscribe to the left end of the political spectrum, distributive justice is best achieved with a focus on economic egalitarianism – the spreading around of wealth through progressive taxation and income and property redistribution. People on the right wing of the political spectrum believe distributive justice can best be achieved through a reliance on the free-market system structured in a manner to ensure equal opportunity to succeed through hard work and smart choices combined with a moral imperative to engage in philanthropy and charity. However, social justice is a broader concept than distributive justice in that it

encompasses economic issues as well as non-economicbenefits that emanate from a society where every individual is equally valued, where differences are embraced and accommodations made.

ELEMENTARY ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE SOCIAL JUSTICE

Young children, when playing in social groups, want to feel included and valued. In order to feel this way they expect to be treated fairly and equitably relative to others in the group. This is why children become upset when they feel the rules have been violated or inappropriately applied. To explicitly illustrate this point, try playing the Rules Game in which a game situation is explained and played, but the teacher gradually begin to apply the rules erroneously. Students will start to voice complaints, possibly even rebel against the game. Stop and explore what has happened and discuss the importance of following the rules properly in order to treat everyone fairly.

That said, when a person gains a privilege that others do not, children (and even some adults) so rewarded will gladly accept it, perhaps believing they somehow earned it through merit or simply that they are special in some way. While one cannot discount the rewards that can be earned through talent and hard work, allocation of privileges without any real basis can lead to problems within social groups. People need to consider how personal good fortune may impact on those who are less fortunate. Do the less fortunate feel left out? Do their feelings of exclusion make them feel diminished and does this ignite resentment, ill will, or hatred? What are the implications of this? Teachers can explore this with students by examining simple classroom practices. One example is as follows:

- Over the course of one or two days pick out a single student, preferably one with reasonably well developed emotional fortitude, to come to the front of the line when students line up to enter and exit the class.
- Play up the specialness of being at the front of the line and suggest that by extension the student must be special. This will likely lead to reactions from the class. Watch this carefully as you do not wish the exercise to continue to a point where the favored student is unnecessarily harassed for being the 'teacher's pet'.
- After a time, bring the exercise to a close and debrief with students what has occurred. Explain that you have been engaging in an exercise to explore the concept of social justice. Further explain that you had no particular reason to choose this student to be so privileged and that though s/he is a fine person each and every student in the classroom is a fine individual.
- Explore how the privileged student felt, how the others felt, and ask if either considered the feelings of the other?
- Have students engage in an exercise whereby they generate ideas as to how everyone might hold such favoured positions (i.e., share in the benefits of the classroom society).

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- If students do not suggest it themselves introduce the possibility of sharing based on merit or talent rather than happenstance or favors from authority (the teacher). Another possibility is to change the person each time they line up until everyone in the class has had a chance to be first.
- Emphasize the importance of social justice with groups. Reinforce by applying students' ideas when choosing students for extra-curricular activities such as computer games, team captains and monitor duties.

This concept can further be developed by exploring how some people behave when privileged because they have simply dodged persecution. For example, explore how students often simply feel thankful when the school bully chooses not to harass them and instead turns attention to others. People sometimes stand by silently basking in their good fortune and rationalize their silence by believing that the bullying has nothing to do with them. Story books are an excellent entry point into exploring why bullying is an inappropriate social behaviour and how remaining quiet or inactive while others are persecuted is also problematic. Intermediate and senior students can explore incidents from history where citizens, institutions and nations have remained silent and inactive in the face of persecution (e.g., lynching of Black Americans, the Holocaust, Rwandan crisis of 1994). You can ask students to examine quotation, which can assist in further exploring the concept, for example: "Silence = Consent" John Bradford's, "There but for the grace of God go I" and Martin Niemoller's 1946 speech which contained the famed

> First they (the Nazis) came for the Communists, And I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist; And then they came for the trade unionists, And I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist; And then they came for the Jews, And I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew; And then. they came for me. And by that time there was no one left to speak up.

SECONDARY ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE SOCIAL JUSTICE

Students are often asked to participate in writing rules for the classroom and formalize them in a classroom constitution. The result may be an expression of values to live by in the classroom, a list of students' rights and responsibilities, a code of conduct with clearly delineated consequences for violations or a combination of all of these. As a starter, it would be worthwhile to define and explore the concept of social justice and its merit as a baseline value to inform decisions about what can and should be included in the constitution. As students go through the process, which may also include brainstorming, composing, selecting, editing, printing, presenting and voting steps, be sure there is ample opportunity for analysis of proposed items for the constitution. For example, a reference to a definition of social justice could include a student composed item that states, 'All perspectives presented in classroom discussions will be listened to and considered as long as they are respectful of others'. This is more socially just, and thus a better

candidate for inclusion into the constitution, than 'The teacher's perspective on all questions and issues will prevail'.

A simulation activity I have tried with secondary students in the past begins by setting the stage with a reasonably credible scenario such as that which as follows:

> The Republic of Imara has just declared its independence from Altrossia. While the succession from Altrossia was peaceful there is lingering bitterness and anti-Altrossian sentiment has been expressed in some parts of Imara. Elections have been held in the newly founded Imaran democracy and members of the elected body have been selected to develop a proposal for a constitution which will include a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Imara is a reasonably prosperous nation that is demographically diverse (e.g., 62% Imaran, 13% Altrossian, 25% other) and a committee has been established to develop a proposal to place before the government and ultimately be ratified in a nation-wide referendum. The governing party campaigned on a platform espousing social justice for all. The government wants the most socially just charter possible.

To assist students who will take on the role of committee members, I introduce the writings of political philosopher John Rawls. Rawls' work is concerned in part with issues of social justice and draws on the social contract ideas of John Locke, the utilitarian insights of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and the categorical imperative ideas of Immanuel Kant. Rawls' (1971) views were most clearly laid out in his book, *A Theory of Justice*, where he begins with the premise that all societies have a basic structure of social, economic, and political institutions, both formal and informal. Within all societies, "each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override" (p. 3). This inviolability rests on a set of unranked freedoms which all people possess. They are:

- freedom of thought;
- political liberties (e.g., representative democratic institutions, freedom of speech and the press, freedom of association and assembly);
- liberty of conscience as it affects social relationships on the grounds of religion, philosophy, and morality;
- freedoms necessary for the liberty and integrity of the person (e.g., freedom from slavery, freedom of movement and a reasonable degree of freedom to choose one's occupation);
- rights and liberties covered by the rule of law (e.g., right to property).

These freedoms and liberties are widely recognized as normative by various international organizations and constitute a significant part of several constitutions throughout the world. However, this does give a starting point for students to compose their own charter for Imara and assess it vis-à-vis a basic understanding of social justice. Many students reformulate these items into their own words.

Following editing and a final decision on their charter I continue with an examination of Rawls' work by suggesting that despite the fact that these freedoms and liberties may be agreed on, there can still be people disadvantaged in the society. I ask student to contemplate the question: How can we ensure social justice is achieved?

Rawls introduces the concept of 'justice as fairness' which is based on two ranked principles. First, is the *equal liberty principle* whereby each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberties possible as long as they are compatible with similar liberties for others. This principle is based on the belief that the foremost goal of justice should be to maximize the basic liberties for each individual. Rawls gives this principle priority over any other virtue or principle, defending this point by asserting that the products of these liberties, namely self-respect and the means to set life goals, are key to living a full life.

Second, Rawls argues that society should be structured in a way that allows similarly able people to have similar life chances by eliminating the effect of social contingencies on admissions (e.g., universities), processes (e.g., voting) and job opportunities. This is done through things like inheritance taxes, government-funded education, and so on. Known as the *fair equality of opportunity principle*, it contends that justice can only be found if everyone is given a fair opportunity to live their life to its fullest. Justice should not simply benefit those with advantageous social contingencies.

Rawls adds a caveat of lesser order to his second principle. Called the *difference principle,* he claims that to overcome the inequalities of natural and social contingencies, society should design institutions and processes that are the most beneficial to the least advantaged people. Rawls suggests that this can be done through a thought experiment using the notion of *original position* – that is, the circumstances in which you start life. For example, some people are born abled or with physical and/or mental challenges; some people are born wealthy, comfortableor in poverty, while some people are white, black, Asian, Latin, aboriginal or mixed race. Indeed, original position can cut across any number of contingencies with some people's original position being female, Latina, physically challenged and living in poverty. To create the most 'just' society citizen representatives must go under the *veil of ignorance* whereby they do not know the individuating circumstances of their citizens' original position. Under the veil of ignorance, justice is created when institutions and processes are designed to minimize the obstacles and barriers to society's least advantaged, allowing them to maximize their potential. In this case, all are then free to live their lives to the fullest.

At this point in the Imaran simulation activity, I would ask the students on the committee working on the national Charter of Rights and Freedoms go under the *veil of ignorance*. They no longer know their own original position. Instead, they receive their original position in randomly distributed sealed envelopes. Privately, they 'discover' their social contingencies and are also told that this position is shared by a certain percentage of the Imaran population (e.g., you are a white Albatrossian

from the northern section of Imara. You only speak your local dialect and a little Imaranian. You suffer from severe arthritis that inhibits your mobility and have been unemployed for a year – between 7–10% of Imarans are in similar circumstances). Students are now expected to critically analyze the charter proposal to consider the ways citizens like themselves are and are not well protected. Students then prepare revisions or additions to the charter and present them in a new round of discussions. The aim is to make the charter as socially just as possible. Discussions continue until a final text is approved.

As a final step, students present the proposal to the teacher. The teacher draws his/her *original position* and reveals it to the committee. Following a discussionperiod, members of the committee explain how and why the proposed charter is or is not socially just for the teacher's original position.

A variation on this exercise is to have students critically analyze previously composed charters such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the U.S. Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments or South Africa's Chapter 2, to evaluate how socially just they are given various social contingencies in a citizens' original position.

CRITICISMS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

While these exercises engage students in generative activities related to developing and analyzing policies relative to social justice, criticism of the concept comes from many sides and students should be introduced to and explore their views. Moral relativists such as the Sophists disputed the existence of an objective standard for justice let alone social justice. Cynics such as Machiavelli believed that the pursuit of social justice was merely a justification for the status quo. Libertarians believe that the pursuit of social justice violates the non-aggression principle. Indeed, Friedrich Hayek of the Austrian School of Economics viewed social justice as a semantic fraud which purports to eliminate social and financial inequities, something he believed stemmed from individual choices which individuals should control. This last point comes closest to reflecting some of the concerns raised by my former students who argued that efforts to help the homeless could infringe on their individual rights.

Introducing students to opposing or critical views need not be seen as undermining what may be considered the core or essential essence of the concept. Indeed, it may only heighten understanding of social justice in the minds of students. Generative thinking can be inspired in a number of ways and critically exploring counter-arguments is one way of generating deeper insights, increased understanding, and positive action.

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20. SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SOCIAL STUDIES

I have no idea how to begin. I am a teacher. I have been teaching for 15 years. I am not capable of writing as an academic and so you will notice that I break all the rules of formal essay writing. Yet, for this treatment, I believe there is real value in not steeping myself in the language of academia. Education is in its essence about human relationships and connections. I need to be honest with you and allow you to see and hear me for who I truly am. Therefore I wish this to be a personal connection between me and you. So, with that in mind, please excuse, among many things, my liberal use of personal pronouns and my attempt at narrative research. Much of my research comes directly from my experiences as a student and as an educator, and so my references to other authorities are limited. I am able, however, to share with you my experiences, my thoughts and ideas around social justice. Let's begin with a definition of social justice.

- The belief that every individual and group is entitled to fair and equal rights and participation in social, educational, and economic opportunities. The agenda for increasing understanding of oppression and inequality and taking action to overcome them.
- The processes which seek to ensure the maintenance of a fair, equitable, egalitarian and generally harmonious society.

The definition does not, I am sure, surprise us. It is what we expect from the term social justice. However, I believe we need to take a closer look at not just the definition but the practice as well. Namely, do we truly cultivate a culture of social justice in our schools and our classrooms? My experience as a student, a parent and a consultant leads me to believe, that while we may entertain the idea of social justice we have not truly embraced it as a practice.

Social Justice is more than just a content piece. It is more than simply saying we will study 'poverty' for two weeks. We also need to think of Social Justice as issues-based learning. Social Justice is something we need to embrace in the way we approach learning.

My experience at school, with the exception of elementary school and with my high school Ethics teacher, runs contrary to what public schools generally are intended to do; for example the two examples below outline the strategic plans of the Alberta School Board Association and the Saskatoon Public School Board.

> The best possible schooling experience – a public school experience – will treat every student, every parent, and everyone else with respect. The public school will work to draw the best out of every student by cultivating: imagination; knowledge; skill; convictions; and, character formation. The public school experience will promote harmony in diversity, among students and throughout the community, by fostering: understanding;capacities based on the traits of individuals; convictions; respect; and, humility. (Alberta School Board Association, n.d.)

> Saskatoon Public Schools inspires and sustains learning. We are open to all children and youth so they may discover, develop, and act upon their potential, thereby enriching their lives and our community. (Saskatoon Public School Board, n.d.)

You could, if you choose, research the mandate of public school systems around the world until the proverbial cows come home and you would find all of them aligning themselves with the concept of social justice (like the two above). It is clear, that as educators working in public schools we must embrace and practice the concept of social justice.

Moreover, the importance of social justice has never been higher as we begin a new century with a new set of challenges and opportunities. Our new world – the digital one – is still relatively young and yet it has had a profound impact on our society. These changes are broad in scope and they reach deep into our societies; even my Mom at 83 years of age has become a digital citizen, where she consumes, connects and creates online. It is imperative that in this new age we reconsider what social justice means in our schools and how a firm practice of its principles may better prepare our youth for their future. Damn. I hate sounding like that. It is the intent of this narrative to raise questions around social justice and why it needs to be more than simply a concept studied in Social Studies class.

"IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES"

My sense of social justice and education began early on in my 'sordid' academic career. I entered grade 1 as an outsider and struggled to find my place. Luckily for me I attended a great elementary school where the teachers cared for us and loved each one of us for who we were. Soon I was celebrating myself, as did my teachers, despite my family's personal baggage and social economic status – by the way we were poor. I recall my dad coming home one day and announcing that, 'that was it, we had no more money and so we would have to be careful until he could sell some cows.' I wore my cousin's hand-me-downs, replaced my shoes only when a toe poked its steely nail out the canvas side. We were rural and we were poor. Yet at my elementary school, and even though all could see the economic gaps that existed between all of us, we were never identified by our financial status or our social hang-ups.

In grade 4 I had trouble with mathematics. I was quiet and shy. I remember my teacher Sister Johanna, asking me to stay and have lunch in her room with her. And for the next six weeks we broke bread together, and she always shared her fig newtons with me, and we talked about subtraction. Not once was I stigmatized as 'slow', but rather I was celebrated for who I was and she made me recognize that I was full of potential. By the end of that year I was a master at subtraction, multiplication, division, addition and living my life with my chin up and my shoulders square. I think now how different that episode might have turned out, had my teachers not had a keen sense of social justice and the belief that all should have the opportunity to achieve.

By grade 5 I was on fire. I was happy, did well in school, believed I could one day be a writer had many great friends and loved our teachers. For whatever reason, perhaps it was outstanding administrative leadership, or simply one of those times when the stars align and people with shared values around social justice come to belong to a school staff for a moment in time, our elementary school gave all of us the opportunity to believe in our potential.

Our teachers were fascinated by the world and every chance we got we were invited to explore global issues. What a place! We read and studied about other parts of the world in social studies, we read the newspaper as a class and discussed the day's events, we wrote letters to the mayor of our town expressing our concerns, we invited in our local Catholic priest and I remember asking him why there were no women altar-boys or priests and while he stumbled with the answer, I recall my teacher patting me on the back and smiling at me. In grade 6, we invited two girls from Chile into our classroom. Their family had escaped the 1973 coup and had fled to our small South Saskatchewan town. Immediately we were invited into their world and their experience. We learned their own unique culture and history and we learned to speak a little Spanish. What strikes me as remarkable all these years later is that our teachers had the confidence to allow their voice to be part of our classroom rather than trying to assimilate them into our larger classroom culture.

By the time we graduated from elementary school in grade 6, we stood in the gymnasium and I believe we all felt valued and able. I have looked back at our grade 6 class photograph recently and I see it in all our faces. The brightness, the belief that our future was bright because we were all celebrated as outstanding. We felt we belonged to the world and that we would have the opportunity to make a difference. The optimism was so palatable I can still see it in our eyes and the rosy red of our cheeks.

This was a school that not only modeled social justice by creating a culture where all felt valued because all were give an equal opportunity to achieve, but also in the ways we accessed the content of the curriculum. The discrete facts and concepts we studied revolved around global issues of justice and inequality. Here was a group of teachers that created a culture of collaboration and problem solving by presenting us with global issues we cared about and we needed to address.

Nel Noddings (2006) mentions in *Critical Lessons: What our Schools Should Teach,* that critical thinking happens when people use skillful reason on matters of moral and social significance. Two things happened in our elementary school that made it a great school. First, the entire school structure and culture embraced and practiced social justice. We all felt – regardless of our gender or economic status – that we belonged and contributed to making our school a better place. Secondly, whenever the opportunity presented itself, the content of the curriculum was tied to our world and the issues of the day. So, in English Language Arts we read stories from around the world and explored issues in China, India and Africa. Our Math class was not only memorizing algorithms it was using them to understand and make meaning out of standard of living statistics.

Children are fascinated by their world, if they see curriculum content as tools to help them make sense of global issues and to celebrate cultural diversity they are engaged. Too much of school is today housed in a vacuum where we sterilize education and make it meaningless. The world is complex and that can, at times, be frightening, but using social justice as a foundation helps us examine, discuss and perhaps understand these complexities more clearly. It is the job of our schools to provide students with the tools and skills to better understand their world and their future. Our little elementary school, even way back then, got that and lived it and we all benefitted from it immensely.

Up until the middle years of my scholastic journey, I was allowed to be a successful student. I was well liked by the teachers of my elementary school, my peers and I achieved good grades. Unfortunately that would all soon change. My grade 7 year was marked by two dramatic events. First, I graduated from my elementary school and was promoted to the local junior high school where the climate and atmosphere was vastly different. Secondly it was over the summer between grades 6 and 7 that my body exploded into a three ring circus of hormones, hormones and more hormones. Needless to say, my academic career suffered.

When I arrived at the junior high school I was an unknown commodity to the teachers, and I was now a shy, awkward boy uncomfortable in his own skin and uncertain of his own abilities. It was not long before I was given the label of lazy and unintelligent. In fact, I was awkward and this made me shy, but the essence of who I was remained. I still believed I could one day travel, write and impact communities by participating in them. Yet, because my tepidness was now misinterpreted, my grade 7 homeroom teacher decided by Christmas, that it would do me - and a few others – good to know that we would best consider vocational careers. If this is what I wanted to do, that would not have been a problem, but I wanted to be a journalist, or a writer, or a teacher, or a historian. By grade 7, I had read and watched the Pierre Berton series *The National Dream*, had digested Barry Broadfoot's *Six War Years* and made a habit of watching the CBC National News with my parents and discussing the events of the day. Yet, at school I was stamped, labeled and shelved as 'unintelligent and lazy'.

If I am frustrated by any part of my school experience it is those three years I spent at junior high school. I felt unjustly treated, and yet I was powerless and lacked the confidence to assert myself. The door was closed. In other parts of my life I felt intelligent, witty and capable and yet in the straight and narrow rows of the classroom I felt more and more incompetent and unable.

The truth was, I loved global issues and was fascinated by the way the world worked and the geo-politics of the past, the present and where it might take us. However, there was no place in school where my passion for global issues could be appreciated and recognized. I recall, early in grade 7, obtaining a grade of 98% on a social studies test and the teacher called me aside and admitted that although she had no evidence she suspected that I had cheated on the exam - the implication being that I was not capable of such understanding, and so therefore I must have cheated. I remember clenching my fists and holding back my tears. After that I gave up and I became everything they assumed I was…I lost interest in the world and in myself.

So what? My experience is, unfortunately, not unique. This sort of story is one that many of us carry away from schools. Furthermore, what does this sad tale have to do with the generative topic of Social Justice and its importance in Social Studies class?

I believe it illustrates the best and the worst of formal schooling.

When I look at schooling as we currently practice it, I am struck by the lack of social justice we are committed to in our schools, and in our classrooms. I contend that we as educators are in error if we leave 'Social Justice' as a topic to be covered in one or two humanities classes. Our job as educators is to promote and support a culture built upon the fundamental tenets of justice and equality. Therefore, if we truly believe that our job is to help students construct and maintain society as a good place, then we need to have a foundation of justice underlying all the disciplines taught at school.

Then we invite all into the learning community and not only those that fit with our model of what constitutes a good student. We also invite our students to participate at the class level, the school level and ultimately the community level. They will see themselves as powerful people with the power to change. And so I would contend that addressing social justice as one topic in one social studies class only serves to isolate it as a topic and not as a larger concept. Therefore, it is imperative that we embed this practice in our schools and our classrooms. Hopefully, over the course of the next several pages I will present to you the reasons why and some practical approaches to address how we as educators bring this to our communities.

THE SCHOOL/SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

Over the last few years I have been intrigued by what characteristics make for a good education in the 21st century. And yes, it has changed. Long ago, it seems we needed great managers in the classrooms; that the youngsters fresh from the streets

of Charles Dickens were not so well behaved and in order to survive, educators needed to be task masters. I am sure the same applied for those teachers and the robust farm kids of the 1900s prairie schools. Yet, the time for that model has long since passed, and we find ourselves now in a new age of knowledge management, using antiquated models of classroom instruction. So, if an educator no longer needs to be authoritarian, dispensing reams of knowledge to a body of children sitting quietly, what then do we need? In his book *The World is Flat*, Tomas Friedman (2005) identifies the skill sets children need in order to face and solve the challenges of a digital world that is hot, flat and crowded. Friedman, after consulting with many economic and government leaders, identified the following five core components of synthesis thinking: critical thinking; problem solving; communication; collaboration; and civic and cultural development.

Therefore, what we know is that in an increasingly connected, ever more crowded, level world it will be difficult for our children to avoid bumping up against one another and encountering diversity. We should also realize that in a world that is quickly leveling in terms of standard of living, there will be serious competition for resources. The UN has predicted that the wars of the 21st century will not be about territory, they will be about food, water, and of course, energy. If we believe that our job as educators is to prepare students to face the challenges of society here and in the future, where resources will need to be shared more equitably and responsibly, does that not underscore the importance of creating schools where difference and diversity are celebrated and the issues of the world are explored and addressed?

Our school systems need to model this by creating centers of social justice where students are using 'synthesis thinking' to connect, collaborate and understand the world.

It sounds good. But is it the practice within our system, our schools and our classrooms? More importantly in a society and culture as diverse and fragmented as ours, is it possible to provide that equality of opportunity in one institution, one location and one room? There is evidence to suggest that our public system is beginning to strain and moan as it comes up against the iceberg of pluralism. Take for example the creation of an African American school in the Toronto Public School Board. While this is deemed necessary by the constituents of that community, it does raise very critical questions about what our public schools seem at times, unable to do. Are we prepared to create authentic learning communities in schools where social justice is not just a topic, but a foundation of the entire system? Are we prepared to invite difference? Are we prepared to have our belief systems challenged? It seems to me that it is one thing to invite 'the other', but are we willing to step away from being the voice of authority, managing the narrative and thereby gate-keeping who or what is allowed into our story, and move to a place where all are part of the narrative? Isn't that the world we need?

Or, do our school systems continue to ignore these new global strains? Will Biology continue to be taught without any reference to issues of environmentalism in the local and global community or to the effect that ever increasing consumption

rates will have on our planet? Will we continue to teach Math in a vacuum instead of using it as a tool to understand the issues surrounding poverty and reservation life for First Nations people? We make school meaningful – and I mean all subjects – by using the content of these curricula as vehicles to help the students learn to be synthesizers, communicators and learners, where they understand the social issues we face as a global society and perhaps even become agents of social change. We need our students to connect with communities around the world and to begin to face the challenges of the future and to work together with students from Chile, India, Africa and China.

Our responsibility is to create models of social justice where all are invited to participate and not only in a token fashion. Our classrooms are gathering places for all cultures to meet and to 'rub and polish' their brains together. Firstly, we as public school educators need to remind ourselves that all of our students are entitled to fair and equal rights in educational opportunities.

THE CLASSROOM CULTURE

Social justice in our schools is important because it creates classroom communities of collaboration and connection for all members. That is important because we will need connected citizens with the creative skills to collaborate with one another to move our global society forward.

However, there is another more practical reason why we should embed social justice in all of our classrooms and that is because it works as a model of engaged learning for students. Students are passionate about social justice because they remain, at heart, idealists. They have a sense that the world can be better and even those that are already cynical and bitter love to engage in the wider conversation. In a survey of nearly 470 dropouts throughout the country, nearly 50 percent said they left school because their classes were boring and not relevant to their lives or career aspirations. A majority said schools did not motivate them to work hard, and more than half dropped out with just two years or less to complete their high school education.

I need to be careful here, because I do not want to send the message that if we simply roll around on the carpet, sing '*Kuumbwa*' and allow things to happen, meaningful learning will take place. The classroom needs structure and the educator needs to have clear intentions about where the students need to arrive by the end of the class. This is not about 'tune in, turn on and drop out.'

On the other hand it does not mean that the teacher fills the white board or the smart board with notes for the students to copy and then has those same students read five pages in a history text and answer the five questions at the end of the section. That is not an opportunity to learn for most of the students in the class. For many, that amounts to drudgery and boredom. It is the reason why students often complain that they need to 'gear down' when they come to school. You live in the real world, you learn every day, and how often do you learn by copying notes,

reading and answering questions? Our learning occurs because we are engaged, and we are engaged because we believe that our learning has a purpose…it will take us some place, it will change something.

Your classroom should be a model of social justice and that simply means that all are there for the opportunity to learn something every day. They might not all learn the same thing at the same time, but they leave the room a little more enlightened than when they arrived and they feel a little more empowered to control their own lives and gradually improve the community.

The first and most important thing is get to know the people who share the classroom with you. Listen to their conversations, eat lunch with them and put plenty of time and effort into getting to know who they are. Relationships are key, and yet we as educators get caught up in the urgency of covering curriculum, sacrificing rapport-building with our students. One of our greatest challenges as teachers is our class size. It is difficult to get to know each of your students when the population of your class is inflated to thirty or forty students. Developing a human relationship with students is so important that some school divisions are exploring the idea of having high school students attached to one social studies, or math or English teacher for their academic career. That means that a student in their first year of high school will keep the same Social Studies teacher (for example) for all the other grades. I have often heard that teachers love to teach in rural school divisions and because they claim to have less discipline problems because the kids in the small towns are better behaved and want to learn. Many factors are involved here, but certainly the fact that small rural schools allow for the cultivation of a family culture where the school community is small enough for all to establish connections, is huge.

The best opportunity for everyone to learn is tied directly to the student and the teacher knowing each other. When you know your students it is much easier for you to help them make meaning out of the concepts you are studying. You will begin to see what it is that concerns them and what it is they would like to change and then you will be able to find ways to connect the content to their purpose. This in turn affords them access to learning and if everyone is given that access you have a classroom that models the very nature of social justice. I explain to my students that everyone in the room, including me, has the right and the responsibility to learn something every day, and that if we were not doing that, then we were wasting our time together.

The point is that it would be worthwhile to begin class in September, by opening the floor to discussion about what culture are we going to establish. And in this case the 'medium is the message'…so do not impose, be open and to a certain extent be fearless and by this I mean do not be afraid to show them your human side. Explain openly and honestly the world that you live in and the realities that you have to deal with.

Keith Walker (2007) writes that team building should be less about an imposition of norms and practices, but rather team and communities should be viewed more

as ecology. I believe the same thing can be said about classrooms. When we think of an ecology we do not necessarily think of a rigid, liner order. Rather, an ecology is a useful metaphor because while it does have structure it is within that structure flexibility that provides the opportunity for voices, surprises, serendipitous moments…true democracy is closest to that.

This is the first small step towards building a community where coherence is eventually reached and then probably shifted. What the students will learn is that this space, physical and cultural, is going to be dynamic and filled with the kinetic energy of learning. They will also see and understand that there are some fundamental ground rules that need to be in place for this system to respect and be open to all. What are those fundamental rules? Have faith that they will percolate to the top as you dialogue with the group. The rules about what it is to be human and to co-exist with others will emerge and while it may not be neat, clear cut and dried to perfection, it will engage and it will begin to build a sense of what social justice truly entails. Students will leave your classroom not only with an appreciation for the other's point of view and with tolerance and understanding, but also with a better sense of themselves and where they fit into the grand scheme of things. When you feel that a sense of social justice has been established in the community of the classroom then you can begin to look out beyond the borders of the classroom and into the local community and the world.

In some cultures, humility is regarded as one of the greatest virtues. Yet, we have the tendency to talk down to students; to care more about the 'management' of the classroom, than about the identity of the students. Humility means we do not colonize minds, rather we invite and explore all the possibilities because we fundamentally respect where they come from. An example of this in a practical sense is using the seminar approach in classes. We begin each module with a problem – we usually begin with a school based problem and then gradually move to a local community issue and then global issues. Students are given time to research and then we meet in small discussion groups to talk and share. What is great about this is that students are treated as though they are historians, or writers, or mathematicians or biologists and what they each bring to the table is respected as equally important as all others.

This model also allows us as teachers to be involved in the learning with our students. We share our perspective on issues with them, then allow them a voice and then model for them how we deal with opposing viewpoints yet still maintain a dignity and respect for each other. I have seen amazing things happen when teachers truly and authentically use the seminar/inquiry model in their classrooms. They allow the students an opportunity to connect their learning to any social issues they are concerned about. I have noticed that in these cases the teacher and the students are very much personally connected to these issues and this motivates them and engages them. One other important ingredient is when the teacher continually reminds the students that she/he is a learner as well and that they she/he wants to learn a lot from them.

So, make sure at the outset that your classroom is a model of social justice, make sure it is a place that is open to discourse and ideas. Encourage divergent thinking rather than forcing convergent thinking.

THE CURRICULUM CONTENT

Establishing a classroom culture modeled on social justice is one thing, but what about the curriculum content? All educators agree that students love 'shop class' and home economics class because the learning is hands on. But have we ever considered why hands on learning is so popular? Is it not because in those classes the content the students are learning is having an immediate impact on their lives. They learn the fundamentals of using a table saw, or of geometry in drafting, because they see that this will help them build a bookshelf, which in turn will change their world in some way. Is it not possible to make all courses 'hands-on'? In other words, is it not possible to help students see how the content will in fact empower them to become agents of change?

Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997) did something very similar with literacy in Brazil. His theory was, simply put, that learning should liberate people from ignorance and subsequently from control (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulo_Freire). His work included a literacy program where, within 45 days, peasants were taught to ready and write. Talk about student engagement. But fundamentally this occurred because Freire understood that when learning is understood as having an immediate impact upon one's life, then it is engaging and important to the learner.

Nicholas Negroponte's One Laptop Per Child project (see http://one.laptop.org) is based upon a similar premise. That when students understand that learning will change their lives, they will – given the right tools – embrace the opportunity. Negroponte's program intends to connect children to the internet and allow them to learn and to become agents of social change.

Again, I must pause here to provide the following cautionary note. Simply placing these tools or these opportunities at the feet of students will not be enough. Educators cannot simply abdicate their responsibility, 'leave the room' and expect learning to happen. We would not simply put the skill-saw in the hands of a student and walk away believing that she will learn and be safe. The truth of the matter is that she could cut her hand off. It is the same for any learning tool or opportunity. The role of the educator is to mentor, to ask questions as a way of guiding, to not know all the answers, but to work with the student to find them.

So, use the curriculum content as a vehicle to explore issues of inequality. Empower your students with knowledge and skills that they recognize as tools to change their own lives, their school, their community and their world. Instead of learning Math or English because it is in the curriculum, invite them into an authentic conversation about how the things they are learning might affect their lives. Dig a little and you will see that many of your students are concerned about the world. In my generation we lost sleep over the threat of global nuclear war.

Today, my guess would be that students are worried about the environment, jobs, the flattening of the world. Help them see how Math, for instance, might help address some of those issues.

Be global in your thinking. Watch, listen, read always with a thought to how the events of the day, week or month might tie into the topics you are covering in class. Students love topical discussions. Do not hesitate to bring the world to your students. It is imperative that they access the world. Students are very interested in their world, just do not be condescending to them by watering down the issues. I have seen a Grade 12 Biology teacher integrate the curriculum content with a fascinating, student-lead study on bottled water and its environmental impact as well as examining the quality of the water in the actual bottles. Students were engaged to the point where they started a school and community campaign to educate people about the negative aspects of the bottled water industry. A Biology class connected to the world where students see the content as empowering them to change their world. Powerful.

Or what about a Math class that calculates the current rate of inflation in Canada and compares it to the current rate in Zimbabwe and use that information to understand cost of living rates and also issues of development.

And then she asked; 'what then of technology". Did you realize that the internet is only about 5,000 days old, and while that is amazing, what's more amazing is how quickly we have embraced it as an integral part of our lives. You only need to ask yourself what you would do without Google, or You Tube. See what I mean? How is it that is this change was so quickly absorbed globally? I believe it is because it fills one of our fundamental needs as humans – namely our need to connect. As an educator you need to familiarize yourself with the net as a tool for research, for collaboration and for connection. You need to recognize it as a powerful tool for exploring and for acting upon issues of social inequality and justice.

There appears to be three fundamental ways of using the new tech tools in our classrooms to address social justice issues. First, allow students the opportunity to consume. This means that they research, play games like Ayati - which explores the inequity of resources and its effect on one family in Haiti. Students love thisgame. Another excellent resource is the website Games for Change (www.gamesforchange. org), which provides support, visibility and shared resources to organizations and individuals using digital games for social change. However, simple consumption of online resources, I believe, is made even more powerful when it invites conversation and collaboration, thinking and action.

That takes us to the second level of using tech tools to create. At the *Games for Change* site, students are invited to begin building their own social justice games. I have seen students create amazing documentaries about homelessness, sexism, Darfur. Another good site – Taking IT Global (https://www.tigweb.org) – invites students to get involved in an online community of young people creating social change around the world. There are a host of opportunities for students to use tech tools to create a voice for themselves around issues of social justice.

Lastly, technology allows students to collaborate on community projects. Students in one school use digital photography to document their lives and their challenges, they share these visual essays with students in South Africa and together the two schools create a virtual and a face-to-face art show of their work. How about a Math class that designs, creates and organizes a budget for sustainable housing projects for low income people. These are not teacher fantasies, they are realities, because I have been fortunate enough to work with these teachers and to watch these projects unfold.

FINAL WORDS

By the time I arrived at high school I was a mess. And then a teacher arrived at our high school and she changed everything. She was our Christian Ethics teacher, but her approach was to use Catechism to study the world. We were fascinated and engaged and we loved going to her class where we would take a biblical story and use it to analyze global events. Slowly, my apathy slid away because this teacher opened doors and made learning about change. In retrospect, I am certain that some of our ideas were silly and simple, but she always honored them and truly considered them. Eventually we created a group that sought to raise money for programs to help those less fortunate in the Middle East.

My grades across the board went up. I was once again on the honor roll. I engaged my teachers in conversation and learned to challenge them and learn with them. I finished school with scholarships and opportunities. And while I admit that some of it had to do with hormones, I give most of the credit to the teacher who made our learning meaningful. She connected us to the world, to our community and ultimately to ourselves.

It is time that we as educators move beyond being mere transmitters of knowledge. We need to engage our students in the world, or the challenges of the future will become insurmountable and we will leave our destiny in the hands of others.

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