DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS: NAVIGATING DIFFERENCE AND CONFLICT IN THREE ONTARIO CLASSROOMS
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Abstract

Citizenship education is a key means to support understanding and respect of Canada’s diversity. How are various visible and invisible social, political, cultural, and ethnic identity diversities negotiated in some predominantly white, rural classroom contexts in Canada? How may these differences surface, intersect with, or be denied through teachers’ pedagogical choices? This thesis compares three case studies of how democracy-committed social studies teachers in rural public high school classrooms in southern Ontario selected and taught subject matter, and implemented pedagogies, to facilitate students’ expression in relation to various social and cultural differences and conflicts. Data include 56 classroom observations, 6 teacher interviews, 10 group interviews with a total of 29 students, and analysis of documents including teacher handouts and student written work.

The case studies brought to light pedagogical challenges and opportunities for citizenship teachers to affirm social, political, and ethnocultural diversity and justice. Some students had had few prior opportunities to interact across difference, especially (visible) ethnocultural difference. One teacher organized a rural-urban encounter to introduce her students to racialized newcomer youth, to exchange their different and similar lived experiences. Others presented information and discussion opportunities about various social differences such as immigration experience. The three teachers’ pedagogical choices also surfaced the less visible differences that did exist
among their students – such as ideological (opinions on contemporary issues), religious, socioeconomic, and mental health – as (additional) important elements of pluralistic democracy. Pedagogies that invited expression of contrasting, sometimes unpopular, views provided students with opportunities to hear alternate perspectives beyond their own, thus to experience social difference and conflict as valuable conditions of living in a democracy. This study challenges notions of difference typically embedded in some citizenship literature, by drawing upon learners (as well as experienced teachers) as sources of knowledge about less visible social diversities in (under-studied) rural contexts. This study contributes to teacher education and citizenship teacher theory and practice, concrete ways of teaching for democratic pluralist citizenship, especially in relation to apparently homogeneous student populations.

**Keywords:** democratic citizenship education, conflict, dialogue, discussion, controversial issues, multicultural education, diversity, rural, secondary classrooms, social studies
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obs:</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>P/O-Int</td>
<td>Post-Observation (informal) teacher interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>T-Int:</td>
<td>Teacher interview</td>
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<td>SGI:</td>
<td>Student group interview</td>
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<td>Doc:</td>
<td>Classroom document</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>M:</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC:</td>
<td>Accelerated Integration Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPM:</td>
<td>Joanne Pattison-Meek (researcher/author)</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
RURAL MATTERS:
ECLIPSED ON THE CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

Purpose of the Study

Citizenship education in Canada has been expected to nurture and support young citizens’ understandings and respect for diversity. So, in what ways do teachers teach for democratic citizenship, in particular, guiding students in majority white, rural school contexts to recognize and respond to (less visible as well as visible) social and ideological difference and conflict? How and why might teachers select and implement subject matter and pedagogies affirming and probing perspectives in relation to Canada’s vast ethnic, cultural, linguistic, racialized, and religious populations – ethnocultural diversity – in classroom settings where such diversities are apparently rare? Clearly, teachers’ and students’ belief systems and experiences are, to some degree, influenced by the geographical relations and spaces in which they find themselves (Kenway & Youdell, 2011). How might this contribute to shaping what each teacher brings to their education for democratic citizenship?

Over 25 years ago, DeYoung (1987) insisted that an “urban bias” dominated most educational research in the United States and around the world. He appealed for “new generations of educational researchers to become involved in rural education” (p. 142). Many years later, rural education research in North America remains underdeveloped (Arnold et al., 2005; Cicchinelli, 2011; Corbett, 2007, 2014; Johnson & Strange, 2009), particularly in citizenship education. Compared to studies on urban and suburban teachers, there has been very little research to explore the ways in which citizenship teachers in Canada’s vast rural regions
teach citizenship education (especially in relation to social diversity), their reasons for doing so, and the ways their (inevitably although perhaps not visibly diverse) students respond. Qualitative research comparing such classrooms is especially rare. The purpose of this multiple case study dissertation project is to expand theory and research in democratic citizenship education by examining how and why three teachers, in rural, predominantly white classroom settings, pedagogically addressed different types of differences: social, cultural, and ideological.

I examined three experienced, democracy-committed teachers, each in a different rural and predominantly white high school and community setting in southern Ontario, Canada. Each teaching case is comprised of one teacher and one of their social studies classes (grades 9-10). I examined how and why these teachers selected and implemented particular subject matter and pedagogical strategies to support their students to navigate a range of social identities, values, and ideological differences within their specific rural locales. Each teacher viewed learners as themselves sources of knowledge about their lived social differences.

This thesis study of democracy and diversity education in three majority white, rural classrooms is important to examine and challenge what difference may mean – beyond the racialized assumptions and emphases embedded in some citizenship education and multicultural education scholarship. Teaching for understanding difference and conflict within ostensibly homogenous classroom contexts requires teachers to detect, surface, and facilitate expression of disparities among students, including their contrasting ideological perspectives (Barton & McCully, 2007; Bickmore, 2014b; Hess & Ganzler, 2007). Ideological diversity, in this study, refers to the co-existence of different interpretations and competing views concerning social and political issues. Pedagogies that invite various perspectives, thus invite constructive conflict to emerge through classroom discussion and other activities, offers students opportunities to
develop the skills and inclinations for democratic civic engagement (Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013; Barton & McCully, 2007; Bickmore, 2014b; Hahn, 1998, 2015; Hess, 2009; Hess & Ganzler, 2007; Hess & Posselt, 2002), and to practice tolerance and inclusion of alternative meanings and understandings (Hess & Avery, 2008). Classroom pedagogies that infuse contested societal values can be meaningful democratic opportunities to support students to view issues (and thus difference and conflict) from multiple social group perspectives, a necessary ingredient in pluralist democracy.

Author’s Standpoint

I came to this study as a practitioner as well as a researcher: with five years’ experience teaching high school social studies in a racially homogeneous, small town setting in southern Ontario, and one year teaching English as a second language in high schools in rural Japan. I agree with Duckworth (1989) that “it is only because [a teacher] knows how to do her [or his] job as a practitioner that she [or he] is in a position to pursue her [or his] questions as a researcher” (cited in Barter, 2008, p. 472). In designing and carrying out this study, I sought to make sense of my own pedagogical questions and to expand my skills as a citizenship educator working in public high schools. At the time of writing, the school community where I taught was located only thirty minutes’ drive from one of Canada’s most ethnically diverse cities. Home to large East Indian, Punjabi, Filipino, Italian, and Jamaican communities, the 2011 Census reports that foreign born residents accounted for more than half of that city’s total population there (BEDO, n.d.). Yet, the faces in my classroom, year after year, signalled that visible racial and ethnic diversity had not (yet?) crossed the threshold of this small community. The social studies students I taught have been of wide-ranging socio-economic backgrounds, differing life experiences and beliefs, and predominantly white.
Citizenship is a relationship between an individual and their society (Ross, 2008). I see it as my responsibility, as a teacher and scholar in this context, to critically probe the emotional tensions (affective dimensions) of citizenship, expressed by some of my students in their narratives about those they view as different (in other contexts, see Fortier, 2010; Zembylas, 2014). I arrived at this research as a result of my own attempts to implement multicultural education and anti-bias education in my majority white classroom setting. For instance, working from social studies curriculum expectations, each semester I attempted to elicit and facilitate students’ divergent views on the topic of immigration policy. In some instances, I observed a handful of my students positioning unfamiliar social groups (e.g., racialized newcomer Canadians) outside the realm of legitimate Canadian citizenship, simultaneously unmindful of their own less recent immigration histories, in the absence of racial or visible ethnocultural Others in the classroom. Students’ intolerant perspectives anywhere – rural or (sub)urban – cannot simply be dismissed as attempts to gain reactions from their classmates (and/or the teacher). They are viewpoints which may resonate with the “ideological predispositions and the baggage of political socialization by [some] parents, peers, schooling, and the media” (Washington & Humphries, 2011, p. 112).

My bias as a teacher, not always recognizable to me (although it has become more apparent through this research journey), has been that I have tended to focus my gaze (and pedagogical responses) in the directions of confronting these students’ occasional expressions of intolerance. These views are often the loudest to my own ears, and reverberate the longest. Clearly, I carried my gaze and classroom experiences (triiumphs and frustrations) into my three high school research sites in comparable rural contexts. However, my professional experiences have also shown me that these students’ intolerant views were few, and that student expression
(e.g., open dialogue), facilitated through inclusive classroom opportunities, can often invite firmly-voiced resistance to those beliefs from peers in the same classroom. Thus, developing various ways for students to open up, share, and constructively probe and/or challenge their peers’ views – to provoke rethinking in relation to social justice topics – became an important research focus in and beyond my own classroom practice.

For years I struggled to locate subject matter and teaching strategies that would enable me to support all students to recognize and examine a range of social differences, including but not limited to racialized and other visible ethnocultural diversity. I did not find these resources to be readily available for racially homogeneous contexts similar to my own. Some are available for teachers of white children in elementary grades (e.g., Derman-Sparks & Ramsay, 2006). Perhaps not surprisingly, my own teacher training in an urban center, in relation to culturally relevant pedagogy, focused on classrooms with racially and ethnically diverse student populations. At no time was I exposed to strategies or theory that discussed teaching approaches for working in majority white classroom contexts. I assumed that teachers applied culturally relevant pedagogy in these settings – but I could not locate any scholarly studies or professional resources to show how citizenship teachers adapted or operationalized the theory for pluralistic democratic education in these high school classroom contexts.

Numerous spirited conversations with teacher colleagues on this topic gave rise to a pedagogical question: how could we teach our white, rural students to recognize and navigate the various diversities inherent within their own rural school and community? My initial inspiration came from Nieto’s (2004) writings on diversity education. She argued that, in general, students needed to recognize and understand their own cultures before they would be open to other cultures. As Delpit (1995) thoughtfully reminds us, “we all interpret behaviors,
information, and situations through our own cultural lenses; these lenses operate involuntarily, below the level of conscious awareness, making it seem that our own view is simply ‘the way it is’” (p. 151). Thus, nurturing students’ awareness of their own culture(s) and varied lived experiences, in contrast with others, may disable some students’ “tendency to make their own community the center of the universe” (Gordon et al., 1990, p. 15). If teachers could create opportunities for students to recognize and explore their own, largely uninterrogated, different types of differences (e.g., culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, beliefs, experiences, and perspectives), might (more) students be(come) more open to understanding and appreciating those forms of diversity, as well as those that may not be found in their community context? I wondered what pedagogical work of this type was happening elsewhere in classroom contexts similar to my own. As Duckworth suggests, I felt I was in a position to further explore the questions I had about teaching for democratic citizenship in majority white classrooms – and so developed this research.

When I was first hired to teach in a rural school, early in my teaching career, a friend who was a former principal suggested that I ‘put in my time,’ gain a few years of experience, and then ‘move on to a more vibrant school’ in the larger surrounding cities before my teaching reputation would become sullied in the eyes of those external to my school (teachers, principals – prospective employers). The implication was that teaching and learning in my rural, small town school was undervalued, in comparison to that which takes place in larger, more racially and ethnoculturally diverse, (sub)urban settings. I did not take Ms. Principal’s advice, and have instead acquired a deep appreciation for the pedagogical opportunities that apparently homogeneous, rural, and/or small town school contexts can present to citizenship teachers. While my personal experiences working in this type of setting have been complicated, this
research is not intended to patronize, nor to reinforce negative perceptions of, rural teaching contexts. My intent is quite the opposite. I want to challenge deficit and stereotypical discourses about rural people and to present apparently white, rurally-situated classrooms in a nuanced and positive light, by providing a detailed picture of how three democracy-committed teachers used subject matter and pedagogies to create equitable classroom spaces that were vibrant and pluralistic, and how they promoted understandings of many human differences that existed in their rural schools, communities, and beyond. I am limited by my experience teaching in only one small, rural high school. Thus, in this research, I took a step back from my own classroom, to view more broadly what democratic citizenship pedagogy could look like in three other rural, majority white high school classrooms.

**Research Questions**

Education for democratic citizenship, I contend, should expose students to the ways in which people from diverse social and cultural identity groups may differentially experience and be affected by particular social problems and policies. Thus, education for democracy includes teaching about and for multiple understandings and experiences of citizenship and citizen issues. In this thesis, I construct case studies, each set in rural southern Ontario, to examine how and why three social studies teachers chose and implemented subject matter and pedagogies to support their students to navigate various forms of diversity. Thus, the overall purpose of my research is to explore teaching for pluralist democratic citizenship, in relation to difference and conflict, in selected predominantly white and rural high school classrooms. I first explore how and why selected social studies teachers navigated less visible social and ideological differences that were present in their particular community settings. Second, I examined how and why
selected teachers taught for democratic citizenship, specifically in relation to ethnocultural diversity, in classroom and community contexts where such diversity was rare.

The following two research questions guide this study:

1. How and why do the selected teachers surface and facilitate various students’ expression in relation to social and ideological diversity?
2. How and why do the selected teachers surface and facilitate various students’ expression in relation to ethnocultural diversity?

Overview of the Thesis

In Chapter 2, I review published theory and research in citizenship education and multicultural education. I present an overview of some of the debates in conceptualizing citizenship education goals (curriculum content) in a liberal democracy, using a framework of traditional, civic republican, and transformative perspectives on democracy. I then examine multicultural citizenship education goals within settler national contexts such as Canada. I draw from scholarly literature and research to support my claim that multicultural citizenship education (Banks, 2009; Dilworth, 2008) is needed to address the social and ideological diversities embedded in any context, including rural and other contexts with low (apparent) levels of racial and ethnocultural diversity. Next, I explore various pedagogical approaches and orientations to citizenship education for navigating different kinds of differences – including dialogic pedagogies, conflictual issues to surface ideological diversity, and culturally relevant pedagogy. I distill a conceptual framework for my study, synthesized from the theory and research, describing elements and indicators of democratic citizenship education to navigate difference and conflict (Table 1, see p. 38).
In Chapter 3, I overview and justify my qualitative multiple case study methodological framework and provide details about the study design and procedures I used for selecting participants, data collection, and data analysis. In Chapter 4, I attempt to conceptualize rural through a brief overview of North American rural education research. I offer a working definition of rural, for the purposes of this study, that includes both geographic and social dimensions. I then introduce and provide a brief comparative overview of the characteristics and key features of each of my three classroom case studies. Chapter 5 examines how the three teachers implemented pedagogical strategies to elicit and facilitate the less visible heterogeneities within their rural classroom and community settings. I describe and discuss how each teacher invited their rural students to engage with the diverse lived social experiences and beliefs they brought to the classroom. Chapter 6 presents vignettes from classroom observations and interview data to demonstrate how each teacher taught for democratic citizenship in relation to forms of ethnocultural diversity viewed as rare in each of their rural settings. Through analysis of selected classroom observations, interviews, and (anonymized) student written work, I discuss some of the challenges and opportunities addressed by the three teachers, in designing and implementing pedagogies to prepare their students to participate and live cooperatively within increasingly ethnically diverse Canadian landscapes. Last, in Chapter 7, I summarize my research findings and discuss their significance and contributions to scholarship in citizenship, cross-cultural, and rural education and professional practice. I review the strengths and limitations of the research method and design, discuss considerations that arose from this study that require further research, and then conclude by discussing the significance of the thesis inquiry as a whole.
Democratic education goals require citizens and educators to critically question how diversity is interpreted and taught in various classroom settings, such as the three majority white classrooms in this study. Democratic citizenship education for diversity is important for teacher educators and teachers in such classroom settings in rural southern Ontario and elsewhere. For comparison, late in 2014, two rural schools in Britain, each with a predominantly white student population, were assessed negatively by a government-regulator\(^1\) because the students’ “cultural development [was] limited by a lack of first-hand experience of the diverse make-up of modern British society” (“Ofsted criticizes school”, 2014). Thus, those policy makers recognized the need for diversity in citizenship education, yet viewed certain communities as having a deficit because there was little visible ethnocultural diversity present. My research, based in rural southern Ontario, Canada, will inform citizenship educators grappling with how to approach diversity education in other apparently-homogenous environments, such as rural and/or suburban student populations in Canada and elsewhere, and in school settings that are in the early stages of, or anticipate, racial and ethnocultural diversification.

\(^1\) OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills), United Kingdom.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW:
DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Democratic citizenship education seeks to teach, among other things, that diversity is a social fact, that it is a social good, why this is so, and how diversity and democracy require one another. (Parker, 2003, p. 1, emphasis in original)

In this chapter, I begin with a review of the extensive body of theory and research in citizenship education and multicultural education. I explore some of the tensions in conceptualizing what good citizenship education may look like in a liberal democracy. I examine citizenship education goals in Canada using a framework ranging from traditional, civic republican, to transformative perspectives. I apply Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) typology of personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented approaches to citizenship education to bring to light some of the empirical challenges. I join other scholars (Bickmore, 2014a; Joshee, 2004; Parker, 2003; Sears & Hughes, 2006; Tupper & Cappello, 2012) in arguing that some scholarship in citizenship education tends to overlook the realities of inequality and the complex, difficult nature of citizenship in pluralistic, multicultural, and multiracial societies. As citizenship education (policy and practice) has been a means to support Canada’s social diversity, I follow with an examination of multicultural citizenship education goals and scholarship relevant to the Canadian context. Based on the literature reviewed, I argue that citizenship education for diversity requires educators to locate and surface different types of differences among students, including different lived social experiences and contrasting ideological perspectives concerning conflictual topics and issues.
I go on to discuss various pedagogical approaches and orientations to citizenship education. I apply Miller’s (2007) three holistic curriculum orientations (transmissional, transactional, transformational), to highlight how differing (citizenship) curriculum goals also would influence the pedagogical experiences to which citizenship teachers give priority (Evans, 2008). Dialogic pedagogies, conflictual issues to surface ideological diversity, and culturally relevant pedagogy, are reviewed as citizenship education approaches to open up different kinds of differences (and conflicts) in classroom settings. This literature review provides a background and substantiates my conceptual framework articulating elements (and indicators) of democratic citizenship education to guide my analysis of how three teachers navigated difference and conflict in their predominantly white and rural classrooms (Table 1, see p. 38).

Citizenship Education Goals

Citizenship is a relationship between the self (individual) and others in society (including governance institutions and the nation-state) (Ross, 2008). What values, beliefs, and behaviors are associated with good citizenship, and by implication, with a good democratic society? Philosophers, politicians, and citizens have conferred many meanings on the term. Divergent conceptions of democracy and citizenship result in disagreements about the kind of education schools should cultivate in preparing young people for citizenship (Bickmore, 2014a; Sears & Hughes, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), rooted in larger questions about what good citizens in a democracy should know and do. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) (among other scholars) provide a typology to illustrate a range of views about what constitutes good or effective democratic citizenship (embodied in curricular practice). Applying democratic theory to an analysis of a few actual program goals and practices, they labeled three conceptions of citizen: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. Each conception shapes which
curriculum content and pedagogical experiences, as well as distinct types of student agency (Faden, 2012) are given priority. I provide an overview of their typology to help to elucidate the range of traditional, civic republican, and transformational goals of citizenship education outlined below.

Citizenship education goals reflect whether they reinforce or challenge hegemonic discourse. The *commonsense*, a notion derived from sociologist Antonio Gramscsi, highlights the idea that the perspectives and priorities of the dominant group in society are embedded (assumed and not challenged) in “official” curricular content and pedagogy (Apple, 2014). Curricular commonsense refers to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are normalized: uncritically served up by many teachers and ‘tried on’ by their students (Tupper, Cappello, & Sevigny, 2010). “The uncritical acceptance of commonsense (embodied in curriculum) may shut down possible alternative visions for what society might look like by consistently reifying a dominant vision” (Tupper & Cappello, 2012, p. 40). Assumed-neutral citizenship teaching, generally supports exposing students to the socially constructed norms, values, and beliefs of white, androcentric, heterosexual, and mid/high socio-economic populations (Kumashiro, 2004). This approach is problematic because it ignores or misrepresents many cultural and social identities and inequities. Some marginalized students may not be able to see themselves as legitimate, full, agentic citizens (that is, people who can influence the political decisions of their society) if the curriculum portrays a narrow or generic definition of who are citizens and what actions constitute good citizenship (as if unproblematic, rather than unfinished consequences of histories and power relations, to be negotiated). In what follows, I present three approaches to citizenship education that reflect different goals: traditional (minimalist, personally responsible
while politically compliant), civic republican (mainstream participatory), and transformative (critical, justice-oriented) citizenship.

Traditional citizenship education goals, also known as ‘education about citizenship’ (e.g., Kerr, 2000), focus on safe civic content (compliance-oriented, not acknowledging conflict), idealized abstract principles of democracy, and social cohesion through teaching ostensibly neutral national narratives and civic virtues (Bickmore, 2014a; Hughes & Sears, 2008; Parker, 2003; Ross, 2008). Within this frame, the traditional (personally responsible) citizen exhibits good character by being considerate of others, having good manners, and abiding by the rules of the community. As a key goal in history, social studies, and civics curriculum, explicit citizenship education in many countries is often focused on structures-and-functions knowledge of government, duties and entitlements, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, and cohesive national identity (Cogan & Derrick, 2000; Kerr et al., 2010; Schulz et al., 2009). Such a citizenship education, comprised of such conventional content, would tend to neglect the realities of cultural pluralism in ethnoculturally diverse societies (Parker, 2003) and promote “transmission of an overly narrow, uncritical, and chauvinistic conception of citizenship that tends to equate being a good citizen with the acceptance and defense of the status quo” (Grelle & Metzler, 1996, p. 150). A prescribed, presented-as-neutral curriculum of this traditional type, in which differences and social conflict are presented as marginal or deviant, would not promote an understanding of the complicated and conflictual nature of citizenship that is essential to democracy (Davies, 2004, 2014), nor invite mutual respect and tolerance for diverse identities, social positions, and lived experiences.

A civic republican approach to citizenship, emphasizing responsible and active participation in community support and formal political institutions such as voting, is advanced
in curriculum policy across Canada (Bickmore, 2014a; Hughes & Sears, 2008). The participatory citizen is familiar with the mechanics of government and community organizations, and (unlike the traditional, personally responsible citizen) is active in civic affairs and activities at various levels (local, national, and sometimes global). Based on notions of the common good, civic obligations, representative decision-making and civic deliberation, civic republicanism “embodies an active conception of what it means to be a citizen, with citizenship defined as a practice” (Peterson, 2011, p. 3, emphasis in original). This learning-by-doing approach may be called ‘education for citizenship,’ combined with knowledge-oriented ‘education about citizenship’ (Kerr, 2000). Such a (minimalist) civic agency approach, rooted in liberal representative democracy, may imagine (assume) that the rights and freedoms afforded members of a nation state are (in practice) universally distributed, that the status and opportunities of individuals are equal, and thus that any social, cultural, and/or political differences among citizens are resolved or irrelevant (Brooks, 2000; Marshall, 1950; Tupper, Cappello, & Sevigny, 2010). Such a liberal focus on generic individuals (emphasizing benign representation, freedom, and equality) typically helps to officialize hegemonic discourses (as curricular commonsense) and overlooks continuing conflicts and injustices and the value of collective social action. In contrast to these assumptions, a student’s social location (experiences and social relationships based on factors such as race, Aboriginal identity, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic status, geographic location) may impede them from enacting their citizenship in the same ways as other students/citizens. Despite its emphasis on civic engagement of youth, liberal civic republican education for citizenship can serve to normalize practices that maintain the status quo, ignore social difference and conflicts (such as unjust colonial relations), and thereby to reinforce social inequities (Tupper & Cappello, 2012).
In contrast, transformative (critical) democratic citizenship education goals aim to engage and equip students to improve society. The justice-oriented citizen understands a structural critique of political, economic, and social forces shaping continuing social problems, and actively seeks social change to address injustices that impede democracy (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Critical democratic goals mean problematizing, renegotiating, and transforming the curricular commonsense about citizenship (Banks, 2001; Banks, Cookson, & Gay, 2001). Transformative citizenship education, sometimes framed as ‘education through citizenship,’ (e.g., Kerr, 2000), includes many of the knowledge components of traditional and civic republican citizenship, however, here they are applied to developing (diverse) students’ capacity to exercise agency – their disposition and capacity to act (Gordon, 2006) – for social change (e.g., through mobilizing in referenda campaigns, exercising rights of civic protest). Such a critical, justice-oriented approach to citizenship education is also more inclusive of various social and cultural identities and raises “questions about […] the way belief systems become internalized to the point where individuals and groups abandon the very aspiration to question or change their lot in life” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 50). Transformative citizenship goals emphasize communitarianism (e.g., group solidarity, community relationships) over individual entitlements.

Westheimer and Kahne (2004), illustrating their conceptions with evidence from observations and interviews at two secondary schools (urban and suburban) in the United States, argue that programs emphasizing personally responsible individual behavior, obedience, and character, are minimal approaches to citizenship that would impede (rather than encourage) democratic participation and social change. Even narrow civic republican visions of good neighborliness and loyalty, welfare (Davies, 2006), and “voting and volunteering” (Ross, 2008)
are inadequate for advancing democracy when detached from critical analysis of social, economic, historical, and political contexts including continuing social justice problems. There is certainly nothing wrong with teaching responsibility. However, granting primacy to loyalty and obedience may ignore fundamental goals of social justice-oriented democratic citizenship: critical reflection and collective action toward making systemic change. A caution: interpreting understandings of citizenship (and/or content) through application of a simple typology does not account for the complexity of situations within specific local social, economic, and political contexts (see Williams, 2013). This thesis research is designed in part to test the application of these ideas to selected rural, majority-white classroom contexts in one region of Canada.

Critical democratic citizenship education in Canada remains elusive and difficult in actual classroom practice. A few, mainly small-scale, qualitative studies suggest that teachers’ conceptions and practices of citizenship teaching tend to emphasize personal responsibility perspectives that underline traditional citizenship and/or liberal and civic republican participatory goals (Bickmore, 2014a; Faden, 2012; Hughes & Sears, 2008; Tupper, 2007). For instance, case studies of social studies classrooms in Ottawa (Canada) high schools showed that teachers did not often implement active pedagogies that encouraged critical thinking and active civic engagement (Llewellyn et al., 2010). Civic learning was largely characterized instead by procedural (individualized) knowledge and compliant codes of behaviour. Some evidence suggests that teacher-centered approaches to citizenship continue to be typical classroom practice in Canada (Evans, 2006; Sears & Hughes, 2006).

Existing citizenship education research in rural contexts focuses primarily on some rural students’ conceptualizations of citizenship, more than on their teachers’ conceptions. For
instance, in one U.S. citizenship education study, students in rural, suburban, and urban communities were asked: “When [you] hear the word ‘citizen’, what do [you] think of first?” (Conover & Searing, 2000, p. 99). A majority of students in suburban and urban communities responded, “a person who has legal rights.” In contrast, a majority of students from one rural community framed citizenship more apolitically, saying that a citizen is “a member of the community” (p. 99). Similarly, eighth and eleventh grade students in rural Oklahoma (U.S.) showed a strong affinity for community service. A good citizen, according to these students, was a person who “helps the elderly,” “coaches basketball and sports for the kids in the community,” and/or “donates money and food to Feed the Children and works at the Christmas store” (Chiodo & Martin, 2005, p. 120). A number of responses at that location also equated being a “good Christian” with good citizenship. These students’ impressions of good citizen qualities included: loyalty, good-hearted, honest, being polite, kind and generous, and doing nice things for other people (p. 120). Thus these rural students, emphasizing individual character and interpersonal behavior, tended to understand good citizenship within the personally responsible frame. As discussed above, such conceptions of citizenship avoid problem-solving, challenging the status quo, and/or social action to address social injustices. However, applying implicitly urban citizenship education theory to all contexts (such as rural classrooms) does not consider local social, political, and population context factors – and so may not present a fair reflection of the broader factors that affect pedagogy. Typologies are also limited in their (over)emphasis on abstract ideals to the neglect of understanding the implemented and hidden curriculum in practice (Adamson & Morris, 2007).

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2 Rural in Conover and Searing’s (2000) study refers to one small farm community: culturally homogeneous, lacking distinct social class difference (predominantly middle class), and politically conservative.

3 Context of ‘rural’ not specified in the article (data compared with urban and suburban groups).
Some citizenship education scholarship has been critiqued for not paying adequate attention to the realities of different kinds of differences (and conflicts) or inequities in pluralistic, multicultural societies (Bickmore, 2014a; Joshee, 2004; Parker, 2003; Sears & Hughes, 2006). The challenge for citizenship teachers (and implemented curriculum) in Canada’s pluralist democracy becomes whether, and how, they assume the (partiality or) neutrality of citizenship, or reveal the normalized, racialized, gendered, and classed construction of the good citizen through a critical frame.

Cultural and Social Diversity in Canada: Multicultural Citizenship Education

Canada is a multinational and multicultural state that is home to diverse Aboriginal peoples (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) and settler populations, and continues to receive thousands of new immigrants from around the world each year. The extent of diversity present within the country is distinctive, including wide ranging ethnic, racial, religious, language, and gender and sexual diversities, and so too is the degree “to which [Canada] has not only legislated but also constitutionalized, practices of accommodation” (Kymlicka, 2003, p. 374, emphasis in original). This political inclusion of Canada’s diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious populations, known as multiculturalism in English Canada (somewhat distinct from interculturalism in Quebec), emphasizes cultural retention: protecting the values and practices of different ethnocultural populations from being absorbed into mainstream cultures (Gérin-Lajoie, 2012). In other words, diverse groups are supported and encouraged in law to maintain their identity differences (as opposed to assimilating).

Citizenship education policy requirements across Canada, determined at provincial and territorial levels, have been a means to manage Canada’s social diversity (intersecting forms of

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4 Multiculturalism has been explicitly protected in Canadian federal law beginning in 1988 under the Canadian Multicultural Act (Bill C-93) (see Joshee, 2004 and Kymlicka, 2015).
difference such as race, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, sexuality) and to support intercultural understanding and respect of such diversity, equity issues, and associated identity rights (Bickmore, 2014a). Changes in diversity policy in public schools from assimilative practices, to nurturing understanding and respect for ethnic differences, to more recent goals of social cohesion (Joshee & Sinfield, 2010), have also included changes in citizenship education orientations and approaches (Joshee, 2004; Peck et al., 2010). While there has been “a clear assumed progression from knowledge of diversity, through acceptance and respect, to justice” in social studies curricula in Canada (Peck et al., 2010, p. 65), some argue that, “it has been largely iconic rather than a deep pluralism” (Peck et al., 2010 p. 67), if not more myth than fact in actual practice (Kymlicka, 2003). Citizenship education research in Canada suggests that a progressively inclusive approach to ethnocultural diversity and plurality in policy (e.g., social studies and citizenship curricula) is less pronounced in classrooms (Bickmore, 2014a; Kelly & Brooks, 2009).

Despite positive intent, official multiculturalism and multicultural education discourse have not meaningfully improved enduring problems of structural racism and social oppression of marginalized groups within Canada’s pluralistic society (Bannerji, 2000; Dei, 2011; Gérin-Lajoie, 2012; Kirova, 2015). For example, multiculturalism tends to disregard Canada’s history (and enduring forces) of colonialism by uncritically inserting Aboriginal content into multicultural frameworks as “merely one perspective among many” (St. Denis, 2011, p. 313). Curricula in Canadian schools continue to reflect and thus reinforce as the status quo an undivided narrative of multiculturalism with respect to a Canadian national identity. Thus, a liberal approach to multicultural education prevails in the English-Canada context and tends to reflect minimal citizenship goals. This approach acknowledges and even celebrates (generic)
cultural differences in the absence of social justice principles (e.g., critically examining the dominant white, Eurocentric, middle-class culture) (Gérin-Lajoie, 2011, see also May & Sleeter, 2010). For instance, research on school textbooks in British Columbia highlights how multiculturalism is often uncritically presented to students as an assumed (already achieved) characteristic of Canadian identity (Bromley, 2011), thus reinforcing the status quo by disregarding ongoing contemporary struggles by marginalized groups to achieve equitable citizenship. Anti-racist education (Dei, 1996), a critical alternative, calls into question “how the dominant understanding of multiculturalism misreads or ignores race and other forms of social difference as markers of oppression” (Dei, 2011, p. 17). Further, as yet in Canada, there is little or no existing research on how social and cultural differences are presented or taken up within (or closely relevant to) predominantly white and/or in various rural school contexts.

Citizenship education and multicultural education are related areas of study. As a bridge between the two, multicultural citizenship education aims to provide youth with knowledge and skills to learn, live, and participate in an increasingly diverse democratic society (Banks, 2009; Dilworth, 2008; Miller-Lane, Howard, & Halagao, 2007; Sleeter, 2014). Teaching for multicultural (democratic) competence includes nurturing students’ “personal and intercultural communication skills; knowledge of cultural, social, and political systems; and [their] ability to critically think about civic and political life among and between diverse groups” (Dilworth, 2008, p. 425). Some theorists advocate for multicultural citizenship education as a way to promote tolerance and reduce prejudice and discrimination (Banks, 1994; Camicia, 2007). While scholarship in relation to student difference in the field is diverse and abundant, it is focused almost entirely on racially and ethnoculturally diverse populations in urban contexts (Atkin, 2003; Ayalon, 2003; Banks & Banks, 2012; Reed, 2010), or on rural or suburban
schools in the United States that had already experienced an influx of racial minority students (Heidlebaugh-Buskey, 2013; O’Neal et al., 2008; Rhodes, 2014). Teachers practicing in rural classrooms, especially those also comprised of primarily white students, are left with the complex task of translating (and transplanting) multicultural education curricula designed for racially and culturally diverse and/or diversifying (sub)urban contexts for the cultural milieux of rural schools and their communities (e.g., Yeo, 1999).

One study in the United States showed that highly regarded multicultural textbooks used in teacher education programs excluded rural perspectives, while the urban context was ubiquitous throughout (Ayalon, 2003). In the study, white teacher candidates from some rural areas expressed that it was difficult to apply these texts to their work in rural communities. Social studies textbooks available to schools, similarly, may generate confusion and resistance among elementary and secondary students and teachers if various rural identities and experiences are not reflected in the pages (see Stephens, 2014).

In a survey in one southeastern state in the United States, secondary school administrators in rurally-located schools tended to hold negative perceptions of multicultural education, compared to administrators in urban and suburban schools who expressed more value (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004). In the study, administrators who expressed support for multicultural education were more likely to work in school communities with racially and visible ethnoculturally diverse student populations, compared to administrators in schools populated primarily by white students. None mentioned their community’s lack of visible diversity as a reason to support multicultural education. Thus, multicultural education is sometimes assumed to benefit non-white students, and/or to address face-to-face interactions between non-white and white students. Distinct from multicultural education, though also
attentive to equity and justice, studies have found that some Canadian educators tend to view Aboriginal curriculum (e.g., the history of treaties) as more relevant in schools that have high numbers of Aboriginal students compared to those schools that do not (Deer, 2010; Tupper & Cappello, 2008). This orientation is undemocratic because it neglects the multiple, often overlapping forms of difference, and colonial histories, that define inequitable positions of power in society.

The ‘overwhelming presence of whiteness’ in the teaching force and teacher education (Sleeter, 2001) may account for some educators’ attitudes discounting the importance of anti-racism and diversity education in general, let alone in majority white contexts. Teacher candidates and teacher populations in North America continue to reflect predominantly white, female, heterosexual, and middle-class identities. Scholarship in multicultural education in teacher education tends to focus on addressing white teacher candidates’ lack of cross-cultural knowledge and experience to teach effectively in racially diverse schools (Sleeter, 2001). One study of two teacher education programs in Ontario (Canada) showed how some white teacher candidates discounted information that challenged assumptions of whiteness and their own white privilege (Solomon et al., 2005). In white teacher candidates’ reflections, written after reading Peggy McIntosh’s (1990) seminal work entitled ‘White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack’, the researchers found that candidates expressed difficulty in owning their (unconscious) complicity in upholding systems of privilege and oppression and how this applied to schooling and curriculum (see also Cochran-Smith, 2000). Candidates cited their own personal sense of oppression (reverse discrimination) and/or suffering (guilt) for being white, thus demonstrating difficulty to see beyond a liberal individualist, meritocratic view of
education to take into account the systemic forces that underlie privilege and institutional racism.

Narrow understandings of citizenship education and multicultural education (and diversity in general) tend to overlook different kinds of differences: heterogeneities of religion (within as well as beyond Christianity), sexual preference, gender identity, socioeconomic status, (political) ideology, and other less visible social distinctions that exist in all communities (Nieto & Bode, 2012; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Identity is a broader and more dynamic concept than race or ethnicity alone: it extends to a wide-range of (fluid and overlapping) similarities and differences that manifest in students’ communities, lived social experiences, and ways of knowing. My study is designed to inquire how teachers frame such curriculum challenges and possibilities in predominantly white and rural classroom settings. I argue that a multicultural citizenship education should not be limited to settling social anxiety in settings faced with changing ethnic demographics: citizenship education for diversity also can affirm the democratic principles of social justice, through rejection of all forms of discrimination and oppression based on human differences in schools and society.

An enduring difficulty for theorists and practitioners in multicultural citizenship education is that diversity tends to be understood (and presented) in different ways (Gérin-Lajoie, 2008). Educators and educational researchers from various perspectives (e.g., multicultural, queer, feminist) advocate and practice a multiplicity of (sometimes contradictory) theoretical and practical perspectives on combatting social injustice. Kumashiro (2000) distinguishes four ways in which educators and curriculum conceptualize social difference and social change to resist oppression associated with various cultural and social diversities. Education for the Other and education about the Other both reflect liberal approaches to address
issues of oppression and diversity (Other refers to typically marginalized groups in society – e.g., based on race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexual preference, ability). Education about the Other involves education to fill a gap in knowledge – to enrich mainstream or majority students’ knowledge about, understandings of, and empathy toward particular Others by making visible different ways of being. The knowledge some students hold about the Other is assumed to be “either incomplete because of exclusion, invisibility, and silence, or distorted because of disparagement, denigration, and marginalization” (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 32). Among Banks’s (2006) four approaches to multicultural education reform, his “contributions” and “additive” approaches to multicultural curriculum content are congruent with education about the Other – Otherness is inserted into an essentially unchanged curriculum (e.g., reworking a curricular unit of study to be more inclusive). Banks’s contributions approach adds ethnic heroes and holidays into the curriculum in superficial ways; the additive approach incorporates culturally diverse content and literature into parts of the mainstream curriculum. Banks’s framework, however, tends to be more narrowly focused on ethnic content, compared to Kumashiro’s broader interpretation of difference.

These conventional approaches to liberal multiculturalism risk essentializing (stereotyping) Others and are undemocratic when they present a singular, dominant narrative of ‘Us’ or of an Other’s (social identity group) experience. Approaches that celebrate differences at a generic level through cultural celebrations showcasing traditional food, clothing, and entertainment (see also Troyna’s 3 S’s: saris, samosas, and steel drums, 1993) quickly descend into “tourist curriculum” (Derman-Sparks, 1989), which can be both patronizing and trivializing (Gorski, 2008). Kumashiro’s latter two approaches, education that is critical of privileging and Othering and education that changes students and society, support critical justice-oriented
citizenship education to expose social conflicts and critique hierarchies of power. Similarly, Banks’s transformation approach supports students to view concepts and issues from multiple and critical perspectives, including those of Others. Banks’s social action approach adds to the transformation approach: the encouragement and capacitation of learners to take action for social change in relation to the issues they study.

Next, I bridge my discussion of citizenship education and multicultural education goals (which up to this point have emphasized curriculum content) to build in pedagogical approaches and orientations. I review scholarship on various citizenship education pedagogies, to substantiate the pedagogy component of my conceptual framework regarding how citizenship education may navigate difference and conflict in high school classroom settings.

Citizenship Education: Pedagogical Approaches and Orientations

What teachers actually do in classrooms is one of the most significant factors influencing student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Evans, 2006). Pedagogy plays a critical role in democratic citizenship learning. Citizenship is taken up in schools through what is taught (through both the explicit and implicit curriculum) and how it is taught. Pedagogy – how a teacher selects and presents subject matter to students, and the classroom norms and relationships established – communicates compelling messages concerning the sort of citizenship that is valued (or not) within a particular context. As Pace (2011) argues, “teachers provide students access to particular educational experiences through the choices they make about content and methods” (p. 34). Schools and classrooms can offer abundant possibilities for students to explore, experience, and (re)think the multifaceted aspects and participants of civic life. If young people are to learn, assert, and maintain the values and principles of democracy, opportunities must be available for them to learn what a pluralist, democratic way of life entails
and to experience how it might be led (Dewey, 1916), in terms of equity as well as liberty. Divergent understandings of democratic citizenship education, ranging from traditional, to civic republican, to transformational approaches discussed above, also support various citizenship pedagogies.

Miller (2007) articulates three broad, holistic curriculum orientations that imply different types of pedagogy: transmissional, transactional, and transformational. A holistic approach to education views all aspects of life as interconnected, positioning relationships and human experience – which include human differences – within the learning environment. Evans (2006, 2008) applied Miller’s framework to citizenship education, to illustrate how classroom learning experiences may be prioritized within each of the three orientations. In a transmissional approach, the expert teacher (and/or text) transmits fixed factual knowledge (e.g., about democratic institutions and processes of government) to an assumed passive learner. This conventional type of teaching emphasizes lecture and recitation (mastery of content). The transactional approach, in contrast, views knowledge as fluid and constructed, and the individual learner as an inquirer and problem-solver of social and political dilemmas. Young people arrive in the classroom prepared with diverse experiences with civic life, such as experiences of social inclusion/exclusion or discussing political issues with family, peer groups, and social media (Lievrouw, 2011). Teachers facilitate student interactions to promote transaction (interaction, sharing) of various ideas and experiences, such as through (presumed rationale) dialogue. This approach aligns closely with civic republican goals with its emphasis on students’ active participation and deliberation among peers. In the transformational approach, learners are “not reduced to a set of learning competencies or thinking skills” but are considered connected to potential social transformation through communication and collaboration with others (Miller,
Pedagogy can be “personally and socially meaningful” when it is inclusive of students’ different life experiences (Miller, 2007, p. 12) and views them as already democratic citizens, not merely citizens-in-training (Biesta, 2007).

I argue that knowledge transmission pedagogies are not necessarily undemocratic because some students’ lack of prior knowledge can impede participation capacity or further learning about diversity and conflict issues. However, when teachers rely heavily on a transmissiional approach to the neglect of transactional and transformational approaches, this practice risks normalizing status quo hierarchies, and is thus undemocratic. Note: citizenship teaching invites and involves more messiness and complexity (e.g., qualitative differences among pedagogical choices) than the way conceptual frameworks may make it appear. Simultaneous implementation of Miller’s orientations is likely, and also expected: classrooms may exhibit overlapping aspects of each and to different degrees in any lesson, unit, and/or course of study.

Citizenship Education Pedagogies for Navigating Different Kinds of Differences

All classrooms, as contested social spaces, embody difference and conflict. Classrooms are public places – a mirror of society – that bring together individuals already equipped with dissimilar social experiences in community and civic life. As Parker (2010) argues, schools, and therefore classrooms, are perhaps the most diverse spaces that youth will find themselves for sustained lengths of time. Thus classrooms are possibility-spaces for democracy-oriented teachers to elicit and facilitate various differences among those who populate them. In this thesis study, I expand on Evans’ (2008) application of Miller’s framework, to inform the types and characteristics of citizenship education pedagogy for navigating difference and conflict. In the
following sections I discuss various pedagogies to navigate different kinds of differences in classroom settings.

**Dialogic Pedagogies**

In this study, I examine democratic dialogue (discussion) as a means to surface a diversity of multiple viewpoints on social, cultural, political, and/or interpersonal topics (e.g., an event, a policy, etc.), or issues (e.g., should public sector employees be permitted to wear religious garb while on duty in the workplace?). As a pedagogical approach, implementation of classroom dialogue about conflictual issues is associated with a multitude of democratic outcomes including a sense of political agency (Davies, 2004; Gimpel et al., 2003); perspective-taking abilities (Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013, 2014; Johnson & Johnson, 2009); comfort with the ubiquitous nature of political conflict (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002); bridging across conflicting or historically divided groups (King, 2009; McCully, 2006); substantive political knowledge and inclinations toward political participation beyond the classroom (McDevitt & Kiousis, 2006); and democratic values such as inclusiveness and pluralism (Carretero et al., 2016).

Discussion is valuable pedagogically, both as a skill to be learned (curriculum outcome) and as a way to learn (instructional process) (Parker & Hess, 2001; Parker, 2006). Despite the democratic potential and merits of dialogue, rarely does that theory translate into practice, particularly in public school contexts (Hemmings, 2000; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Kahne, Crowe, & Lee, 2012; Schultz et al., 2009). Classroom discussion, as a pedagogical approach with wide-ranging forms and purposes, tends to be infrequent compared with (and often confused with) mere “classroom talk” dominated by teacher lecture and student recitation (Dull and Murrow, 2008; Hess & Ganzler, 2007). Sometimes, also, what passes for classroom
Discussion involves the passionate venting of opinions with little sustained, informed exchange (Hess, 2009).

Discussion is a necessary element of a robust democracy, thus a way for young people to exercise elements of authentic political engagement (Apple, 2004; Bickmore, 2014b; Hess, 2009; Parker, 2010). Schools (classrooms) are ideal sites for discussions to occur, because “schools have a much greater capacity than most parents and voluntary associations for teaching children to reason out loud about disagreements that arise in democratic politics” (Gutmann, 1999, p. 58). The International Civics and Citizenship Study found that students aged 14-15, in most of the 38 countries studied, tended to experience more discussions about civic and political issues in school than in their homes (Schulz et al., 2009). School experiences make a difference: according to one large study, even evidently helping to overcome some of the disadvantages of social marginalization (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Young people who engage with discussion of contrasting viewpoints in classrooms, particularly on political and social issues, tend to have more knowledge about and commitments to civic participation and social relatedness than those students who are not provided with the same dialogic learning opportunities (Claire & Holden, 2007; Hess & Avery, 2008; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Schulz et al., 2009).

I use the term ‘dialogue’ throughout this thesis as an umbrella term to include multiple forms of classroom communication pedagogies (interaction processes) such as teacher-implemented issues discussion, (small group) structured academic controversy discussions, circle sharing, small and large group debate and deliberations (Bickmore, 2014b; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Parker, 2008). These pedagogies share similar goals: “to help people take in more information and perspectives than they previously had, as they attempt to forge a new and broader understanding of a situation” (Schirch & Campt, 2007, p. 6). Such pedagogies are
pivotal for nurturing students’ recognition that they are ideologically diverse, and not all of the same mindset (a presumed consensus) (Barton & McCully, 2007; Hess & Ganzler, 2007).

As a transactional dialogic approach to citizenship education, human relations (intergroup education) emphasizes affective dimensions of citizenship such as empathy and tolerance (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). A version of human relations pedagogy designed for high-conflict societies, called intergroup contact (dialogue), aims to support students to communicate with, accept, and learn from people who are different from themselves (or even ‘enemy groups’), while dismantling negative feelings and stereotypes toward Others (e.g., Tal-Or et al., 2002). Face-to-face (or online) intergroup dialogue encourages people from different social identity groups to share different perspectives and insights into social conditions (via dialogue processes), to open opportunities to shift negative intergroup perceptions into positive, affective connections with Others (Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004; van Dick, et al., 2004; Zuñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002). Students’ intergroup learning could potentially nurture inclusive understandings of citizenship in which students are less likely to marginalize and oppress those with whom they are unfamiliar or hold partial views. Short-term, shallow, or marginal ‘feel good’ human relations pedagogies or intergroup encounters, however, may highlight “acceptance of differences” at the expense of democracy and justice: “to get along within the status quo rather than educating [students] to change the status quo” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 116; also Tal-Or et al., 2002), thus cannot be assumed to be transformational.

**Surfacing Ideological Diversity Through Teaching (with) Conflictual Issues**

Conflictual issues as subject matter and dialogue as a pedagogical approach in democratic citizenship education go hand in hand. Controversial or conflictual issues are problems or societal questions (e.g., public policy) that are likely to produce diverse, opposing
views (Hess, 2008, 2009). Many scholars support dialogue and other classroom activities in relation to conflictual issues as necessary for students to come to understand a range of multiple, contrasting views (and their justifications and critiques) and to improve their proclivity and capacity for civic engagement (Bickmore, 2014b; Hahn, 2010; Hess & Avery, 2008; Schultz et al., 2009; Waterson, 2009). Explicitly supporting students to view conflictual social and political issues from alternative perspectives may invite critical thinking about social difference and inequities. However, the deep-rooted, complicated aspects of social and cultural difference are, for the most part, avoided by teachers in heterogeneous classrooms because they are difficult and potentially explosive (Bickmore, 2005; Bickmore & C. Parker, 2014; Llewellyn et al., 2010). Discussion pedagogies involving conflict in Canadian and U.S. publically-funded classrooms do not seem to happen regularly (Bickmore, 2014a; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Byford, Lennon, and Russell’s (2009) survey of 67 social studies high school teachers in Indiana and Oklahoma reported that while 72% of respondents supported the teaching of controversial issues, almost 60% of teachers agreed with the statement: “Teachers should protect themselves and not teach about an issue that is controversial within the community in which they teach.” In another, smaller U.S. study, it was reported that fears of community backlash in middle and high schools in a rural setting deterred many social studies teachers from disclosing their personal views on controversial topics to their students (Miller-Lane, Denton, & May, 2006). In both of these studies, community context was a factor in determining how teachers taught and in deciding which issues to include or omit.

How an issue is presented in the school curriculum (as conflictual or not, as negotiable or a justice value, etc.) continues to be a significant factor. Not only teachers, but texts and curriculum mandates tend to shape what topics to include (and avoid) in classroom activities.
Issues “are not controversial by nature, but are socially constructed in ways that cause them to be more or less controversial” (Hess & Avery, 2008, p. 510). Thus some issues, considered controversial in one context, might be thought of as “settled” (Hess, 2009) in another, depending on local sociocultural and ideological climates. For instance, Hess and Avery (2008) take the position that, in democratic societies, for curriculum and teaching to assert that racism is wrong is not controversial, but settled. However, in at least some classroom contexts, students continue to utter intolerant views that may be rooted in, and nurtured by, deeply held family, religious, and/or community beliefs and traditions. Washington and Humphries’ (2011) qualitative case study highlighted pedagogical challenges one rural high school teacher faced when facilitating discussions on race-related topics. One issue, biracial marriage, understood by the teacher as settled, became controversial in her mostly white social studies classroom because “many” students openly expressed intolerant perspectives in opposition to it (p. 95). In this limited small-scale study, the (white) classroom and community context clearly mattered in shaping whether or not viewpoints on an issue surfaced as publicly highly divisive, thus controversial and sensitive.

Biased perspectives exist in all communities. Contextual factors, such as a racially homogeneous setting, may help to shape whether and how particular perspectives are brought to light. There is scarce classroom-based empirical research available to offer insight into the “contingencies and contexts” of conflictual and sensitive issues and dialogic pedagogies (Camicia, 2008, p. 134). There is also little research to show whether and how some students’ intolerant remarks are considered (by the teachers) as reflecting legitimate controversies, and

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5 Rural, in this study, was characterized by a predominantly white high school population situated in an ideologically-conservative, working-class community in rural north Florida, U.S.
how and why teachers in various contexts understand, anticipate, and/or respond to such remarks.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Culturally relevant and responsive teaching is an equity-oriented, inclusive approach to support students of all social identity groups to develop voice and perspective (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). An underpinning of this approach is an appreciation of diverse learners as subjects (agents) in the teaching process – (re)sources of cultural knowledge. The three dimensions of a culturally relevant framework include: motivating students’ academic success, developing cultural competence, and supporting critical consciousness. To enhance students’ cultural competence, teachers reshape the prescribed curriculum by integrating various social identities, experiences, and community relationships into the implemented curriculum (e.g., by inviting dialogue). In this way, conceptions of culture stretch beyond static notions limited to belonging to “a nation-state, an ethnic group, or a religious group” to include more dynamic understandings of human difference (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75).

To support students’ critical consciousness, teachers guide them “to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). Analyzing society (here and now problems – e.g., poverty in the local community) from multiple perspectives with a view to transforming it is similar to Banks’s (2006) transformational multicultural education approach. Sharing power with students as a pedagogical strategy may align with the development of critical consciousness, by inviting and affirming students’ multiple viewpoints (Morrison et al., 2008). Further, classroom dialogue regarding local community issues also may support democratic citizenship and students’ agentic dispositions: “to reflect critically on one’s status within communities and society,” “to investigate deeper
causalities,” “in critical interpretation of others’ viewpoints,” “speaking with one’s own voice,”
and engaging in dialogue “with others’ identities and values” (Johnson & Morris, 2010, p. 90).
Attention to human relationships across diversity in curriculum content and learning
experiences, particularly among students and between students and their communities (e.g.,
classroom, school, town), may (although they cannot be guaranteed to) support culturally
relevant (cultural competence) pedagogies to democratize citizenship education. Research is
needed about what culturally responsive pedagogical approaches might look like in practice in
rural and/or majority white schools and classrooms.

**Transformative Education About Human Differences**

Unlike transmissional and transactional approaches, transformative teaching supports
students to be open to diverse beliefs, perspectives, and ways of living, rather than merely
recognizing and tolerating differences (Solomon & Portelli, 2001). A transformational approach,
such as critical pedagogy, resists and supplements oppressive knowledge in curricula, by
explicitly presenting “differences in ways that change the underlying story and the implications
of the story for thinking, identifying, and acting in oppressive and/or anti-oppressive ways”
(Kumashiro, 2002, p. 59). Such an approach challenges hegemonic assumptions and supports
critical thinking through exposure to issues and ideas aired from various (sometimes conflicting)
points of view, similar to Banks’s transformation approach and Ladson-Billings’ critical
consciousness. Through creating inclusive classroom spaces, teachers support students to
encounter perspectives (marginalized, silenced, unpopular) that may conflict with their own,
particularly in the context of social difference and inequity. As democratic learning experiences,
learners’ gazes may be drawn to areas in need of attention, further discussion, and/or lead to
transformative social action.
Interruption (Haroutunian-Gordon, 2010) means that exposure to unfamiliar, thought-provoking perspectives may invite students to transform their initial beliefs and to question/challenge oppression. Similarly, Davies’ (2004) theory of interruptive democracy (in) education argues for dialogic opportunities that introduce diverse, silenced and/or unpopular perspectives, to support students to exercise agency and to question dominant assumptions: “the democracy of the hand shooting up, the ‘excuse-me’ reflex … finding spaces for dissent, resilience and action” (p. 212). Thus, democratic dialogue also requires a particular type of agency: active listening to the unfamiliar and/or to views that conflict with our own (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012; Parker, 2010) to hear “the limitations and lacunae in our own understandings” (Burbules & Berk, 1999). Teachers’ facilitation of critical dialogic classroom experiences can expose white, male, heterosexual, and Christian values as ideological perspectives, rather than assumed neutrality (Apple, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000). This is especially important to provide opportunities for students to unlearn Othering (Davies, 2014) and to challenge what defines ‘normal’ through consideration of contested social constructs (Apple, 1995).

**Conclusion**

The analytical landscape derived from the theory and research cited above frames my data analysis in the following chapters. Table 1 (see p. 38) synthesizes elements and indicators of democratic citizenship education curriculum content and pedagogy to navigate difference and conflict and thus forms my conceptual framework. The four democratic elements (Inclusion of diverse social identity content, Surfacing conflict, Student agency, Inclusion of multiple perspectives) cross-cut the analysis of each case study to make sense of how three high school social studies teachers navigated different kinds of differences in each of their predominantly
white and rural classroom settings. Varying conceptions of citizenship education and social diversity will influence how teachers shape the pedagogical experiences they provide (or deny) to students. My review of extant scholarship shows that very little empirical research exists to portray how teachers explore the complexities of rural students’ differing social group identities, social experiences, and ideological diversity in classrooms, and what would motivate teachers’ subject matter and pedagogical choices. How and why do teachers teach for democratic citizenship in relation to difference and conflict in predominantly white and rural classroom contexts? This question has thus far been under-studied in citizenship education, multicultural education, and rural education research – and I bring them together here in this study.
Table 1.  
*Conceptual Framework and Indicators: Democratic Citizenship Education to Navigate Difference and Conflict*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Democratic Citizenship Education</th>
<th>Indicators of Democratic Citizenship Education</th>
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</table>
| **Curriculum Content**                      | • Subject matter includes visible and less visible dimensions of social difference (e.g., heterogeneities of religion, socioeconomic status, ability) (Sleeter & Grant, 2009).  
• Students are supported to view and understand concepts and issues from various social group perspectives – both present and absent in the classroom/school/community (Banks, 2006).  
• Teachers shape curriculum to include students’ social identities, prior experiences, and local community relationships to encourage student engagement (Hemmings, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Miller, 2007). |
| **Surfacing conflict (ideological diversity)** | • Conflicting (contrasting) perspectives are purposively-positioned (and/or surfaced) by the teacher (e.g., using conflictual issues) as opportunities for content learning.  
• Diverse and competing perspectives invite conflict to interrupt bias and misconceptions (Davies, 2004; Haroutunian-Gordon, 2010). |
| **Pedagogy**                                | • Developing student capacity to speak about and/or reflect on one’s own views and/or experiences (Johnson & Morris, 2010).  
• Active listening to unfamiliar social, political, and cultural perspectives (Parker, 2010; Schultz, 2010).  
• Students are invited to assess, critique, and reformulate ideas and views and to co-develop understanding and make decisions (Gordon, 2006), e.g., concerning conflictual issues.  
• Students are provided opportunities to actively interrogate bias, disrupt assumptions/stereotypes, and/or unlearn Othering (Davies, 2014). |
| **Inclusion of multiple perspectives**       | • Various task structures provide openings for all students to participate and contribute (share, articulate, dis/agree) their views (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012; Davies, 2004).  
• Perspective sharing between teacher and peers, and/or among students, to formulate decisions about authentic political and/or moral dilemmas; e.g., dialogic pedagogies whereby students engage with others’ diverse viewpoints and experiences (Hess, 2009; Parker, 2010).  
• Facilitation of discussions to air/expose various (including marginalized, silenced) perspectives (Banks, 2006); to invite students to transform their initial beliefs; and to question/challenge status quo hierarchies (Davies, 2004, 2014; Haroutunian-Gordon, 2010). |
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY: THREE CASE STUDIES

Overview of Methodological Framework

This study focuses on three social studies teachers’ understandings and practices of democratic citizenship education to navigate difference and conflict in predominantly white and rural high school classrooms. I conducted three classroom case studies in three rural high schools in southern Ontario. Each case is comprised of one social studies high school classroom, focused on the interactions between a teacher and one group of students, and among students, occurring in each classroom. Data collection methods included classroom observations, teacher interviews, group interviews with students, and analysis of classroom documents (including student written work). These multiple case studies explored how and why three rurally-situated teachers implemented subject matter and pedagogies to activate and facilitate students’ expression in relation to cultural, social and ideological differences.

The study was intended to develop pedagogical insights from these three classroom cases that might be useful to teacher educators and teachers in secondary school classrooms, to critically navigate multiple social differences. My aim is not to generalize, but instead to illustrate and analyze issues and options in citizenship education for diversity. The research is guided by a central question that considers what teaching for democratic citizenship in relation to difference and conflict looks like in three majority white and rural high school classrooms in southern Ontario. In particular:
1. How and why do the selected teachers surface and facilitate various students’ expression in relation to social and ideological diversity?

2. How and why do the selected teachers surface and facilitate various students’ expression in relation to ethnocultural diversity?

Qualitative Multiple Case Study

The study examined how three selected high school teachers enacted democratic citizenship pedagogy in their rural schools populated with predominantly white students. I chose to conduct a multiple case study as a methodological frame. Case studies involve rich and colourful descriptions of specific instances of real people in action. Yin (2008) defines case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).

Consistent with the constructivist perspective, qualitative research is based on recognition that researchers and participants construct the subjective realities under study through mutual engagement (Mishler, 1986). It is further situated within the interpretive paradigm, which endeavors to reveal how participants within a particular social context ascribe a range of meanings to various situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Meaning, I examined individuals’ perceptions of teaching and learning (democratic citizenship), and how they made sense of and navigated their classroom environments.

A qualitative case study approach has some distinct advantages when compared to quantitative forms of research. Case study is a good option when it is not possible to fully identify the variables in advance of the study, because they are so embedded in the context (Yin,
Cronbach (1975) refers to this method as “interpretation in context” (p. 123). Quantitative studies often have a pre-specified focus than qualitative research, and rely on convenient derivative data (e.g., surveys and test scores), whereas case studies “tend to spread the net for evidence widely” (Bromley, 1986). Classrooms are complex social spaces, and curriculum can entail unpredictable, immeasurable, and unexplainable events and unseen consequences, not reducible to quantifiable variables. In my study, I collected non-quantifiable evidence such as perspectives, attitudes, and impressions. Thus, a qualitative case study approach was appropriate to this study, to observe and capture unforeseen events and features of classroom contexts that may otherwise be lost in larger scale quantitative data.

Knowledge acquired through qualitative case study is distinguishable from some other research knowledge because it is concrete, vivid, and uses the senses. The vivid descriptions provided by case study may permit readers to experience the issue for themselves (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Readers contribute their own experiences and understandings to their interpretations of the material. This process of applying insight to the original data is “part of the [ongoing] knowledge produced by case studies” (Stake, 1981, p. 36). Firestone (1993) refers to “case-to-case transfer,” whereby the reader asks: what can I take from these findings to apply to my own situation? Providing a rich, thick description (Geertz, 1973) for each case enabled me to assess the relationship of these situations with prior research findings and future professional practice.

A purpose of multiple case studies is to describe and compare an issue from multiple perspectives to gain thoughtful insight into and develop a collective understanding of that issue (Creswell, 2008). Replication of similar methods across my three classroom cases was vital, to bring “commonalities across cases, as well as differences” to light (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p.
Comparisons across my three cases generate illustrations of teacher pedagogy that are more credible and compelling than a single case, because they are built on more instances in similar kinds of environments (Yin, 2008). My rationale for choosing a case study method was to capture the circumstances and conditions of distinctive rural classroom situations, and to compare and contrast multiple rural sites to one another.

**Study Participants and Rural School Contexts**

Local (e.g., rural) communities are among the social contexts in which students come to understand themselves as citizens (Kenway & Youdell, 2011). Thus, my research sought classrooms located in selected high schools in predominantly white and rural settings as a key element in the design.

For the purposes of this research, rural refers to both metro-adjacent and non-metro-adjacent communities. Rural metro-adjacent refers to areas within a reasonably short commuting distance to urban cores. Rural metro-adjacent regions include some suburban developments and small urban areas, but are comprised predominantly of rural agricultural land and have significantly lower population densities than urban core cities. Rural non-metro-adjacent areas are located further from commuter zones. This study did not examine rural northern or indigenous regions. The rural high schools I studied are located in southern Ontario, had school populations ranging between 500 and 1800 students, of which a sizeable number were bused from outlying areas that have small population sizes, densities, and growth, and low levels of racial and visible ethnocultural diversity. Definitions of rural vary, and so do rural schools. To

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6 Rural northern regions refer to census divisions found entirely or predominantly above the 54th parallel in Ontario (du Plessis, Beshiri, & Bollman, 2002). It was not feasible to include these as thesis research sites.

7 To protect the anonymity of my school sites, I have not included detailed demographic information specific to their surrounding towns and regions.
view the three schools in my study as typical of rural schools fails to recognize the heterogeneity of social identities and experiences found within and among different rural places.

University ethics approval for my study was granted in January 2013. I subsequently applied to five school boards in Southern Ontario for board level ethics permission with the intent of securing three classroom sites, each in a different school. One school board declined my research application in March 2013 stating: “Although your research study looks interesting, we continue to focus on our core business this year.”

Four school boards had approved the study by April 2013. I contacted the principals of eighteen high schools that I believed to be located in ideal locations within the approved school boards because they were within a 2-hour drive in one direction from my home. I emailed each principal a brief summary of my research, school board ethics permission, an Administrator Information Letter (see Appendix D), and Teacher Participant Information Letter and Consent Form (Appendix B), requesting to recruit teachers in their school.

The focus of my study is social studies teachers’ classroom practices of democratic citizenship education for navigating difference and conflict in predominantly white and rural schools. I used purposive sampling to locate three teachers who expressed interest in participating in the research. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 1990, p. 230). I sought teachers with a minimum of one year experience teaching social studies in a majority white rural context. One year is a sufficient period of time to familiarize oneself with teaching in a school context and to adjust one’s curricular approach and pedagogy as needed.

I looked for teachers who articulated an awareness and affirmation of multiple social differences among their students (e.g., socioeconomic status, sexuality, gender, ability, etc.), and

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8 Email communication to J. Pattison-Meek, March 28, 2013.
in the broader Ontario and Canadian community. According to my preferred criteria, teacher participants would have experience using social studies and Civics curriculum to surface multiple perspectives in their classrooms, and if selected, would willingly describe and allow me to observe some of their strategies for doing so. In informal early conversations with prospective teacher participants, I asked each one what forms of diversity (if any) they saw among their students, and how they invited and facilitated various students’ expression in relation to their differences. Teacher participants selected for this study saw ideological diversity as playing an integral role in their social studies teaching, and attempted to create learning opportunities for students to communicate their perspectives in relation to their various identities, such as through discussion-based pedagogy.

The principal from Vandenberg High School in School Board ‘B’ (this and all school, board, educator and student names are pseudonyms) responded to my email instantly to confirm that she had forwarded my information to a social studies teacher on her staff whom she believed to be doing “social justice work” with his grade 10 Civics class.9 The teacher, Mr. Byrne, responded favourably to the prospect of participating in my research project and we arranged to meet at his school in early April 2013 just before his next scheduled Civics course was about to begin (Vandenberg High School scheduled four 10-week, half-credit Civics courses per school year). During our initial meeting, Mr. Byrne shared that social justice was the dominant theme of his first Civics unit and that he paid particular attention to social justice issues throughout the course. He enthusiastically invited me to observe his class in action the following morning. I did so on an informal visitor basis, and this classroom visit solidified my decision to include Mr. Byrne’s participation in the study, after we discussed mutual expectations and he provided me with written consent to carry out my research in his classroom.

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9 Email communication to J. Pattison-Meek from Principal 1, March 5, 2013.
Accessing two more case sites proved more difficult. Recruitment difficulties are sometimes a problem for studies with a focus on risky topics such as democracy and social justice (Llewellyn, et al., 2010). Of my 17 remaining email inquiries, 8 principals replied that they had forwarded my information to the relevant teachers; 3 principals indicated that they did not have anyone on staff at the time whom they thought would be interested in participating in my study; and the rest did not respond. By early September 2013, I had been contacted by one grade 11 parenting teacher, one grade 10 history teacher, and one grade 10 Civics teacher. These individuals graciously invited me into their classrooms to observe the complexities of their teaching practice. Unfortunately, either problems with scheduling or a discrepancy between what teachers claimed to do in classrooms (e.g., emphasis on small and/or large group discussions) and what I observed those teachers actually doing (e.g., emphasis on didactic practice), meant that I needed to look elsewhere to locate two more research sites.

Word about my research project had reached an educational consultant in School Board ‘A’ through a mutual teacher friend. She contacted me in mid-September 2013 to encourage me to re-contact the principal of Buchanan Secondary School about my project. The consultant knew of a Civics teacher at the school, Ms. Watson, who was widely recognized among her colleagues and teacher-professional organizations as a curriculum expert in Civics and History education. The principal was receptive to my email and forwarded my information to her Canadian and World Studies department. Ms. Watson phoned me that same evening and we had a spirited conversation about her (then) Civics class. She indicated that controversial social issues and various forms of classroom discussion were core aspects of her pedagogy. She was very open and keen to help out with my research and invited me in to her classroom to observe her first period Civics class the following day. After my first classroom observation, and some
detailed discussion of what participating in my study entailed, I decided to include her and she heartily agreed to participate in the research and provided me with a copy of her classroom schedule with an open invitation to attend the class “at any time.”

I was introduced to my third classroom teacher, Mrs. Thomas, by her colleague Mrs. Grey, who had contacted me herself about participating in the study. When Mrs. Grey realized that her grade 12 parenting class was not a good fit for my study because of the upper grade level and because she did not facilitate many classroom discussions about political citizenship or social differences, she took me to meet Mrs. Thomas – a teacher with a reputation as being a “bit of a renegade” among the staff of Hoffmann Secondary School (in School Board ‘C’) for her work in equity and inclusive education. This sounded promising. In our initial informal conversations, Mrs. Thomas expressed a passion for responsible and active citizenship teaching, and invited me to her grade 10 Civics classroom to meet her students.

I completed 7 classroom observations in Mrs. Thomas’ grade 10 Civics class before she asked if I would like to visit her afternoon grade 9 Geography of Canada class. In the later class, she was starting a final course unit about immigration policy in Canada, which she thought I might find more interesting for my research than the Civics class because she paid particular attention to issues of diversity and multiculturalism. She was keen to share with me a rural-urban encounter (intergroup) activity she had designed the previous year, to engage her Geography students in various sharing activities with new immigrant and refugee students from a neighbouring (urban) school board. The rich topics and discussions I glimpsed in my first observation of the Geography class prompted me to shift my research focus from Mrs. Thomas’ Civics to her Geography class.
Sources of Data and Data Collection Procedures

I collected data in the three social studies high school classrooms, one site at a time, from April 2013 to January 2014. I intended my data collection to be both broad (examining three cases, to reveal a range of pedagogical possibilities) and deep (collecting four types of data in each case location, to enable a deep understanding of each case). I used four data collection methods: classroom observations, teacher interviews, student group interviews, and analysis of classroom documents, such as anonymized student written work. Table 2 provides an overview of my observation and interview data collection:

Table 2. Three Classroom Case Studies: Overview (Summary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1</th>
<th>Case 2</th>
<th>Case 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Watson</td>
<td>Mr. Byrne</td>
<td>Mrs. Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10, Civics</td>
<td>Grade 10, Civics</td>
<td>Grade 9, Geography of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchanan High School</td>
<td>Vandenberg High School</td>
<td>Hoffmann High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Board A</td>
<td>School Board B</td>
<td>School Board C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 students (15-F, 10-M)</td>
<td>18 students (11-F, 7-M)</td>
<td>22 students (4-F, 18-M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September – November 2013</td>
<td>April – June 2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 classroom observations (24 hours)</td>
<td>20 classroom observations (26 hours, 20 minutes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 semi-structured teacher interviews (+ 3 informal check-in interviews)</td>
<td>2 semi-structured teacher interviews (+ 4 informal check-in interviews)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 semi-structured student group interviews with 9 students (7-F, 2-M) (one interview per student)</td>
<td>3 semi-structured student group interviews with 10 students (8-F, 2-M) (one interview per student)</td>
<td>4 semi-structured student group interviews with 10 students (3-F, 7-M) (one interview per student)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buchanan High School School Board A 25 students (15-F, 10-M) September – November 2013 18 classroom observations (24 hours) 2 semi-structured teacher interviews (+ 3 informal check-in interviews) 3 semi-structured student group interviews with 9 students (7-F, 2-M) (one interview per student) Buchanan High School School Board B 18 students (11-F, 7-M) April – June 2013 20 classroom observations (26 hours, 20 minutes) 2 semi-structured teacher interviews (+ 4 informal check-in interviews) 3 semi-structured student group interviews with 10 students (8-F, 2-M) (one interview per student) Vandenberg High School School Board B December 2013 – January 2014 16 classroom observations including 2 fieldtrip observations (32 hours) 2 semi-structured teacher interviews (+ 3 informal check-in interviews) 4 semi-structured student group interviews with 10 students (3-F, 7-M) (one interview per student)

My qualitative design was steered by semi-structured (planned but open) interview guides (Appendix E and Appendix F) and a semi-structured classroom observation protocol (Appendix G), each organized around my conceptual framework (Table 1). I did not know in advance all questions that I might ask of the participants, nor where to cast my gaze next. I simultaneously collected and analyzed data, to refine these decisions as the research proceeded (Bogdan & Biklan, 1992). In this iterative, interactive process, one data collection method
complemented another. For example, teacher interview data helped to focus my observations of particular activities (for instance, Mr. Byrne’s description that his mind map activity was a key component of his citizenship teaching). Analysis of classroom documents also gave rise to new questions for teacher interviews and group interviews (for instance, students who wrote comments that conflicted with the dominant view about immigration and multiculturalism presented by their teacher, Mrs. Thomas). My research questions and conceptual framework provided structure to each sequence of data collection, as well as data analysis.

I spent two to three months in each classroom setting, consecutively, for a total of 82 hours and 33 minutes of observations. The following sections describe the various sources of data and data collection procedures that I used.

**Classroom Observations**

Dewey wrote that, “knowing is not the act of an outside spectator, but of a participator inside the natural and social scene” (cited in Ezrahi, 1997, p. 318). Qualitative classroom observation “draws the researcher into the complexity of participants’ worlds; here situations unfold, and connections, causes and correlations can be observed as they occur over time” (Cohen et al., 2008, p. 397). Because I, as researcher, entered the contexts of what I was attempting to describe, I was a participant. Because I also brought with me my professional experiences in similar contexts, observational data provided an understanding of classroom situations as they occurred (Patton, 2002).

I observed each individual classroom case between 16-20 times (75 and 80 minutes each). I aimed to observe lessons that would permit me to see and hear which/how within context differences arose, how they were taken up, and how they appeared to matter. All 3 teachers provided me with previews of future classes to help me decide whether or not to
conduct an observation. As suggested by several research methodologists (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002), I began the research process with focal points (open-ended protocol) to structure my initial classroom observations (see Appendix G). I focused on behaviours I could see, and words I could hear, such as how students’ expressed (dis)interest in classroom conversation (e.g., cell phone use might indicate disinterest).

In qualitative research, dialogue is an important way to identify participants’ perspectives, attitudes, and feelings (Crotty, 1998; Punch, 2005). I observed to see to what degree and how each teacher participant created an ‘open’ classroom climate for discussion, meaning that students’ expressed multiple perspectives, and how teachers encouraged inclusive ways to invite various students to practice agency and express their views (or not). I looked for how a teacher provided alternative ways (e.g., written reflections, small group discussion) for students to express their personal views on a given topic, if they were not comfortable expressing these in a larger group. I observed who was participating audibly or visibly in discussions (and not), how and how often, and the content of their contributions.

I wrote my field notes both by hand and with a laptop during (and following) classroom observations. These included: 1) descriptions of the setting, the people, the activities, in as much detail as possible; 2) the substance of what people said (including key words in participants’ remarks); and 3) observer comments (Merriam, 1998). The second component included quotes (e.g., a teacher disclosing to the class a personal view on a topic, or a student’s expression of an opinion that contrasted with another person’s view). The third component included my initial interpretations/analysis, gut reactions (including feelings), working hypotheses, and emerging questions. I also recorded events I wanted to ask about in teacher interviews and/or student
group interviews. A separate research journal assisted with the organization of my personal memos, summaries, and analytic questions.

At the outset of my research, I had intended to assume a peripheral membership role in the classroom, whereby my observer status was not concealed from the students and my classroom role would be passive (Adler & Adler, 1994). Almost immediately, this role changed to more active participant observer in all three classrooms. All classroom teachers invited me to interact with the students, assist with answering questions during work times, sit with groups to observe brainstorming activities, and hand out/collect work (I provide more detail in Chapter 4). This interaction increased opportunities to engage and familiarize myself with the students in each classroom context.

Immediately following each observation, I wrote into my field notes any information (questions, commentary, observations, dialogue heard, etc.) not recorded during the session. Later I typed up the field notes (identified by date, time and location) with full descriptions, including context. I organized all data (observations, teacher interview transcripts/notes, student group interview transcripts/notes, and classroom documents) by dates, and location, and stored it (with backups) on my password-protected, personal laptop, which served as the primary database for analysis.

**Semi-Structured Teacher Interviews**

Interview is a common form of data collection in qualitative research, to gain access to those aspects of which cannot be observed directly (Merriam, 1998). “We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on” (Patton, 1990, p. 196). Any interview is a “conversation with purpose” (Dexter, 1970, p. 136). One-on-one (face-to-face) interviews provided teacher participants with opportunities to impart their
perspectives, to confirm, refute, and/or build on my emerging understandings based on my classroom observations, student group interviews, and analysis of classroom documents. All three teachers asked for my feedback about their lessons, particularly in relation to how students had taken up different issues and pedagogies.

I conducted between 5-6 one-to-one interviews with each classroom teacher participant (case) over the course of an observation data collection period. Two of these were extended semi-structured interviews, each approximately 40-60 minutes in length, with each teacher. The first semi-structured interview took place at the start of the observational period, to explore each participant’s teaching background, their awareness of the multiple forms of diversity in their classrooms, school, and community, and the principles on which they decided their teaching strategies (see Appendix E). The second semi-structured interview took place toward the end of the observational period to confirm, refute, and/or build on my emerging understandings of the data.

Between 3-4 shorter, informal interviews, more like check-ins, occurred approximately one-third and two-thirds into each observational period, to probe what each teacher was doing in the classroom and why they were doing it. Depending on the teacher and their schedule, we may have engaged in additional informal conversations about the lessons, which I recorded in my research notes. The questions I posed during these interviews asked about what I had observed in each classroom, heard in student group interviews (anonymized), and from reading classroom documents, such as instructions in student worksheets. For instance, following a class session in which a student had openly expressed an unpopular perspective, if time were available, I followed up with the teacher to learn why/how they had (not) addressed the comment.
Teachers are embedded in the realities of their schools and communities. They possess a knowledge base from which to contribute theoretical and pedagogical insights on the contexts of citizenship education. I disclosed to teacher participants that I am myself a classroom teacher, to make known our shared experience and develop a rapport, to invite outspoken, no-nonsense conversations. I asked teachers questions probing how they perceived teaching in their particular classroom context, how they understood teaching for democratic citizenship, the limitations and possibilities they faced in light of their predominantly white and rural teaching contexts, and their motivations for (dis)engaging in particular topics, activities, and discussion formats in the observed classes.

To help mitigate any vulnerability felt by teacher participants, our longer, formal interviews were held in quiet locations, away from the presence and influence of students, other teachers, or administrators. I informed participants that they could decline to answer any questions posed and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. At no point did a teacher decline to respond to a question or choose to depart from the study. I reminded each teacher at the start of interviews that their identities, those of their students’, the names of the school, community, and school board, would be kept confidential, and that pseudonyms would be used in place of real names in research notes and writing. Each teacher participant provided me with their own pseudonym.

Interviews were audio-recorded with teacher participants’ consent. I also kept handwritten notes in my personal journal, organized by date, time, and location. My written reflections followed each interview, to note insights and words/remarks/opinions requiring further clarification. I transcribed audio-recordings to provide a database and convenient format for analysis.
Semi-Structured Student Group Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with students in small groups to check (compare to and build on) my findings from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and classroom documents. Group interviews allow a researcher “not to infer but to understand, not to generalize but to determine the range, not to make statements about the population but to provide insights into how people perceived a situation” (Krueger, 1994, p. 3). My aim was to stimulate interaction among student participants, from which I was able to glean norms, beliefs, and values (meanings) underlying their responses (Bloor et al., 2001).

Small group interviews may encourage some students to feel more comfortable sharing their views when surrounded by a small group of friends (Creswell, 2008), and may be less intimidating than individual interviews. Group interviewing enabled some students to use peer-appropriate language as well as to challenge each other, and to contribute confidently in ways that may not have happened in a one-to-one, researcher-student interview (Cohen et al., 2008). Having more than one student participate in each interview encouraged multiple versions of events to emerge. Sometimes students complemented the others’ insights with additional points, leading to a more complete and reliable account (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

I am opting to use the term group interview rather than focus group because the data collection strategy was focused around my semi-structured interview questions. Some students were quiet in interviews and/or offered narrow (short) responses, and so, as interviewer, I assumed an assertive investigative role through questioning and directing the dynamics of the group (Bloor et al., 2001; Parker & Titter, 2006). In focus groups, in contrast, the role of facilitator would shift to a more peripheral role, relying on group interaction around the topics and tasks provided (Morgan, 1997). My ultimate goal was to guide the topics and yet generate a
“group effect” whereby the interactive spirit of discussion among participants provoked new insights to emerge and opportunities for participants to evaluate diverse viewpoints (Carey, 1994). Lively discussion was possible in some of my group interviews, but not all. I asked questions to guide the agenda and acted as a facilitator for discussion – attempting to sustain a democratic space for all participants to have a voice, through prompting (e.g., ‘When you learned about … ? How did you … ? Why was that?'), pausing after responses to ensure all students who wanted to speak had an opportunity, and sometimes I asked students directly if they wanted to share.

I designed initial questions to provide a platform for group discussions to unfold and to focus the conversations around participants’ perspectives on particular curriculum and/or pedagogy they had experienced, such as specific incidents, behaviors, and/or discussions observed in their classrooms (Appendix F). A semi-structured interview format (for both teachers and students) allowed me “to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent[s], and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). During these group interviews, I listened for various students’ (mis)understandings of the content included in lessons, how and why they expressed (dis)interest in lesson content and/or (dis)like of various teaching strategies, whether or how they felt they had (safe) opportunities to express their opinions on lesson topics or not, opportunities they had to connect their personal and community experiences to curriculum, and conceptions of diversity within their school and community contexts. These flexible, semi-structured group conversations allowed for new questions to emerge based on the participants’ interactions and responses (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).
Student interview groups were comprised of between 2-5 participants (one interview per group). A small number of participants in group interviews do not necessarily create a safer environment for students to contribute to the conversation compared to larger groups. Owing to the sensitive nature of the topics that could emerge and the “interactional synergy” that I wanted to arise among the participants (Kitzinger, 1994), I considered student dynamics when assembling groupings. All of the teachers were amenable to participants choosing which peers would be in their own interview groups in order to create voluntary spaces for students to engage. The small group size and self-selection provided more students more opportunity to participate actively, and thus to impart rich subjective data.

I conducted 3-4 group interviews per classroom, each comprised of different participants. I invited all students in each class to participate in group interviews. I provided student volunteers under the age of 18 with a consent letter to be signed by a parent/legal guardian prior to their participation (Appendix A). In Mr. Byrne’s Civics class, I held 3 group interviews with a total of 10 students. In Ms. Watson’s Civics class, the 3 group interviews included a total of 9 students, and in Mrs. Thomas’ Geography class, I conducted 4 group interviews with a total of 10 students. Each group interview lasted between 20-30 minutes. Multiple group interviews in each classroom case allowed a wider range of viewpoints to surface. In all cases I held the interviews near the end of my observation data collection period so that I could ask students to reflect on their previous learning experiences in that class (e.g., those I had observed).

All teacher participants made class time available for all student group interviews to be held, in a quiet adjoining room, or in a quiet place in the school library. In contrast, conducting student group interviews during students’ lunch periods or after school would not have been
ideal, since these times would have infringed on students’ personal time or been impeded by busing schedules and/or student work.

Before the start of every student group interview, I reminded the students that their participation was entirely voluntary; they could decline to answer any question that made them feel uncomfortable; and they could leave at any time without consequence. At no time did a student refuse to respond to a question, nor did a student withdraw from participating in the group interview. Some students commented at the end of their session that they had enjoyed talking about what they had done in class and expressed interest to do it again.

Interviews were audio-recorded and I also kept hand-written notes in my personal journal organized by date, time, and location. Similar to the teacher interviews, I followed each interview by recording my personal reflections, noting behaviour(s) which I had seen rather than heard. I transcribed audio-recordings to complete my research database.

**Classroom Documents**

Documents are “social facts” which are created with a purpose, shared, and used in socially organized ways (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). In classroom documents, I looked at how various topics and issues were presented, any opportunities for students to express their views or to share experiences in relation to social and/or ideological difference, and how various students responded.

I collected two kinds of classroom documents to supplement, corroborate and/or challenge my findings from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student group interviews. The first includes lesson plans and teaching resource materials (designed for student use) provided by each classroom teacher, such as: assigned textbook and/or news article readings, handouts, assignment/project instructions, presentations and videos, and course
websites. Within these documents, I looked at what content was provided and how each
classroom teacher created spaces (outside of classroom discussion) for various students to
express their diverse perspectives.

Second, with permission from each classroom teacher, I collected anonymized copies of
ungraded written and/or drawn work completed and handed in by students, individually or
through group activities. These included: personal reflections, position paragraphs, mind maps,
ideas written during brainstorm activities, responses to questions based on assigned readings,
posters and visual expressions, and culminating unit and course projects. In student work, I
looked for examples of various students’ expression in relation to social and ideological
difference. Some students’ written responses were particularly useful because they contained
student perspectives that had not been shared openly in larger, public discussions during my
observations.

The analysis of classroom documents provided additional detail and useful insights into
how teachers presented, and how various students perceived and understood, forms of social and
ideological difference and conflict, connected (or not) to issues that developed in the classroom
and in the implemented curriculum. Such evidence provoked me on several occasions to further
investigate certain areas (e.g., create new questions for teacher interviews or student group
interviews) such as why some students seemed to prefer to write down various perspectives on
paper rather than say them aloud during whole-class discussions.

**Data Analysis**

Case study involves rigorous, holistic description and analysis of a “case,” e.g., an
example in this instance is a predominantly white and rural social studies high school classroom
in southern Ontario explored through the lens of democratic citizenship education (Merriam,
2009; Stake, 2006). Data analysis is a process of moving up “from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 261).

Before starting my fieldwork, I operationalized my conceptual framework to develop analytical categories (look-fors) to help guide data collection (see Appendix G). Although I started with research questions and initial categories, my data analysis was inductive: “categories and ‘variables’ initially guide the study, others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study” (Altheide, 1987, p. 68). The (re)development of analytical categories and coding to depict distinctive characteristics of the data was an ongoing, intuitive process. I refined these categories through reviewing my data to reflect an analytic framework describing indicators of democratic citizenship education for navigating difference and conflict. The analytical categories, introduced in Table 1 (Chapter 2), include: inclusion of diverse (social identity) content, surfacing conflict (ideological diversity), student agency (practiced and supported), and inclusive of multiple perspectives. The raw data (typed: transcripts of interviews, field notes, quotes/passages from documents, etc.) were methodically coded using shorthand and colour codes. I aggregated the data into about 15 categories and then collapsed these into the four above. Each category contributed toward answering one or both of the research questions. In each category, I developed a list of corresponding descriptors (look-fors and listen-fors) to help guide the coding process.

Multiple case studies typically involve two dimensions of analysis: within-case and cross-case (Merriam, 2009). Using my research questions and initial conceptual framework as guides, I immersed myself first in each individual case. I assembled a thorough description of each classroom upon completion of my fieldwork. I tagged aspects of each case I found interesting, not limiting myself to the initial analytical categories. I triangulated the data by
comparing, contrasting, and juxtaposing different sources (observations from various lessons, teacher and student group interviews, classroom documents).

In my analysis of classroom observations, interviews, and documents, I noted what topics and issues teachers had taught (how they were introduced, facilitated, and concluded). I looked at what strategies each teacher employed to elicit (which) students’ viewpoints and opinions (e.g., small/large group discussion, individual/group written responses) and their stated reasons (e.g., in observations and/or interviews) for doing so. I looked for how (and why) each teacher promoted and activated students’ awareness of social and ideological difference, and whether/how a teacher had planned for and responded to the range of student viewpoints/opinions that were expressed. The analytic procedure entailed locating, selecting, synthesizing, and making sense of the data contained in each document through excerpts, quotations, or whole passages of written text. When there was a convergence of information from the different data sources, I had greater confidence in the credibility of the research findings.

I conducted cross-case analysis – thematic comparisons among the three cases – once my initial analysis of each individual case was complete. While it is valuable to examine and contrast the situational complexity and unique interactions within each individual case, to understand the research questions, it is also important to examine characteristics shared and contrasted across cases (Stake, 2006) (e.g., in this instance, how teachers facilitated opportunities for their students to recognize and learn about various diversities). I looked for “processes and outcomes that occur(ed) across … cases, to understand how they (were) qualified by local conditions, and thus develop(ed) more sophisticated descriptions and more
powerful explanations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172). Though each case was different, each research question corresponded to all cases (Yin, 2008).

Validity and Reliability of Data

As Stake (2005) compellingly argues, information acquired through research “faces hazardous passage from writing to reading. The writer seeks ways of safeguarding the trip” (p. 455). Some qualitative researchers, such as Merriam (2009), suggest a variety of validation strategies to bolster the credibility of research findings, including “triangulation, checking interpretations with individuals interviewed or observed, staying on-site over a period of time, asking peers to comment on emerging findings, and clarifying researcher biases and assumptions” (p. 234). In what follows, I outline a number of these approaches that I employed throughout my research journey (study design, data collection, and data analysis) to enhance the validity of my research findings.

Triangulation is one strategy that is used to corroborate evidence of findings using a variety of data sources (Creswell, 2008; Golafshani, 2003). As discussed previously, I used classroom observations, teacher interviews, student group interviews, and analysis of classroom documents, to triangulate my data. For example, classroom observations served to confirm (or refute) what each teacher said (in interview) they did in the classroom and what they actually did (in practice). Classroom documents (including anonymized student work) and student group interviews allowed me to further triangulate the data and provide a more thoroughly supported description of the three teachers’ pedagogies. Moreover, the use of four different types of data (classroom observations, teacher interviews, student group interviews, and review of classroom documents) produced an abundance of detailed data from which I generated rich, thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of each teacher’s pedagogy for democratic citizenship. Having a
fairly high number of observations per classroom case (between 16 and 20) helped me to get close to the data and purposefully look for variations in a teacher’s practice (Merriam, 2009).

To increase internal validity I solicited feedback from teacher participants on my emergent understandings of what I was (not) seeing and hearing in my data. This was an important strategy to avoid misinterpreting the meanings of what teachers said and did, and also to identify and keep in check my own biases as researcher (Maxwell, 2005). Asking interpretive questions, for example, if a teacher had time available to speak with me immediately after a classroom observation to debrief, was a means to both add to and to check what I thought I understood. I forwarded each teacher participant the transcripts from their interviews to review as a form of member checking, and provided the option to remove any information they did not want included in the study. None of the teachers asked to remove or edit any of the interview material. Continuously sharing the data and tentative interpretations with the teachers throughout the research assisted me to build and accurately document a clear and verified representation of what occurred, thus enhancing the validity of the study (Merriam, 1998).

For qualitative researchers, there can be several interpretations of the same data. In light of this, Lincoln and Guba (1985) conceptualize ‘consistency’ and ‘dependability’ in lieu of ‘reliability’ in qualitative research. To ensure consistency between my three teaching cases, I applied similar sampling criteria to each case, and I used the same observational and interview (teacher and student) protocols. I also observed each teacher working with the same class of students. Using multiple methods of data collection (triangulation) and member checking strategies, both discussed above, further support the reliability of my findings (Merriam, 2009). My thesis supervisor thoroughly reviewed the raw data (compiled in case reports) to help me to assess whether or not my emerging interpretations and findings were consistent with the data
that was collected, and thus dependable. My research design goal was to compare and contrast across types of data within cases, and across the three cases, to reduce the impact of biases that might arise from a single case study or from fewer types of data in each case – that is, to improve the reliability of my findings (Patton, 2002).

**Limitations of Method**

As has already been outlined in this chapter, there are various strengths of qualitative case study research and of the particular design (three social studies teacher cases and four kinds of data collection). However, any study is also constrained by limitations, and I discuss below those that I feel apply to my research.

One limitation of case study research is that results are not generalizable. Case studies are regarded as lacking rigour, because they tend to focus on processes (through descriptive accounts) rather than on measurable and/or evaluative pre-set indicators or end products. I cannot make causal inferences: it is not possible to discount alternative explanations in this type of qualitative research in which I collected data at only one point in time. As Merriam explains, in case study research, “It is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to his or her context” (2009, p. 51, see also Cohen et al., 2008). Thus the findings of this study are meant to be illustrative. The thick descriptions I offer of each case will assist readers to understand how and why the three teachers in this study implemented pedagogies to navigate various diversities in their classrooms.

The rich, holistic description of phenomena that is a special feature of case study research can lead to another limitation. I conducted fieldwork one case at a time, enabling me to focus my attention toward describing and explaining each individual case – possibly providing me with more descriptive detail than if I had conducted my fieldwork simultaneously. While
such immersion within a case is a strength, the immense amount of descriptive data I collected over the course of my research was overwhelming. On the other hand, I feel that my data is limited in other respects because I was not able to access each classroom site at the start of the course term to observe how each teacher established norms and relationships for classroom discussion. These dimensions of teaching for discussion (Parker & Hess, 2001) were often in place before my arrival in the classroom(s). As there are no fixed guidelines for how to construct a final case study report, I was left to rely on my own instincts, discussions with supervisor and thesis committee members, and scholarly reading to strike a balance between the amount of description, analysis, and summary material to include in (and to omit from) the thesis. As a novice researcher, it has been a struggle to continually pull myself out of my descriptives, to generate a useful and comprehensible analytical study that is not too detailed, too prolonged, or too involved.

I am a trained classroom teacher with 9 years of experience teaching the same grade levels and subject areas as those I observed in this study (grade 10 Civics, grade 9 Geography). I came to this research having worked in a predominantly white and rural classroom context, similar to those in this study (see Chapter 1). Throughout my data collection and analysis, I repeatedly asked myself whether/how I was inadvertently overlooking details of a case because the research settings were so very close to my own. Or, were my observations too focused on confirming my preconceived understandings of a situation without probing deeper into the multiple variables of each case? Despite my reflexive efforts, the subjective nature of any case study methodology means that selectivity and personal bias inevitably permeates my work. I have made a conscious effort to be self-reflexive of my personal observer biases and how they affect the research. To attempt to mitigate these effects, I kept a personal research journal to
assist me to repeatedly interrogate how my role and background as a researcher and teacher influenced my collection and reading of the data.

While these limitations are significant aspects to recognize in the context of my study, I hope that the strengths of my vivid qualitative case study portrayals of three classroom cases will in turn provoke scholarly and professional discussion of what is (not) happening in these three rural school contexts with respect to democratic citizenship education. The findings of this research study are not intended to be generalizable, but illustrative.

Conclusion

A multiple case study was a useful methodological frame to investigate in depth how and why three social studies teachers’ implemented democratic citizenship pedagogy for exploring diversity education in three primarily white, rural classroom settings. Through using a variety of sources and types of data as part of the investigation, the case study approach invited in the complexities (and messiness) of real life classroom processes and relationships, and exposed detailed, holistic insights that would not have become apparent through qualitative non-observation, or survey methods. Conducting three classroom case studies in comparable classrooms (predominantly white, grade 9-10 social studies, in rural southern Ontario) allowed me to describe teaching cases and yet delineate a range of pedagogical possibilities for citizenship educators working in other apparently homogenous environments in Canada and elsewhere. As shown in Chapter 2, high quality, empirical research in white, rural classroom contexts – especially regarding citizenship education and multicultural education – remains limited (Arnold et al., 2005; Corbett, 2007, 2014). Based on this methodology, this study presents and discusses in-depth descriptions of what happened in three classrooms, thus contributing to research literature in democratic citizenship education and teacher pedagogy.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTS:

OVERVIEW OF CLASSROOM CASES AND RURAL LANDSCAPES

Overview of Chapter

In this chapter, I begin with the challenge of conceptualizing ‘rural’ as both a geographic and a social construction through a review of North American rural education research. I argue that rural classrooms are thinly researched, under-theorized, and too-often undervalued contexts that have received scant attention within citizenship education scholarship, which remains predominantly urban and suburban in emphasis. Following this overview of rural landscapes, I describe in general terms the three classroom teaching case studies – each located in a different high school in rural southern Ontario. Each case involves a teacher and one of their grade 9 or 10 social studies classes. For each case, I first outline the school and community context including a brief snapshot of pertinent demographic information. Next, I explain the teaching contexts – background information about each teacher and my relationship to them and the students in their classroom. I briefly describe the set-up of classroom environments, to portray what each looked like to me as an observer. I conclude each case overview by discussing its key features in relation to democratic citizenship education, including highlights of the various implemented curriculum and pedagogical strategies I observed. To close the chapter, I discuss the three cases comparatively, outlining some of their similarities and differences in relation to the purpose of this study.
Conceptualizing Rural

Canada’s overall rural population was about 19% of the total population in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2014). Some provinces and territories have significantly higher or lower proportions of rural inhabitants than the national average, from 14% in Ontario, to 53% in Prince Edward Island (Statistics Canada, 2014). Despite such evidence that Canada is home to vast rural populations, rural education research in Canada (and elsewhere) remains overwhelmingly urban and suburban in focus (Corbett, 2014), particularly in relation to citizenship education. The relative dearth of rural contexts studied in the citizenship education literature casts (sub)urban (metrocentric) experiences and understandings of citizenship as normative, thereby obscuring the significance of rural spaces and framing rurality as Other (Bryant & Pini, 2011; Corbett, 2014). As Michael Corbett, one of Canada’s leading researchers in rural education, compellingly argues, “if rurality is not defined as a distinct category and as a legitimate and consequential space of marginalization, then it is possible to ignore and blur the common and particular problems faced by people living on the fringes of the metropolis” (2014, p. 7). The power asymmetries between urban and rural populations serve to “[marginalise] the rural context to the periphery of awareness” (Wagner, 2014, p. 555). North American research has yet to bring a view of democratic citizenship education in classrooms that are both predominantly white and rurally-situated into focus.

Historically, conceptualizations of ‘rural’ have tended to be based upon binary understandings (that is, in opposition to ‘urban’):

…in attempting to determine what rural means, some writers have fallen into the trap of not defining it at all, rather discussing it as if everyone knows what rural is, leaving it intangible and tacit. Or, it is referenced
against an urban backdrop as an issue or concern and, therefore, cast in a negative light, as an area “in distress” (Miller, 1993) and in need of fixing. (Barter, 2008, p. 470)

On one hand, rural is presented relationally as less progressive, lacking cultural diversity, more patriarchal, and more poverty-stricken than urban (Balfour, Mitchell, & Moletsane, 2008; Corbett, 2006; Green & Corbett, 2013; Sandberg, 2013). On the other hand, rural spaces may be represented as romanticized wholesome havens, assumed bereft of the crime and social ills more associated with urban locations (Little, Panelli, & Kraack, 2005): “rustic, historic, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes pathetic, always in need of reform and modernization” (Corbett, 2006, p. 297). Rural is stereotyped as stagnant, contrasted to the stereotype of urban as progressive (urbane signifies sophisticated and civilized). Both of these perspectives conflict with principles of democratic citizenship because they essentialize (stereotype) ‘rural,’ overlooking and/or misrepresenting the diverse lived experiences and social identities found within and among rural communities.

The literature also illustrates complexity and ambiguity around the terms rural and ruralness (Blaine, Pace, & Robinson, 2004; Howley, 1997; Wallin, 2007). Rural can refer to the geographic location of areas located outside of urban centers (see Chapter 3). In Canada, definitions of rural vary from population size and/or density, to settlement patterns, to labour market conditions (du Plessis et al., 2002). Herzog and Pittman (2002) highlight that “not only have researchers not used a common qualitative definition of rural, many have also criticized existing definitions for being based solely upon population density or size, and not upon other characteristics that are quintessentially ‘rural’” (p. 81). Ruralness can represent a rural culture, having distinctive lived meanings (Corbett, 2014) – the state of “being” rural. McSwan et al.
(1995) offer four aspects of rural contexts based on their research in rural Australia: “size, geographic location, culture, and access to the services and amenities taken for granted in urban communities” (p. 67). Clearly, rural is both a geographic concept and a social representation (Barter, 2008).

In the absence of commonly agreed-upon criteria, different definitions of rural can identify different people as being rural, such as those living in indigenous communities, coastal villages, and/or communities centered around agriculture and other resources, among others. My findings indicate that the concept of ‘rural’ tends to be applied on a case by case basis rather than clearly defined. A working definition of rural in this thesis study includes both geographic (e.g., located outside of urban areas, with low population density) and social features (e.g., communities with minimal racial and visible ethnocultural diversity) that are specific to the three classroom case locations. While the rural areas I include in this study are predominantly white, this does not reflect the demographic makeup of all rural areas. It is important to explore rural contexts beyond their simple “ostensibly neutral statistical definitions that map population categories and places on the basis of density and proximity to the metropole” (Corbett, 2014, p. 4) as well as static conceptions of a rural culture. Such conceptions ignore the various multiple social identities, lived experiences, and ideological differences within specific rural locations. As yet, how and why some rural teachers choose and present (or avoid) subject matter and pedagogies to explore difference and conflict in predominantly white classrooms is limited in our existing knowledge base – understandings addressed in this study.
Case 1 Overview: Ms. Watson, Grade 10 Civics, Buchanan Secondary School

School and Community Context

Buchanan Secondary School had a population of approximately 1,200 students in grades 9 through 12. The school was located on the fringe of the town of Buchanan, home to about 17,000 residents, in rural southern Ontario. Buchanan was surrounded by agricultural land and the school also served students from nearby hamlets and villages. Many students were eligible to be bused to the school from surrounding rural townships.

The forms of ethnocultural diversity Ms. Watson identified within the school came in “waves” (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013). For example, many years ago, families belonging to a local church adopted a number of similar-aged children from a country in East Asia around the same time. This wave of Asian-Canadian students had since graduated from the high school during the time of research, leaving few students of Asian descent in its wake. A (small) community of self-identified First Nations students had emerged in the school with the inception of a senior level Native Studies (elective) course taught in the school. Ms. Watson also acknowledged that the school was home to a large proportion of Christians, including many Dutch Reform and a few Jehovah Witnesses (these are groups she named in interview, though they may not have represented the majorities). The high school had an active Christian youth club that met weekly and the school organized various mission trips to Central America.

Teaching Context

Ms. Watson, white and in her late-30’s, had practiced at Buchanan Secondary School for all 12 years of her public school teaching career. She had taught a variety of courses and grade levels through the years including Civics, history, law, humanities, English, and a specialized literacy course. Ms. Watson appeared very relaxed in her classroom, often moving from desk to
desk, coffee mug in hand, chatting with students about their weekends or extra-curricular pursuits.

Ms. Watson had not grown up in a rural community. She disclosed that for her, one disadvantage to working in the small town was that she did not always fully understand all of the local rural issues. “I’ve been teaching here long enough that I’m familiar. But you don’t always know what’s going on. It’s a really small, tight-knit community” (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013). At one time she rented a farmhouse near the high school but found that living and working in this small community took a toll on her private life. She missed having a more anonymous life outside of the school and so returned to her ‘city’ (suburban) life and the daily urban/rural commute to and from Buchanan.

Ms. Watson and I quickly realized that we shared some similar life interests and experiences. We had both worked as English as Second Language teachers in the same city in Japan (in different years) before becoming public high school teachers in Ontario. In our first meeting we easily fell into conversation about our shared love of teaching Civics and compared various activities we used with our classes. Ms. Watson said that she was thrilled to have another teacher in the room to observe her pedagogy and she hoped that I would provide her with constructive feedback. She liked the idea of having me facilitate student group interviews and hoped that I would share any resulting insight, both positive and negative, that might help her to improve her teaching practice. At the end of my observational period I did share with her some anonymized student feedback.

I observed Ms. Watson’s first period, grade 10 Civics class from September to November 2013. There were 25 students in the Civics class, 15 girls and 10 boys. All of the students were white, with the exception of one black female who stopped attending the course
after my fifth classroom observation. I received consent to interview 9 students (7 girls and 2 boys) and conducted 3 interviews (one per student) in groups comprised of two to four students in October. I observed 18 of Ms. Watson’s 80-minute Civics classes for a total of 24 observation hours.

Ms. Watson had arranged a place for me to observe the class, sat near the back corner of the room nestled beside a group of students with whom I could chat and ask/answer questions. On my first observation day, Ms. Watson started class with a community circle activity. She asked me to join the circle to introduce myself; each student in turn had an opportunity to tell me something about themself. This welcoming gesture seemed to open possibilities for students to approach me outside of the circle. That same day, a pair of girls shuffled over to me in their chairs: “What’s so interesting about our class?” “Why are you here?” “You can ask us questions if you want” (Obs, Sept. 18, 2013). Various students, mostly girls, would approach me before the start of the morning class to chat about social and/or academic topics. I used these opportunities to develop a measure of trust with the students and hoped that these relationships would encourage them to volunteer as participants in my group interviews. Ms. Watson always encouraged me to participate in the ritual community circle, walk around the room and visit with students during partner/group work time, and respond to students’ questions if she was busy helping others.

**Classroom Environment**

The desks in Ms. Watson’s classroom were arranged into 8 small groupings. Each “pod” consisted of 4 student desks pushed together to form a large square. Ms. Watson changed the seating plan every two to three weeks so the students would have an opportunity to learn with/from different individuals.
Each day an agenda for the class was written on the front board. Student work was displayed all along the back wall. Often students, before the start of class, would linger near the wall and point to/discuss something of interest with friends. Colourful posters high above the blackboard promoted positive messaging: “Make tea, not war!” and “Celebrate community - Honor diversity.” A poster on a side wall displayed photos and names of Canada’s prime ministers. The caption under the last photo read “Current Prime Minister” – exhibiting a smiling black and white photo of Ms. Watson pasted atop of Stephen Harper. The Civics students often laughed at their teacher’s jokes and one student shared with me how Ms. Watson’s sense of humour made the class more enjoyable.

**Key Features of Ms. Watson’s Case**

Ms. Watson’s classroom-learning environment tended to reflect a transactional pedagogical orientation (Miller, 2007) meaning that learning goals were approached through problem-posing activities, particularly around current news events. Ms. Watson was a skilled dialogic educator and constructed (and scaffolded) multiple interaction processes for students to participate. To promote inclusive student engagement in discussions about conflictual issues, she implemented a wide range of participation structures, such as her assigned small group seating arrangement. Her stated pedagogical intent was to promote the sharing of ideas across students’ different political and social positions through collaborative inquiry-based working groups (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013). Different topics and activities aimed to support more students, more often, to develop their capacity to exercise agency (e.g., community circles). Ms. Watson viewed Civics (and the social studies) as a platform to explore issues that were relevant to the lives of students, such as her lesson on the proposed implementation of wind turbines in the local area. She emphasized the importance of supporting students to view issues from a range of
contrasting perspectives, especially if they did not agree with their own. She often purposely positioned conflicting standpoints in relation to news stories, such as the (then) proposed Quebec Charter of Values, to elicit and inform students’ own diverse perspectives. She also demonstrated how conflictual issues rooted in ethnocultural conflict are valuable opportunities to teach about the difficult aspects of multicultural citizenship and religious pluralism.

Case 2 Overview: Mr. Byrne, Grade 10 Civics, Vandenberg High School

School and Community Context

Vandenberg High School was located in a small working-class community of about 9,000 people. Upon arriving in Vandenberg (town) by road, travelers were met with a welcome sign listing the town’s more than 10 local churches. At the time of study, the high school drew just under 500 students from in-town and the wider rural surroundings. This was the smallest community and school population among my three case sites. The town is located approximately 30 minutes’ drive from one of Ontario’s most racially and ethnically diverse cities. However, this nearby ethnocultural diversity did not appear to have permeated the school population; Mr. Byrne reported that, at the time of study, approximately 6 students at Vandenberg High School were non-white. The town had recently become a rail transit link for commuters to/from nearby cities. This, in combination with the community’s low home prices compared to nearby suburban areas, was expected to attract families from more crowded, higher priced, ethnoculturally diverse (sub)urban areas to “move out to the country” (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). Thus, the demographic makeup of Vandenberg, according to Mr. Byrne, was expected to change in the coming years.
Teaching Context

Mr. Byrne had taught at Vandenberg High School for all eight years of his teaching career. Single, white and in his early-30’s, he identified as Canadian-born and of Scottish heritage. He had spent the early part of his career as a guidance counselor before migrating to the classroom full-time to teach Civics, History, Geography, Law, and Careers courses. In my casual conversations with some of the Civics students during classroom observations, I learned that Mr. Byrne had gained a reputation as a fun, “open-minded” teacher who cared a great deal about Vandenberg students and the local community. One male student described Mr. Byrne as “one of the good guys – he gets us – you have to have him as a teacher at least once” (Obs, April 25, 2013). Mr. Byrne was a graduate of Vandenberg High School and often shared stories with the class about his student experiences from “back in the day” (Obs, Apr 19, 2013). He was a teacher-supervisor for numerous school clubs and teams: he was most active in the ‘Me to We’ club, which promotes local and global participatory citizenship projects. The small school population provided opportunities for Vandenberg teachers to have any particular student in as many as 4 classes before graduation. Mr. Byrne saw the small school setting as an opportunity to form meaningful relationships with students and to mentor them throughout their high school years (P/O-Int, Apr. 24, 2013).

Mr. Byrne’s Civics course ran for a 10-week period between April and June 2013. There were 18 students in Mr. Byrne’s first period grade ten Civics class; 11 girls and 7 boys. I observed 20 Civics classes (79 minutes each) for a total of 26 hours and 20 minutes. I received consent to conduct group interviews with 10 students: 8 girls and 2 boys. At the end of May I held 3 interviews (one per student) in groups comprised of between two to four students.
Attendance varied between 8 to all 18 students from day to day. One female student was non-white, of South Asian descent. She was born in Canada and her family had moved to a rural village outside of Vandenberg from a large urban center when she was in grade two. Another female student had immigrated to Vandenberg with her family from Scotland when she was in elementary school. One male student self-identified as being of Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) descent in a written course assignment. The rest of the students in the class were white, and to Mr. Byrne’s knowledge, had all been born in Canada.

Mr. Byrne had arranged a desk for me in the back left corner of the classroom near students with whom I could chat and ask/answer questions. He would sometimes playfully call on me during class to test my political knowledge when students could not respond to his questions (e.g., ‘Does Ms. P. know who is the Member of Parliament for our riding?’) as way to incorporate me into the classroom community. On another occasion, Mr. Byrne designated me to the role of Governor General of Canada, replete with a rather lengthy (and humorous) pre-written speech from a large wooden throne to deliver, for his Civics class mock parliamentary debate. He invited me to freely walk around the room during work time to listen and interact with students (e.g., ask questions) engaged in pair or group work activities. Sometimes students would ask me to interpret unfamiliar words or concepts or inquire about my personal views on topics they were studying. I respectfully refused to share my opinions.

**Classroom Environment**

Mr. Byrne’s classroom was located in a noisy area of the school. Separated by a thin folding wall, the room was adjacent to the cafeteria from where voices and music could sometimes be heard. There were no windows in the classroom to provide natural light. Mr. Byrne relied on yellowish-tinged fluorescent ceiling lights that he sometimes switched off,
opting instead for the dim light from 3 table lamps located around the perimeter of the space. The pull-down white screen at the front of the room was broken, so Mr. Byrne had constructed a new one by taping together several pieces of white paper, their edges curled out, to a black board. Hanging next to a large Canada flag, a lopsided framed photo of Queen Elizabeth II peered out over the classroom from above the front board. Student work was displayed all along the rear wall; about 20 student posters showed photos and descriptions of various ‘Great Leaders’ including the American musician Kurt Cobain, Canadian children’s rights activist Craig Kielburger, Nobel Peace Prize winner Mother Theresa, and former Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Trudeau.

Upon entering Mr. Byrne’s grade 10 Civics classroom at the start of the school day, students freely chose where to sit among the three curved rows of tightly-positioned single desks, arranged amphitheatre-style. Students settled into a desk, many opting to sit in their friend groups, and faced the front of the room toward Mr. Byrne’s desk and the large makeshift screen. Here listed the day’s agenda and a question to remind students about topics introduced in the previous day’s class. I noted that Mr. Byrne sat down only once at his desk during my observational period – he almost always stood or leaned near the front of the room, or he was walking around (or sitting in student groups) chatting and/or checking in with students.

It was rare for me to see Mr. Byrne’s posted lesson plan proceed from its intended start to finish; if students were engaged in a class discussion on some particular course-related topic, Mr. Byrne did not appear to mind, continuing the conversation, even when it meant bumping forward or removing another agenda item. He felt students learned more from asking questions and “talking through the issues” than they did “completing my handouts” (T-Int, May 16, 2013).
Some students confirmed his belief, stating in group interviews that they preferred to learn by talking and listening to the views of others (SGI, May 29, 2013).

**Key Features of Mr. Byrne’s Case**

Mr. Byrne designed a social justice unit for his Civics course in response to his expressed urgency to transform some of the “misinformed” and “ignorant” views (e.g., concerning poverty, immigration) that he felt lingered in the local community. He tended to focus his change-oriented pedagogy toward students’ considerations of their own partialities and subjectivities as a means to interrogate biases and assumptions that perpetuate Otherness. He employed a range of inclusive pedagogies, including private disclosure strategies such as low risk alternatives (to whole class discussion) to invite multiple and contrasting perspectives to surface among students (e.g., mind maps, guided reflective writing). Small group and partner tasks guided students to explore local social injustice issues (e.g., unemployment, hunger). One particular activity, requiring students to visit a local social service charity, opened a space for some students to exercise agency by speaking to the class openly about their personal experiences with mental illness. One of Mr. Byrne’s stated citizenship goals was to “educate” alternate views in relation to what it means to be ‘Canadian;’ he taught to ready students for expected future local diversification and a progressively more ethnoculturally diverse Canada owing to increasing immigration (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013).

**Case 3 Overview: Mrs. Thomas, Grade 9 Geography of Canada, Hoffmann High School**

**School and Community Context**

I chose to name this site *Hoffmann* to reflect the German-Dutch and Mennonite heritage prevalent in the local area and among some of the school’s student population. At the time of research, the school was home to a handful of non-white students and those of Aboriginal
descent. The community had strong roots in farming activities and was well known in the region for its livestock production. Mrs. Thomas explained in our initial interview that students and parents often used the designations of “hicks” (rural) and “slicks” (town) to distinguish between the two dominant group identities in the school and community (T-Int, Nov 8, 2013): Mrs. Thomas’ geography class appeared to have more (self-identified) of the former. Although the school sat on the edge of a town of just under 30,000 inhabitants, the majority of Hoffmann High School students were bused to school from surrounding rural areas. This particular rural setting was susceptible to a host of weather-related occurrences, such as fog, extreme cold weather, heavy snowfall, and high winds (blowing snow) that resulted in numerous bus and school cancellations during my observational period. Such adverse weather sometimes made it difficult for Mrs. Thomas to find sufficient, reliable time to continue her citizenship work, amidst such schedule interruptions.

As with many schools within School Board C’s rural boundaries, Hoffmann High School’s student enrollment was decreasing each year. The School Board had recently amalgamated nearby middle schools to make Hoffmann High School a grade 7 through 12 building, with about 1,100 students. The school and School Board endeavored to develop innovative programming and curriculum to attract and retain a steady flow of students.

**Teaching Context**

Mrs. Thomas self-identified as a proud “Northerner” and a “preacher’s daughter” (T-Int, Nov 8, 2013). She viewed growing up in northern Ontario to be a benefit to her teaching because she understood Hoffmann’s “very Anglo” setting and some of the mindsets of her students. She had started her teaching career about twenty years earlier as an elementary teacher. Three school boards and seven years later, she moved to the secondary school panel to
be a social studies teacher. Mrs. Thomas, white and in her mid-40’s, was married with school-aged children. She and her husband had moved to this particular rural community because they preferred the feel of a small town to a larger city. She had completed her Masters of Education and had started the process to attain her Principal’s Qualifications a few years earlier. After eleven years’ teaching at Hoffmann High School, she was at a point in her career where she was looking forward to what professional opportunities may come next.

I conducted 16 classroom observations of Mrs. Thomas’ grade 9 Geography of Canada class from December 2013 to January 2014. In addition to classroom observations, I also attended two full-day field trips with the geography class, for a total of 32 observation hours. There were 22 students in the class. I received consent forms from 10 students to participate in group interviews. I conducted four interviews (one per student) in groups comprised of two to three students. I held the interviews toward the end of the semester so that I could ask students to reflect back on their learning experiences from the entire unit I observed.

The class was overwhelmingly male (18 boys and 4 girls). Applied level (tracked) classes, in general, tend to attract more male learners than female learners, as was the case here. Twenty-one of the 22 students were white. Mrs. Thomas did not know of any student in the class identifying as Aboriginal. One black male student, Damion, had moved to Canada from the Caribbean four years earlier. He spoke slightly different from the rest of his classmates, thus having an accent, and tended to talk quickly in large class discussions. At home his family spoke Patois. Rodney, a male student with cerebral palsy, required the use of a wheelchair. The class was comprised of diverse learning abilities: more than half of the students had an Individualized Educational Plan for (one or more) diagnosed learning challenges. One or two
educational assistants were present in each class session to support the wide range of ability levels.

Among this group of students, I noticed how mostly male students appeared dressed in a variety of hunting and farm attire, more so than I observed in the other cases. This included cowboy boots (6 boys, 2 girls), camouflage hunting jackets opened wide to display Duck Dynasty and Harley-Davidson t-shirts, camouflage-patterned baseball caps, John Deere belt buckles, plaid shirts and jeans. One male student wore a sweatshirt with a message written on the back: ‘God loves all rednecks equally.’ It was common for some of the boys, when I arrived in their class, to proudly strike a pose (with one hand on a hip) to show off their shiny boots, farm (milking) boots, and/or belt buckles. They often greeted me with big smiles and one liners, for instance, “We clean up good for farmers, don’t we Ms. P.?!” (Obs, Dec. 10, 2013). It seemed to be very important to some students to wear their stories and express their rural identities through their attire and verbal regional farm accents (which seemed to thicken when many of the boys came together in a large group).

When I first sat down with Mrs. Thomas for our initial interview, she expressed a clear expectation that our relationship should be a reciprocal one. In other words, she would open her classroom to me, and I, a teacher with similar qualifications and classroom experiences, should come willing to share my ideas and resources with her. For example, she said that my previous classroom experience teaching the grade 11 World Religions course might come in handy during her immigration and diversity unit and she hoped to draw on my religious and ethnocultural knowledge. She asked if I would conduct (model) a short lesson to introduce her geography students to Sikhism because she did not feel that she had the background knowledge

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10 John Deere (brand name) is a U.S. company that manufactures farm and construction equipment; Harley-Davidson is a U.S. motorcycle manufacturer. Duck Dynasty is a U.S. reality television series that depicts the lives of a Louisiana family business that makes products for duck hunters.
to lead such an overview – which I obliged. She participated as an audience member and asked questions alongside the students.

She had also indicated to me that she was looking for a quick and feasible strategy to elicit and preview students’ perceptions of various identity groups. I shared a few details about Mr. Byrne’s mind map activity (Chapter 6), which she was keen to try (I did not disclose his or Vandenberg’s identity). This type of teacher-to-teacher exchange helped to facilitate my comprehension of the cases and added value to the research for teachers. On the flip side, I also recognize that Mrs. Thomas’ requests for resources might have influenced her classroom practice during my observational period, and as a consequence, also influenced my findings. I viewed Mrs. Thomas’ requests for (and expectation of) multicultural citizenship education resource support as an interesting piece of my research because her school and School Board did not provide such training. This finding aligns with similar studies that found that some secondary school administrators in rural schools tend not to see the relevance of multicultural education in white school contexts (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004).

During my observations, Mrs. Thomas positioned me in the back corner of the room at her own desk. At some points during lessons she would look to me to respond to students’ information questions about ethnocultural groups if she herself was unsure. After about my first week with the grade 9 class, Mrs. Thomas asked if I could help out and respond to students’ questions while they worked on assignments. Many students in this class needed frequent guided assistance to complete their assigned tasks. This classroom contact, in addition to my accompanying the class on two field trips, provided me with opportunities to get to know many of the students and ask questions about how they were experiencing particular activities. This
was especially useful in helping me to build relationships with many students, especially with the four female students, who typically remained quiet during whole-class discussions.

**Classroom Environment**

Mrs. Thomas’ classroom was full of bright, natural light. One entire side wall was lined with floor to ceiling windows with a view to an empty, seemingly unused outdoor courtyard. An abundance of posters and maps were mounted around the room to form a kind of colourful wallpaper. Among the most prominent were themed maps of Canada and national park posters. A long banner hung from the ceiling at the front of the room: ‘Let learning take you around the world.’ Student work displayed along the left side wall and on the front blackboards rotated weekly to reflect the work of Mrs. Thomas’ three classes that occupied the room during the semester. A cork board next to the entry door displayed a large calendar of school events and an array of photos of students on recent field trips. Each day, the agenda for the class was written on the front board.

Mrs. Thomas’ daily classroom practice tended toward a transmissive approach (Miller, 2007) with top-down classroom management. The class context presented her with various behavioural challenges and power imbalances that limited sustained student-student dialogic participation. She arranged oversized individual desks together to form (horizontal) lines of three desks to face the front of the room. I asked her why she had positioned the desks in this way. She told me she was a bit of a “control freak” and wanted the desks all to look forward to minimize student disruptions and to emphasize routine and settle the students. She assigned seating: two female students together, and the two other girls dispersed among boys. She purposely positioned the five more vocal males in the class equidistant around the perimeter of
the room next to a quiet student (less likely to participate in classroom conversations). She
presumed this arrangement would deter vocal disruptions during her teaching.

Norms of interaction determined who spoke, to whom, how often, and who did not
speak. The five high-status male students dominated “teacher-directed” classroom discussion.
Given that Mrs. Thomas selected who spoke, she often reinforced their dominance. Mrs.
Thomas infrequently solicited responses to her questions from students who did not have their
hands up, thus seldom compelling participation and perspectives from a broader range of
students. The four girls in the class tended to remain quiet. Only two of them volunteered to
speak in front of the class during my observations. Three of the girls confided to me that they
did not feel comfortable to talk aloud in front of the class because they felt “outnumbered” and
feared put-downs from the dominant boys, thus silencing their perspectives (Obs, Dec, 11,
2013).

Students were not permitted to change where they sat unless they were doing group
work with partners they had been assigned to, or Mrs. Thomas moved them nearer to the front
of the room because of behavioural issues (e.g., throwing pieces of paper, continuing to talk to
neighbours during lectures). When Mrs. Thomas was speaking (or using teaching tools such as
the Smartboard), she expected her students to focus their attention toward the front of the
classroom, to be silent when she or another member of the class spoke, and to remain seated at
their assigned desks. Mrs. Thomas expected students to be silent when she or another member
of the class spoke, and to raise their hands and wait for her permission before speaking. When a
student did not follow these classroom norms, she would provide a series of verbal warnings,
culminating in the removal of the student from the classroom: such removal occurred on five
occasions during my 16 classroom observations.
Key Features of Mrs. Thomas’ Case

Mrs. Thomas explicitly acknowledged that a lack of visible ethnocultural diversity in her school and wider community influenced her pedagogical choices. She sought to deepen students’ understandings of the complexities of Canadian citizenship – starting with their own multiple (hybrid) social identities. She employed written self-reflection pedagogies to support students to recognize some of the less obvious diversities in their ostensibly homogeneous context and to complicate understandings of diversity (beyond race). I observed the course unit she designed about immigration and multiculturalism in Canada whereby students examined some of the knowledge, skills, and values to live in increasingly diverse pluralistic communities. She employed education about the Other and a human relations approach to multicultural education to teach for democratic citizenship. This included facilitating a rural-urban intergroup encounter, to introduce her students face-to-face with racially diverse, recent immigrant youth from a nearby city. She created these opportunities to provide her students with authentic interactions with Others to acquire the social skills to interact with different ethnocultural communities.

Conclusion: Comparison of Three Case Study Classrooms

Each of the three case classrooms in this study were comprised of predominantly white, high school students, located in rural communities with proportionately low populations of non-Anglo (visible) ethnocultural diversity in southern Ontario, Canada. The three cases, in these geographically similar classroom and community settings, each represent instances of teaching for democratic citizenship. Of note, Mrs. Thomas’ students were predominantly male (18 males, 4 females), whereas the other two case classrooms contained more female students than males. Vandenberg High School was the smallest school in the study with less than half the student
population of the other two schools. Each case involved a grade 9 or 10 social studies course required to graduate from high school in Ontario: one grade 9 Geography of Canada class and two grade 10 Civics classes. Each class was taught by a teacher with at least 8 years of classroom teaching experience in a majority white and rural setting. Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas had both grown up in rural, small town settings while Ms. Watson was raised in an urban area.

Mrs. Watson and Mr. Byrne, implementing the official mandated Civics curriculum, each interpreted and operationalized the curriculum expectations differently. For example, while immigration policy was not explicitly included as an area to cover in that course, Mr. Byrne included it in his implemented curriculum as a conflictual social and political topic, in light of the potential increase of racial and ethnocultural diversity in the local community. All three teachers were flexible in their pedagogies to include topics that were current (e.g., contemporary news stories) and relevant to their students and community contexts. Together, these case studies illustrate how and why three rurally-situated social studies high school teachers used similar and different subject matter and teaching strategies to provide opportunities for their adolescent students to navigate various visible and invisible social, ethnocultural, ideological, and/or other diversities in relation to their citizenship learning, agency and practice.

Near the end of my observational periods in all three cases, each teacher expressed to me that it had been a positive experience to have another teacher see and hear various aspects of life in their classrooms. They also all indicated that it was rare to have an opportunity to reflect on and discuss with another professional teacher their classroom practices as well as the intentions of their work – which they regarded as a constructive yet missing aspect of their teaching. In each of the following two chapters, I present and discuss the classroom cases separately in
relation to each of the study’s research questions and the conceptual framework (summarized in Table 1, see p. 38). I conclude each chapter with a cross-case comparison highlighting prominent pedagogical features. The following chapter (5) examines the pedagogical strategies employed by these three teachers to surface students’ diverse experiences, beliefs and perspectives in relation to the less visible heterogeneities within their majority white, rural classroom and community settings.
CHAPTER FIVE
SURFACING INVISIBLE DIFFERENCES
TO DEMOCRATIZE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

“Democratic” citizenship education supports pluralism: the social and political processes of a culturally, socially, and politically diverse society. The diversity contained within classroom populations presents resources for democratic educators, to cultivate insight into how citizenship is lived through students’ social experiences, differential status, diverse beliefs and values, in relation to their personal and community histories (Wright, 2003). As I argue in Chapter 2, understandings of diversity in some citizenship education tend to neglect less visible social distinctions such as socioeconomic status, (mental) ability, and heterogeneities of religion (e.g., within Christianity, as well as non-faith) (see Nieto & Bode, 2012; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Different life experiences and circumstances also give rise to ideological diversity: contrasting interpretations and views concerning various social and political issues that co-exist in classrooms (Hess, 2009). For instance, classroom contexts likely embody broader ideological diversity than would be met in students’ homes (Hess, 2009; Parker, 2010). Within any social context, including apparently homogeneous ones (e.g., predominantly white), a complex sociocultural and class politics is inevitably in play that includes tensions between dominant and marginalized identities and voices. Students’ encounters in schools with a variety of divergent and conflicting viewpoints may cultivate (or not) an awareness of multiple social identities. These occurrences may also bring to light how specific policies and practices may facilitate and limit understanding, respect, and just, democratic accommodation of the experiences and perspectives of Others (Davies, 2004; Nagda et al., 2001).
As yet, educational researchers are limited in our understandings of the kinds of subject matter and pedagogies teachers may apply to elicit and facilitate expression and dialogic exchange regarding less visible social distinctions – in particular, in majority white, rural classroom contexts such as those presented in this thesis. The potential for students to learn from different kinds of differences and conflicts that already exist in their classrooms depends on various factors, such as: the teacher’s pedagogical skills to surface and generate respectful encounters with the various perspectives and social experiences among students, whether or not they share agency (power, influence, and voice including potential dissent) with students, and what range of views they present or elicit in classroom dialogue or through other means (e.g., written journal reflections). Pedagogical orientations that invite (or impede) emergence and exchange of different views, such as those I present and discuss in the following pages, provided students and teachers with differing opportunities to hear, make sense of, and critique multiple and contrasting perspectives, and to experience ideological diversity and sociocultural conflict as a normal condition for living in a pluralist democracy.

**Overview of Chapter**

In this chapter, I attend to my first research question: How and why do the selected teachers surface and facilitate various students’ expression in relation to social and ideological diversity? I scaffold the four elements of democratic citizenship education from my conceptual framework (Inclusion of diverse social identity content, Surfacing conflict – ideological diversity, Student agency, Inclusion of multiple perspectives) to my descriptive case studies of classroom pedagogies to examine the various ways the teachers implemented subject matter and tasks, and how the students responded. I present and discuss vignettes to illustrate how each teacher created, and sometimes impeded, democracy-building opportunities that offered
occasions for students to discern and explore difference and conflict located in their rural classroom, high school and/or communities contexts.

I begin with Ms. Watson’s grade 10 Civics class. Ms. Watson invited students to express their perspectives concerning human rights topics. Freedom of expression and religious rights became controversial and elicited heated exchanges among some students’ expressed Christian and non-faith beliefs. She also purposively positioned conflictual perspectives in relation to the installation of wind turbines in the local area, a controversial rural topic, to promote students’ political engagement through a partial deliberation process. Among the three teachers, Ms. Watson implemented the widest range of dialogic activities to engage more students in sharing their different perspectives, more often. Her use of varied discussion processes elicited broad student engagement that offered opportunities for normally quiet and unequal status students to practice agency.

Mr. Byrne developed a ‘social justice’ unit of study for his grade 10 Civics course comprised of individual and group activities that invited students to share their diverse citizenship perspectives and experiences. Mr. Byrne viewed as a priority to teach students to recognize and interrogate justice and difference issues (inequities) that existed in their school and local community. Thus, although he tended toward a transactional approach, he simultaneously overlapped aspects of transformative practices. He shaped learning opportunities to challenge students to reveal and critically reflect on their personal biases, assumptions, and (lack of) privilege. One such task prompted some students to exercise agency by disclosing, in a class presentation, their personal struggles with mental illness.

Mrs. Thomas, at the start of a unit of study on multiculturalism and diversity in Canada, introduced her grade 9 geography class to less-visible social differences. To do this, she asked
her students to explore what diversity ‘looked like’ in their predominantly white and rural school community. Through an examination of their individual (hybrid) identities, social inclusion and exclusion experiences, and personal family immigration histories, Mrs. Thomas’ citizenship pedagogy supported students to explore how their diverse rural selves were reflected in a wider pluralistic Canada.

At the end of the chapter I present a cross case analysis. I discuss some of the pedagogical instances in which the three teachers democratized citizenship education in the ways they invited (or impeded) their students to explore the less visible heterogeneities located within their classroom settings.

**Ms. Watson: Children’s Charter of Rights and Wind Turbines**

Her goal to build “a sense of community” in her classroom was at the core of Ms. Watson’s pedagogy (T-Int, Sept, 25, 2013). One approach she used to help nurture a feeling of belonging among her grade 10 Civics students was a circle discussion activity that she facilitated 2 to 3 times per week. Ms. Watson would invite students to stand in a large group circle. She progressed around the circle and provided, one student at a time, an opportunity for each to speak on a low-risk topic and/or question she had initiated. Topics were open-ended and broad enough to be answerable by everyone. For instance, she invited students to report on what had happened over the weekend, or on “what was your take-away from yesterday’s lesson?” Prior to starting the circles, Ms. Watson always provided students the option to ‘pass’ (opt out) on responding and reminded them to actively listen to the contributions of their peers. “It’s been really cool because, whereas on day one there were several people who opted out, now there’s only the one student who’s opting out and he’s got other social-emotional stuff going on. And the fact that he now stands in the community circle is good for now” (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013). For
this student, the circle activities seemed to be a comfortable way to enter into classroom talk, moving from outsider (non-participant/observer) to insider (participant/listener).

This circle pedagogy was more inclusive than some of the other practices I observed where conversation was often limited to the more confident public speakers (approximately 10% of this class), who frequently volunteered responses and/or asked questions during teacher-led ‘open’ class discussions. In these circles, the teacher guided all students to practice norms and skills for dialogue, what Parker and Hess (2001) refer to as “teaching for discussion” (p. 273). She guided: articulating a response in front of peers and patient peer-to-peer listening. Circles also were a community building activity to help develop students’ capacity to exercise agency in various speaking structures, and thus for students to practice sharing their ideas with, and listening to, friends and strangers in the room (Parker, 2010).

Student group interviews revealed mixed feelings about the circle activity. The two male interview participants said they did not find the activity “overly helpful,” because “you just kinda stand there and listen to what other people say” (SGI, Oct. 16, 2013). I noted that these two students already were dominant (frequent) participants in large class and small group discussions. Evidently, speaking was easy for them and listening to other students may have been difficult for them. In contrast, all seven female interviewees highlighted a fondness for the activity. Female students, in interview, also shared my observations and expressed a concern that teacher-led class discussions tended to be dominated by the same male and female voices. “I like them because, even though we’re in a group, it’s like you’re talking your own opinions and stuff. It’s not like one person is talking about this, and one person’s talking about that; we’re all talking about the same thing – just different perspectives on the same thing” (SGI, F, Oct. 16, 2013). This female participant recognized that multiple perspectives had surfaced on the same
topic(s) among her peers through the circle dialogue. These female student interviewees viewed circles as an inclusive opportunity for everyone to contribute their different ideas to a large group conversation and practice peer-to-peer listening.

Ms. Watson had arranged the desks into permanent ‘pods’ to facilitate discussion activities in groups of 3-4 students. She assigned students to their pods and rearranged the groupings every 2 to 3 weeks so that students could come into contact with, and learn from, a broad range of peer perspectives. “I don’t just want [students] sitting with their friends … I want them meeting new people. I want them hearing other voices” (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013). Ms. Watson told me that because not all students felt comfortable to volunteer their views in a larger group discussion, it was important to create more inclusive opportunities for students to share their views in smaller, less threatening group configurations (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013). This classroom structure, she thought, encouraged interaction and dialogue among combinations of students who may or may not have had previous social interaction with one another.

Student group interviews revealed that some female students understood why Ms. Watson had created new pod groupings and why she did not always place students with their friends: “… it’s so that we can meet new people … and also to hear everyone else’s, like, point of view on different situations” (SGI, October 16, 2013). Adrianna, who I did not observe speak much in pod discussions, did not agree with Ms. Watson’s pedagogical choice: “I feel like sometimes teachers make seating plans assuming that you’re going to get to know people but that doesn’t always happen. Like for me, I have social anxiety. So it’s super hard for me sometimes to meet new people – so it’s easier to talk to people I know” (SGI, October 16, 2013). Two female interview participants explained to me how “sitting with strangers” impeded their motivation to share information/opinions, compared to if they were with self-selected
friend groups: “...if I’m wrong, then I’m like, ‘oh, that’s embarrassing’ ... you feel stupid that you don’t know the answer” (SGI, October 16, 2013). These comments suggest that fear of peer judgment limited some (female) students from engaging more often and/or deeply in pod discussions (see Schultz, 2010). This small-group task structure might not have disrupted existing social hierarchies (peer status), at least for some students, thus narrowing the ideological diversity and opportunities for conflicting perspectives that surfaced in these small group configurations.

Ms. Watson viewed the benefits of diverse social groupings as outweighing her students’ concerns. “I think part of [the problem] is just refusing to get to know people. ‘You look different. I’m not going to get to know you.’ No, I’m not going to put people together [in pods] who I know are going to have, you know, explicit conflict ... I think one of the things to do is to get people talking and sharing who they are, and, maybe if you get to know a person, as a person, there will be some understanding” (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013). Ms. Watson made these remarks in debriefing with me an incident that had occurred in one of her grade 10 history classes earlier in the semester (that I had not observed): two white boys had made repeated racist comments in their pod about the only Black student in the class. At the time of our interview, she was grappling with why the incidents had taken place, how she could preclude a similar experience from occurring again, and how to reintroduce the boys back into the classroom environment after a multi-day suspension for their remarks. Ms. Watson’s pedagogical choices in shaping citizenship experiences for students to engage with different viewpoints and dispositions appeared to be influenced by her expressed desire to promote an inclusive environment for teaching and learning.
I observed how the pod configurations provided students with opportunities to practice consensus-building (and sometimes dissensus) group skills. In one example I observed, Ms. Watson, during a sequence of human rights lessons, tasked each pod group to create a children’s charter of rights (Obs, Sept. 18, 2013). To begin, each pod was supplied with a large placemat organizer (Appendix H). Ms. Watson instructed students to first, individually, write down their personal ideas about the ways children require protection in the placemat section closest to them. Then she directed students as a group to review and discuss their individual ideas within their pods until they reached consensus upon which points to (not) include in their group’s charter. During my observational period, I did not observe Ms. Watson guide students on how to build consensus among group members (such process instruction preceded my observational period). Many students, I observed, appeared to be remarkably engaged in the group activity – writing on their placemat, talking with (and listening to) the students in their pod groups, pointing to peers’ written placemat comments and voicing comparisons to their own. Two male students, in contrast, appeared disinterested in the activity: each leaning back, tipping their chairs away from the group, fiddling with their cell phones under their desks instead of interacting with the other pod members. From my observations, this group activity focused on children’s rights facilitated the sustained engagement of the majority of students in peer-to-peer dialogue.

When the groups had finished constructing their placemats, Ms. Watson directed each group to compare and contrast their charters with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. After the students had spent about 10 minutes reviewing in pods a copy of the U.N. Convention, Ms. Watson posed sustained interpretive questions (Dull & Murrow, 2008) that invited students to share and discuss their insights about the issues with the whole class. She
asked students if they thought any U.N. Charter points were interesting or caused concern. Bea, not a regular talker, raised her hand right away:

Bea: Well, I just have a question about [section] 6. It says you have the right to life. When does life begin that you have a right for?

Ms. W: (picks up her coffee mug from the desk and takes a long sip; the class is silent, all eyes are on her)

That is the big question, isn’t it? When do you actually become a person? That would get into the abortion debate. I think this [document] is talking about people who have already been born. It’s really philosophical and I don’t know that anybody has decided on a specific answer that people agree on.

(she nods toward another usually quiet female student with her hand up)

Claire: Yeah, I thought it was interesting because like, if someone kills a baby inside of you when you’re pregnant, it’s murder. But then if like, the woman decides to abort the baby … then it’s just like an abortion and our laws say that’s okay, when it’s really not.

Amy: (speaks without first raising her hand)

Abortion is murder… (Obs, Sept. 18, 2013)

Following Amy’s remark, I observed three students around the room nodding their heads in agreement while one student shook his head back and forth appearing to disagree. One girl rolled her eyes and sighed loudly. The volume of student voices in the room turned up slightly
as some students turned to speak to their neighbours. As an observer, I could feel the
temperature (tension) begin to rise in the classroom following Claire’s comments, and then
increase after Amy disclosed her strong negative view on abortion. This topic and activity had
provoked conflict to surface through students’ evidently contrasting perspectives. Before Amy
could speak again, Ms. Watson cut in, acknowledged that the abortion debate was beyond the
scope of the day’s discussion, and redirected students’ attention to a different article.

I viewed this brief exchange as an example of how an initially low-risk conversation
about established children’s rights could take a turn toward visibility of conflict. In this instance,
Ms. Watson diverted students away from this high-heat situation. Her action here suggested to
me, and perhaps to the students as well, that she believed this topic was too sensitive and
conflictual to discuss publicly in this classroom context. However, rather than exclude the topic
of abortion from the course altogether because of its high volatility, Ms. Watson provided an
opportunity for students to choose to pursue the controversial topic for their final independent
Civics research task. This conflict avoidance constitutes a kind of defensive teaching (McNeil,
1986): limiting the development of educative conflict and the potential for democratic
education.

The next U.N. Convention article selected, this time by Ms. Watson, was also laced with
potential conflict. Article 14 asserts children’s right to freedom of thought, conscience, and
religion, and that parents have the right to guide children depending on their level of maturity.
As Ms. Watson read the details of the article aloud, 6 students (3 males, 3 females – not all
regular speakers) launched their hands into the air. Ms. Watson appeared surprised when she
looked up from her paper to see the interest the article had generated. She nodded to Todd:
Todd: I don’t think parents… well… I think they should tell you what they believe in, but not necessarily push you to believe in that.

Alyssa: Oh yeah. But this [article] can say whatever but a lot of kids get shamed by [their parents] for not believing in certain things and if you’re young and have to live at home, you have nowhere else to go. Then what are you supposed to do?

Tim: Well, I think the problem is that too many parents … don’t educate their kids about other religions. They kinda tell them about theirs, they go to their church, and that’s it.

Amy: *in a raised voice*

Sorry – so to what you said [Tim] – are you saying that as soon as a kid is born, the parents should leave him at home and go to church ’cause they’re not supposed to guide him?

Hailey: *(jumps in – speaks to Tim directly)*

And how are you supposed to learn about these different religions? Your parents can’t say, ‘Hey, this is what we believe in. This is what so-and-so believes in. Choose your own adventure.’ Of course they prefer if you follow what they believe in! It’s part of like, your family tradition. That is important. I like that they [U.N.] say that parents should guide you, and I agree with that a lot.

Amy: I was raised a Christian. And like… (pauses)… when you think about it, at public school teachers teach you what they believe. Like, the atheist view. So it’s not like I don’t hear non-religious things.
Ms. W: So students are exposed to different ideas at school anyway? (*Amy nods*)

(Obs, Sept. 18, 2013)

This interchange illustrates how students were permitted to openly express divergent, emotion-laden views on a topic (controversial, in the context of this classroom) distinguishing self-identified Christians from others who challenged Christianity’s dominance as a religious discourse. In this instance, expression of social conflict roused student engagement: Amy’s emotion on the topic was so strong that she turned around in her seat to look toward Tim and direct her comments to him face-to-face. As a democracy learning opportunity, children’s rights (as subject matter) surfaced less visible dimensions of social difference in relation to students’ contrasting views on religion. Ms. Watson, as I observed on this and similar occasions, shared her agency with students by allowing them to shape a class conversation through relatively unfettered, horizontal student cross-talk, concerning their similar and different personal beliefs in relation to a teacher-selected curriculum topic. Seated casually atop a desk near the front of the room with coffee mug in hand, Ms. Watson typically nodded to students with their hand up to indicate their turn to speak – as she did above. In this way, she maintained some control of the conversation process (not content).

To further elicit students’ diverse perspectives concerning rights topics, Ms. Watson dovetailed application of children’s rights and Canada’s constitutional rights by introducing a controversial news story. The article, entitled “When bigots have babies” (Wente, 2009), was presented by Ms. Watson as an unsettled (Hess, 2009) rights issue: did students believe that Canada’s constitutional rights to freedom of expression and religion extend to protecting parents who raise their children to hold white supremacist views? (Obs, Sept. 19, 2013) The classroom
came alive with active discussion within pod groups after Ms. Watson read the article aloud. She then invited students in whole class discussion to express differences of opinion based on their own interpretations of the constitutional rights. The result was an impassioned dialogue between four students arguing that religion is a form of indoctrination, and six asserting their personal Christian beliefs. This identity-linked issue, presented purposively to the class as an ‘unsettled’ controversy (Hess, 2009), incited students to speak in response to the views their classmates expressed.

This topic revealed some students’ ideological differences regarding religious rights and provoked emotional verbal contributions from three usually-silent participants. Ms. Watson acted as an ostensibly neutral facilitator – clarifying and/or restating a student’s views before selecting the next student speaker (Obs, Sept. 19, 2013). She did not impede cross-talk among students on this topic, opting instead to allow students to air and experience conflict among their peers. The dialogue ended abruptly with the ringing of the school bell. The issue was not revisited in the next class session, nor did Ms. Watson offer an alternative means for students to express views on the issue (e.g., writing).

Ms. Watson also presented conflictual local environmental issues to surface ideological differences among her students. Prior to introducing the topic of wind turbines, Ms. Watson started the lesson with a Not In My Back Yard activity sheet. Students individually ranked 15 activities/facilities according to whether they would (not) like them in proximity to their homes (e.g., residential treatment centre for teenagers with drug or behavioural problems, nuclear power plant, homeless shelter for families). Next, students compared their rankings with students in their pod groups. This activity opened lively small-group discussions about students’ differing values about appropriate land uses in the local area. All students appeared engaged.
For instance, some vigorously debated the merits and pitfalls of living adjacent to a dairy farm. Some students referred to others as “out-of-towners” meaning that they lived outside of Buchanan on farms or in small villages, and others as “in-towners” (Obs, Sept. 25, 2013). I noted that two in-towners were the most vocal in favour of wind turbines while one out-of-towner was vehemently opposed to their installation because of possible human health impacts. So, even before Ms. Watson formally introduced the topic to the class, conflicting perspectives had emerged among some students.

Ms. Watson shared with me that the Ontario government’s proposal to install wind turbines in a nearby rural community was a hot-button political and environmental issue in the local community. At the time of study, the proposal had not yet been (dis)approved. Ms. Watson told me that some of her former students had attended town meetings with their parents to hear public deliberations on this issue. While community sentiment was generally opposed to the installation of wind turbines, it remained an unresolved and “contentious issue for kids” and their families (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013). Ms. Watson told me that, based on her previous semester’s classroom discussions, she recognized that students within this school “are divided” on the topic: some students identified as “staunch environmentalists” and argued in favour of such forms of alternative energy production; other students opposed the wind turbines; some remained unaligned. Ms. Watson presented the proposed installation of wind turbines as a contested, multi-sided issue that had yet to be resolved, thus purposively introducing conflictual perspectives to provoke student engagement with (and learning about) controversy (Bickmore, 2014b; Claire & Holden, 2007; Houser, 1996). This is an example of nondirective teaching (Hand, 2008), which means that the issue is presented as controversial (Hess, 2002). This highly
relevant, local rural issue seemed to hold significant democratic potential for students to engage with conflicting political perspectives.

She used a guiding inquiry question to engage students: *Should a wind turbine farm be established in the (Buchanan) area? (Obs, Sept. 26, 2013)* Students immediately erupted in loud conversation in their pods as Ms. Watson revealed the question on the front blackboard. She silenced the room (with difficulty) and explained that before they could address the question, it was important to understand what a wind turbine was and why it generated controversy as a form of energy production. She showed students a short YouTube video to demonstrate the mechanics of wind turbines, their various forms and functions, and their environmental benefits. Ms. Watson followed with another short video that presented a different perspective: a Southern Ontario newscast interviewing concerned citizens living near wind farms, who had experienced health problems (e.g., body aches, headaches) that they attributed to their close proximity. A medical doctor, in the same newscast, explained in interview that he believed more research evidence was needed before people could blame wind turbines for their medical problems. In democratic education, substantive knowledge building prepares students for engaged agency through “knowing what the problems are” and “knowing alternate and subaltern ways of looking at them” (Bickmore & Parker, 2014, p. 324). Through these videos and other means, Ms. Watson introduced and substantiated with evidence multiple perspectives on wind turbines during the 2-day lesson so that students could develop informed, evidence-based opinions before entering into formal open discussion on the topic.

Ms. Watson collected a variety of print material (e.g., pamphlets, flyers) from various online sources (e.g., governmental and interest groups) and categorized all information into six file folders according to differing perspectives: *Health (for), Health (against), Environment*
She organized students into six ‘expert’ groups with about four students in each. She tasked each group to become specialists in the focus and perspective of one of the folders. During the first class session, each group was expected to engage with the evidence in their folder by pulling out pieces of information they found interesting, and/or that they saw as supporting a side – either for or against – in their expert area. “For example, if you’re in the group that is against windmills because of health reasons, maybe you can find some statistics in the newspapers and pamphlets [in your folder] to show how many people have expressed concern because they’ve experienced health problems since living near a wind turbine” (Obs, Sept. 27, 2013). Each of the 6 groups recorded their evidence on chart paper.

At the start of the second class session, Ms. Watson instructed each student to draw a copy of a fishbone organizational diagram she had sketched on the front black board (Appendix I). Next, she instructed students to conduct a “gallery walk:” students visited and reviewed each expert group’s chart, and recorded the information in their individual fishbone worksheets. “For you personally, capture the three most important facts or evidence for each of the six areas in your fishbone” (Obs, Sept. 27, 2014). Ms. Watson encouraged students to write down facts, not opinions, and referred directly to a laminated fact vs. opinion poster located on the back wall of the room (Appendix J). This is one of the many instances when I observed Ms. Watson leading students in procedural as well as substantive knowledge building: applying social studies research skills to make an informed (fact-based) decision on an issue and listen and respond to others’ contrasting viewpoints.

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11 Sources of information contained within the folders included recent newspaper articles (local and national), Canadian Wind Energy Association (Natural Resources Canada), University of Toronto professor - published article, Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH).
As students shuffled from pod to pod making notes on their fishbone organizers, some students complained that other groups “had an easier topic” and so could fill their chart paper with more information. For instance, James was quite vocal that his Land Issues (for) topic was “too hard” and his group could not “find much.” Ms. Watson reminded James that not every perspective would have the same amount of information – but this did not mean that a perspective should be valued any less than the others (Obs, Sept. 27, 2013). In this statement, she encouraged James to examine the evidence critically to more deeply understand his assigned perspective. The expert groups also forced some students to research perspectives that differed from their own to provoke rethinking – an important skill to nurture in democratic education (Banks, 2006).

When most students had filled in all of their organizers, Ms. Watson introduced a new discussion model to the class: a U-shaped deliberation (a type of opinion spectrum). She drew a ‘U’ shape on the front board and pointed with her hands: “Imagine that this U is drawn on the floor of our classroom” (around the three sides of its perimeter). On each side of the board she drew an ‘X’ to indicate the top of each side of the U. Above the left ‘X’, she wrote for, and against above the right. “So, the more you are against the practice of using wind turbines in [name of local town] to generate power, the closer you stand to the front of the board here (pointing to against). The person in the class who feels the strongest against [wind turbines] would stand closest to the board. The same goes for the for side.” Ms. Watson instructed students who were uncertain about what side they preferred (or neutral) to stand along the bottom of the U. “It will be up to students standing for or against, to explain why they have taken their position. If you are swayed by any of the reasons you hear, then you can physically
move along or across the U” (Obs, Sept. 27, 2013). This structure did not require students to verbally express their stance to the large group to make known their position on the issue.

The majority of the students (10) stood for, 7 stood against, and the balance (predominantly females) took positions of undecided/neutral along the bottom of the U (all 23 students opted to participate). Ms. Watson did not explicitly invite moderates (neutrals) to speak or ask questions, thus overlooking a democratic learning opportunity to include more (female) students in verbal discussion. There was some jostling among two male students, James and Owen, to decide who should stand closest to the for X. Once students were in position, Ms. Watson invited volunteers to share their perspectives and reminded them to use the evidence from their fishbone organizers to support their views. She encouraged students to “move along the U” (to the left or right) if their position changed and/or if they were swayed by one of the sides. During the 15-minute activity, several students shifted along their side (opinion spectrum) of the U, four females moved from their neutral positions to join a side (3 for, 1 against), and one male crossed over the U from against to for (the for perspective emerged as the most popular view: 14 for, 7 against, 2 neutral). Such movements demonstrated visibly students’ reconsideration of their positions.

Students in all three group interviews highlighted the topic of wind turbines and the U-shaped deliberation, without any prompting from me, as a favourite topic and dialogic format. Students distinguished the activity from other types of discussions in that it made available an unaligned option, provided (some) students a platform to vocally sway peers, and express political voice without participation being demanded coercively. Three female students, whom I did not ever observe speaking up in whole class discussions during my observational period, shared in an interview how they did not feel comfortable to speak in front of the class for fear
that their opinions might be “attacked” by the more dominant vocal students (SGI, October 16, 2013). However, these girls preferred the U-shaped format (to less structured whole class discussions) because they could actively take a position on the issue yet not speak out loud (3 of them had changed their original neutral position). Thus through this activity, students engaged in a type of guided democratic deliberation process that required them to build an informed opinion and practice the skills and dispositions to communicate their perspectives in discussion (Carretero, Haste, & Bermudez, 2016). I refer to this process as a partial deliberation because students were not required to collectively develop a consensus on the issue (Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013, 2014).

In general, all student group interview participants expressed a fondness for Ms. Watson’s issue-based classroom discussions – some commenting that this Civics class had been their first “real” opportunity in a high school classroom to explore and openly express their opinions on conflictual topics. A female group interview participant explained how she had taken up Ms. Watson’s pedagogy:

Female: …for Civics [class]… you’re interacting with others. I find in other classes you’re like, independent and you don’t get the chance to talk to other people about what they think and why. But in Civics you do. (SGI, Oct. 16, 2013)

This student valued exchanging ideas and viewpoints with her peers. While more than half of students did not verbally participate in the teacher-led class discussions, some did acknowledge – and I observed – that they were more likely to speak up about issues in their smaller pod
groups. Listening, in addition to speaking aloud, was also seen as beneficial by some interviewees to hear divergent social and political perspectives. One normally quiet female interviewee stated, “I don’t really participate [in class discussions], but if you don’t know much about, like, an issue that we’re talking about, and, like, there’s other people talking about it and giving their opinions, you kinda get more insight on what is like, the issue, and what people think of it, and it’s helpful to me to hear the different opinions and stuff” (SGI, Oct. 16, 2003).

Students, in general, regard classroom discussions that include contrasting perspectives as important learning experiences (Simon, 2001; Yamashita, 2006). Ms. Watson’s dialogic pedagogies provided her Civics students with agentic opportunities, through speaking and listening, to engage with others’ diverse viewpoints, a type of democratic participation that they also valued.

In this classroom case, Ms. Watson’s transactional pedagogical approach created inclusive opportunities for different students to participate in various classroom dialogic interactions: community circle activities, teacher-selected pod groupings, open whole-class discussion, and a U-shaped debate format. These discussion formats highlight practical, scaffolded approaches to elicit students’ divergent views – particularly when Ms. Watson introduced issues relevant to students’ own lives, thus inviting affective engagement. Presenting children’s rights as not yet settled (Hess, 2009) allowed personally-sensitive topics to surface, such as those having religious associations. This strategy stimulated brief episodes of sustained interpretive discussion, revealing ideological difference and conflict between some students’ expressed Christian beliefs, and those students who critically viewed religion as a form of indoctrination. Other topics, such as the installation of wind turbines, engaged students’ divergent political perspectives because of their local, rural context and close connection to their
lived experiences. Thus a key aspect in Ms. Watson’s citizenship teaching was to regard her learners as capable of thoughtful, active interaction with peers whilst drawing on the knowledge they brought to the classroom as already citizens.

**Mr. Byrne: Building Capacity to Challenge Local Social Injustice**

In our first interview, Mr. Byrne shared his concern that he felt Vandenberg High School had experienced an escalated rate of bullying since he had been a student in the school in the late 1990s (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). He explained that the targets tended to be individuals and/or social identity groups who were perceived by some students in this small school to be “too different” (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). As a former guidance counselor in the school, he had supported some of the victims, who had been targeted because they were of visible (non-white) minority identities, and/or for their perceived low socioeconomic status (“what people have and what people don’t have” – e.g., cell phones), and/or because they were “perceived to be questioning their gender identity” (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). He described how some students chose to conceal their non-visible minority identities, such as sexual orientation and/or Aboriginal ancestry. He knew of one student in the school at the time who did not feel comfortable to share her Jewish heritage with peers, because she feared the anti-Semitic remarks she heard expressed occasionally by students in the school would be directed toward her. One of the most crucial and immediate responsibilities Mr. Byrne identified in his citizenship education work was attempting to teach empathy to transform school climate. “I don’t know how to make it so that [students] understand not just to look at a conflict or a person at face value, but understand where and why they’re coming from” (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). Empathy, an affective dimension of Mr. Byrne’s citizenship teaching, included knowledge acquisition: the more students know
about and understand marginalized social identity experiences and perspectives, the less inclined they might be to marginalize those who they view as different.

Mr. Byrne regarded the grade 10 Civics curriculum as “flexible enough” to provide him with opportunities to teach students to recognize and interrogate justice and difference issues that existed in the school and the small Vandenberg community (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). The small school context, specifically the absence of concurrent Civics classes taught by other teachers, offered Mr. Byrne flexibility and autonomy to design and implement the Civics curriculum as he determined. He appreciated that his content and pedagogical choices were constrained very little, allowing for him to design (and I observed) a localized “social justice” unit. This consisted of a series of pedagogical tasks to build students’ knowledge and awareness of social inequity issues prevalent in the Vandenberg community.

Mr. Byrne planned the first activity in the unit to introduce students to the broad concept of social justice. After assembling the class into small, self-selected groups of two to five students, Mr. Byrne tasked each group to brainstorm and write down what they viewed to be characteristics of social justice. All but one student group opted to talk about the topic within their groups. This group, comprised of three boys, did not speak much at all because they each used their cell phones to locate information. Mr. Byrne observed their behavior and did not apparently try to redirect them. Students’ initial articulations of social justice, shared back to the large group through volunteers, included the elements of fairness, equality, the law, being nice, and being involved in the community (Doc, Apr. 24, 2013). Mr. Byrne asked the class what they meant by “fairness.” Responses (from girls) included giving people what they need, don’t discriminate, treat people equally, making sure both parties are happy (Obs, Apr. 24, 2013). Many female students appeared keen to share their responses on social justice in the whole class
interaction, while most of the male class members acted disinterested (indicated by their silence and ongoing cell phone use).

Mr. Byrne explained to the class that “social justice doesn’t have one definition – it can mean different things to different people.” He presented a definition on the front screen that he said reflected what social justice meant for him:

(a) Social Justice is based on the concept of human rights, equality and a fair society.

(b) People are often defined in groups by their gender, ability, race, culture, religion, class, age, sexuality, and/or socio-economic status.

(c) Judgments are made about people and certain groups and individuals are labeled as superior or inferior.

(d) Social Justice is the act of trying to change these factors to create an equal, unbiased, non-prejudiced society. (Obs, Apr. 24, 2013)

Mr. Byrne’s reference to the pursuit of social change to address injustice in this definition aligns with a justice-oriented approach to citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Mr. Byrne suggested that some kind of ‘change’ was required to promote greater equality and fairness among different social identity groups; however, he did not elaborate what type of act or action. Drawing from all of the ideas that had been shared aloud and/or from Mr. Byrne’s definition, he tasked each student to create a personal definition of the term, beginning with “social justice is…” Student examples, volunteered by six female students (male students did not respond), included “saying good morning to everyone, whether you know them or not” and “…treating others as you would like to be treated” (Obs, Apr. 24, 2013). All of the verbalized student examples described good character and manners, revealing understandings associated with
Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) personally responsible citizen; not participatory or the justice-oriented understandings of citizenship put forward by Mr. Byrne moments earlier.

To invite participation and broaden verbal contributions from more students, Mr. Byrne asked students, in their groups, to “brainstorm examples of acts of social injustice that involve certain social groups, such as either boys or girls, or people with particular gender identities, abilities, race, religions, class, or sexuality” that they had experienced: i) at school, and ii) with home and family. This task generated inclusive, sustained peer-to-peer group conversation, particularly among male students. The volume in the classroom elevated significantly and I noted how some previously silent and disengaged male students became animated in their groups when sharing and/or actively listening to peers’ stories of school and family injustice: they leaned forward in their chairs to listen to group members, often laughing and/or shaking their heads. Students’ lively responses suggested that many had witnessed and/or experienced social injustice in their own lives, and felt comfortable enough to share and listen to these in their friend groups. This apparently more alluring topic for small group discussion appeared to engage both sexes and stimulate perspective sharing more broadly than had the previous activity (characteristics of social justice).

Homophobia and racism were each named among the students’ examples of injustice witnessed within the school. Racism, in the form of stereotypes and (disrespectful) jokes, was acknowledged and discussed in all groups (Doc, Apr. 24, 2013). About half of the class raised their hands to share injustice stories from home or school when invited by Mr. Byrne. The activity did surface hegemonic assumptions and harmful essentializing tendencies that students had witnessed and/or experienced themselves. One female student shared how her father had said “stupid things about Asians when we see them driving … I tell him to stop, but he thinks
we’re laughing too when we’re not.” A table of male students laughed loudly following her remarks; Mr. Byrne did not react to the outburst, allowing the open forum to continue uninterrupted. Another female disclosed how her “grandparents say racist and homophobic things all the time ’cause they don’t know any better” (Obs, Apr. 24, 2013). This instance represents a democratic learning opportunity whereby Mr. Byrne provided a dialogic space for students to air conflicting perspectives: their previous personal episodes with intolerance, many connected to family members, and exercise dissent. Those quoted expressed anti-racist views, rejecting such intolerance, and did not seem to take on their (grand)parents homophobia/racism – attitudes these students viewed as misinformed and ignorant. The activity brought to light a pedagogical challenge for democratic educators: how to facilitate speech about bigotry when it surfaces openly. As Davies (2014) argues, “democratic classrooms are places where offensive views can be aired and picked apart in a relatively safe setting” (p. 454) and where “dialogue should aim to disturb, to challenge – to create turbulence” to support interruptive democracy (p. 453). Speech, however bigoted, should not be silenced, but de-legitimated through airing contrasting anti-racist and anti-homophobic perspectives, preferably those that come from students as they did in these few instances. The sharing activity expended the remainder of class time.

The following day, Mr. Byrne presented students with an assignment to further explore injustice issues and their roots, through a 500-word written self-assessment entitled Your Beliefs Paragraph. He instructed students to choose and respond to between 3 and 5 questions from the following list (provided in the assignment handout):

• What are my biases? How do they affect the way I see the world?
• Where do my beliefs come from? (e.g. family, peers, school, religious teachings, media, experiences) To what degree are they unique to me?

• How do my personal experiences and circumstances (e.g. age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, family, socioeconomic status) affect my perceptions?

• How do my ancestry and nationality affect my perceptions?

• Am I privileged and entitled? In what ways? To what extent does this colour the way I relate to the world?

• Am I oppressed or marginalized? In what ways?

• How do I perpetuate or challenge the status quo?

• How do I respond when someone disagrees with me? How do I treat others with beliefs and values that are different from my own?

• To what extent do I understand the concept of social justice? What do I do to promote social justice ideals? (Doc, Apr. 25, 2013)

First, Mr. Byrne read each question aloud and briefly explained key terms. For instance, to illustrate how a person might be marginalized, he held up a sheet of lined paper and asked students to indicate where the margins were located on the page.

Female: Like, around the edges?

Mr. B: That’s right. There are some groups of people who are pushed to the side, or to the margins (pointing to the edge of the page) of society because they aren’t valued as much as other groups that are seen as more important, or in the center of society. (pointing to the center of the page) (Obs, Apr. 25, 2013)
He did not probe students to consider why or how a particular social identity group might become marginalized. Instead, he left this task to the students, explaining how he hoped the paragraph assignment would be “a way to reflect on your beliefs, where they come from, and why you are treated or treat others in particular ways.” He suggested that they draw from the previous day’s social injustice discussion “for inspiration” (Obs, Apr. 25, 2013).

Mr. Byrne shared the 11 (of 18) student responses with me that had been handed in by the due date. He concealed the names of students and marked each assignment with an ‘f’ or an ‘m’ to denote the author’s gender identity (7 girls; 4 boys). Girls’ responses tended to span several paragraphs, whereas the boys’ responses usually were limited to one brief paragraph. All female students in the class submitted the assignment, while some male students did not. This could suggest that many male students in this class may have found the writing task difficult and/or uninteresting. The candidness with which some students revealed their personal accounts to Mr. Byrne provided deep insight into students’ different lived social experiences – more so than had been aired during the previous day’s ‘open’ forum. For example, one female disclosed how she felt uncomfortable in the school because of her sexual orientation. “Even though I am not open about my bisexuality during at present, and even though there are very few people who are even aware that I identify as anything other than straight, I am still oppressed by the queerphobia occurring around me, no matter how indirect or unintentional it may be … The amount of queerphobia that occurs within the walls of [Vandenberg] High is overwhelming, as is the number of people who think that there’s no homophobia” (F, Doc, May 23, 2013). At the time of study, Vandenberg High School had a Gay Straight Alliance student group. However, this student pointed out, “just because some people are out and about and wearing rainbow
tshirts doesn’t mean everyone’s okay with it.” This student’s concern that some of her peers were homophobic was substantiated by some voices in a class discussion I observed. Mr. Byrne had shared with students a current event concerning an alleged homophobic assault in a nearby town (Obs, May 16, 2013). Josh voiced his disapproval of homosexuality, even though he was not supported by at least three female classmates. These girls, sitting together, did not challenge his views verbally; however, they sighed loudly and shook their heads noticeably in response. All three student group interviews also revealed some students’ recognition that homophobia persisted within the culture of the school, particularly among dominant males and some self-identified socially conservative Christian students.

In other individual essays, some male and female students adamantly opposed religion, specifically Christianity. In contrast, three females cited their Christian faith in their paragraphs as guiding their capacity to treat others with respect and, as one wrote, “to be kind to others, because that is what Jesus taught” (F, Doc, May 23, 2013). Similar to Ms. Watson’s Civics students, religion appeared to be an ideological dividing point among some students.

A female student whose parents had immigrated to Canada from India commented in her paragraph, “I am aware of marginalization because it typically occurs to the minorities in society and I can be considered as one. For example women and colored people are minorities that are often marginalized and I am both” (Doc, F, May 23, 2013). She did not provide any details, in this written response or orally in class, about how she had herself experienced marginalization. Another female student wrote about her discomfort with having a learning disability: “…[it] does not make me any different or insignificant from any other but this does make it harder to express what I am saying or I may do thing a little different from others, and I do feel marginalized because people do not understand what I am doing/saying and just push me
aside before I can explain my thoughts and in the end I just feel doltish and frustrated” (F, Doc, May 23, 2013). The social identity experiences expressed in these personal disclosures demonstrated how some students had acquired tangible, affective understandings of marginalization processes. Mr. Byrne’s reflection activity invited students, as already citizens, to critically reflect on this knowledge: to exercise agency and speak (write) about their marginalized experiences (Johnson & Morris, 2010).

Clearly, this low-risk, private writing assignment provided a platform for some students to acknowledge and explain their marginalized social status, as well as to question and challenge status quo hierarchies in their own lives (Davies, 2004, 2014; Haroutunian-Gordon, 2010) – important aspects of democratic citizenship. The samples of written work I read brought to light how some students attributed their marginalization experiences to less visible dimensions of social difference (sexuality, learning ability, religion, gender). Mr. Byrne shaped this private disclosure pedagogy to integrate (invite) students’ home and community experiences into the implemented curriculum and supported some students to recognize and critique social inequities, thus supporting critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Mr. Byrne explained to me that, while he presented the assignment as a way for students to critically examine and identify their biases, it also provided him with insight into his students’ various identities and life experiences. For instance, one male student identified in his paragraph as having (mixed) European and Aboriginal heritage. Such individual narratives provided Mr. Byrne with knowledge of some of his students, their families, and/or their social situations. He told me that this knowledge enabled him to integrate some students’ lived experiences into the curriculum so that they could glimpse themselves reflected in the learning. I saw evidence of this in the following diamond activity.
As a lead-in to the culminating unit project, Mr. Byrne had implemented a *Diamond Ranking* group task as a means for students to identify, discuss, and visually organize social justice issues in the Vandenberg community. Mr. Byrne introduced the activity by explaining that social issues were “problems that prevent our community from working as well as it could, like poverty” (Obs, Apr. 29, 2013). In small, self-selected groups, Mr. Byrne asked students to brainstorm examples of social issues that they thought were prevalent in and around Vandenberg. After about five minutes, Mr. Byrne asked each group to share one or two examples with the class, which he wrote down on the board: *unemployment, homelessness, drug addicts, alcoholism, disabled people, physical abuse, teenage pregnancy, single parent families, bullying, crime, people suffering from eating disorders, mental health* (Obs, Apr. 29, 2013).

Female students volunteered all but one of the social issues listed. Three male students did not participate at all in the group activity, opting instead to lean back in their chairs, heads down, playing video games under their desks. Mr. Byrne observed their non-compliant behaviour but did not address it during the observed class period.

Mr. Byrne then provided each group with chart paper to draw out a diamond ranking template (Appendix K). He instructed each group to reach consensus and to write what they considered to be the “most urgent” (severe) social issue in the Vandenberg community at the top of their diamond and to continue ranking nine issues of their choice down to the “least urgent” at the bottom. While most groups appeared to work collaboratively (with the exception of the three disengaged boys), Mr. Byrne circulated around the classroom to respond to questions about the various social issues and/or the task.

The group within hearing distance of my desk (3 males, 1 female) engaged in a lively conversation that included comments such as: “teenage parents” (“that’s their fault”), “homeless
people” (“they’re lazy – that’s the same as unemployment”), “drug addicts” (“those people can get a job by cleaning their act up”) (Obs, Apr. 29, 2013). This same group wrote “Hoboes” (ranked low) on their diamond to denote homelessness as a social issue. Tara, the dominant female in the group, insisted that, “being homeless is their fault. They can clean up and get a job, so put it at the bottom” (of the diamond). The other group members appeared to agree with Tara by nodding their heads, laughing and directing comments to her (Obs, Apr. 29, 2013). This group appeared to assign a higher priority to social issues in which they perceived individuals to have little control (e.g., disabilities). Those in which they understood people to have more influence over their situations (e.g., unemployment, crime, drugs) they assigned lower priority. This group espoused liberal mainstream narratives – pointing to an individual’s choices in life as the cause of their success/failure. These students did not connect individuals’ marginalized social circumstances with systemic forces. When observing this group, I was mindful of how Mr. Byrne’s self-selecting grouping strategy allowed students to sit among friends. This strategy could reinforce social hierarchies and ideological dominance (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012), as might have been the situation in this group: students tended to direct their perspectives to popular and influential Tara. They might not have wanted to risk censure from peers (especially Tara) by dissenting from (thus disrupting) her approved views (Schultz, 2010).

After 10 minutes, all (5) groups hung their diamond rankings along the front board. Mr. Byrne noted that no one social issue had been consistently placed among the groups’ top three (most urgent) or bottom three (least urgent) rankings. For example, mental illness was located atop one diamond but did not appear at all in any of the others. He explained that, “because we’re all different and have dissimilar life experiences and circumstances, we’re not all going to agree or understand where these social issues should be placed” (Obs, Apr. 29, 2013). In his
explanation, Mr. Byrne used the variations among diamond rankings to highlight for students their contrasting understandings of local social issues.

Lisa, a usually quiet student, raised her hand and shared, in a barely audible, trembling voice, that her family had a history of mental health problems that had led to other social issues such as addictions and eating disorders. The class fell silent when she spoke – though not all of the male students chose to look up from their video games to focus on Lisa. Her all-girl group had listed mental illness as their most urgent social issue. Underneath, in the same box, they wrote subheadings: addiction, eating disorders, affects everyone/lots of people, depression, and anxiety, thus showing a sophisticated understanding of mental health-related issues (Doc, Apr. 29, 2013). This was the first time I had heard Lisa exercise agency through speaking out loud in front of her classmates. Mr. Byrne shared with me after the class that Lisa suffered from severe anxiety and he was happy that she felt comfortable-enough to share her experiences publicly with the class. “I think [her comments] helped the others understand how mental health can be challenging for people like her who live with it every day” (P/O-Int, Apr. 29, 2013). This activity invited and supported Lisa to practice democratic civic engagement by drawing attention to alternative understandings of mental illness (and thus different ways of knowing and being in the world) and the various ways it can lead to a host of other related social issues.

Mr. Byrne built on students’ awareness of social issues in a subsequent lesson, by inviting them to critically reflect on their status in the community and to consider some of the causalities of social and political problems. Each student-selected group was provided with a stapled package of ‘poverty cards’ (see Appendix L). Mr. Byrne told me later that he had located the cards (each copied on to an 8.5”x11” piece of paper) from The Centre for Social Justice (Canada): a research, education and advocacy group with a focus on equality and
democracy. Each card contained a provocative heading (e.g., *Behind every hungry child is a starving Mom*) followed by statistical data about poverty in Ontario and/or Canada (e.g., *41% of Canadians using foodbanks are children*), and a political message (e.g., *Vote for a living wage*). On the reverse side of each page, Mr. Byrne had developed the same inquiry questions for each group:

1. Why does the poverty exist? Brainstorm 5 ways that would get a person from a “normal life” to the situation the info card presents.
2. Solutions – Brainstorm 5 solutions directly tied to the above that can prevent a person from getting into the situation.
   
   Note: The solutions have to be based on the problems that currently exist and will continue to exist. Do not provide unrealistic answers that eliminate the problem in extreme ways. For example: “Don’t have kids.”

Mr. Byrne introduced the cards to the class as “politically-charged statements, because [The Center for Social Justice] doesn’t think poverty will go away unless everyone starts to change their behaviour” (Obs, May 1, 2013). Thus, he guided students to consider how poverty may result from larger social-structural phenomena (e.g., “a too-low government-mandated minimum wage”), and not necessarily the fault of an individual. Tara’s group, whom I had overheard during the previous diamond activity, had not acknowledged this causal dynamic. Mr. Byrne explained a “normal life” (see question 1 above) as “one not lived in poverty” (Obs, May 1, 2013). He instructed student groups, to “list ways someone can get into the situations [on each poster] and possible solutions to solve the problem in each.” He advised students “not to be extreme” in their responses, because “if you think that the easiest way to solve a problem is to be extreme in your solution, like just telling people to change their behavior, that’s not going to work.” Adam, a frequent contributor to class discussions, challenged Mr. Byrne:
Adam: If it’s so hard, then why ask us to find solutions?

Mr. B: Because we have to stop thinking about: here’s a problem, we’re not going to deal with it. We’re just going to let it happen. Which in my opinion, our society continues to do. We just sort of say, here’s the problem. Let’s fundraise and throw money at it. But sometimes money doesn’t exactly go to the problem. There’s something deeper going on in our society. So if I say here’s 2 million dollars to stop hunger – yeah, that money could stop hunger for a certain number of people, but I’m not actually getting at solving why those people are hungry in the first place.

Adam: But a lot of poverty is due to laziness. There’s a lot of disabilities and stuff, but there’s a lot of laziness. So how are you supposed to stop that?

(All students focus their gaze toward Mr. Byrne to await his response. 
One female student turns to her female neighbour and opens her eyes wide, seemingly surprised by Adam’s confrontational remarks) (Obs, May 1, 2013)

During my observational period, Mr. Byrne generally responded to such comments by disclosing his personal opinions on topics, as he did here – thereby opening (versus closing) space for at least two different perspectives (his and the student challenger’s) to emerge:

Mr. B: I don’t disagree with you [Adam]. Do I think there are lazy people who
take advantage of our system? Oh yes. I see this in our school. Do you believe there are some students in our school who know the system so well that they’re going to take advantage of it? *(some students nod)*

I know that for sure. But I also know that there are some students in our school who need programs and supports in order to get them through school because of the situation they find themselves in. And it’s through no fault or laziness of their own. The same can be said of many adults in society. *(Obs, May 1, 2013)*

Thus, Mr. Byrne did not shut down or reject Adam’s perspective, but he did gently challenge it and legitimize an alternate point of view. With eyes focused on his teacher, Adam nodded his head in response as if to indicate that he understood Mr. Byrne’s points. This activity, including this conversation, surfaced conflict among some students: some labeled people living in poverty as “lazy” – “they’d rather sit on their asses and get a cheque.” Others argued that “some groups have bad things happen to them that are out of their control” *(Obs, M, May 1, 2013)*. Mr. Byrne’s response to Adam acknowledged both perspectives.

Continuing the lesson, Mr. Byrne asked students to refer to a specific poverty card with the message: *The wealthiest families in Ontario earn $14 … For every $1 the poorest earn,* and to consider how a family could lose income security so easily. He drew an example from his personal experience: his family had faced financial hardships while he and his brother were growing up in Vandenberg. Both of his parents had been laid off from their factory jobs within three months of each other. This had caused great distress to his parents, as they did not have any savings to tide them over until they found work. Mr. Byrne disclosed that, while his parents’
unemployment had lasted “only a few months,” it was “a period of my childhood that I will
never forget … and it can happen to any of us” (Obs, May 1, 2013). Mr. Byrne explained to me
after this class session that he had chosen to disclose this piece of personal history because he
“almost always” met with students in his classes, like Adam, who thought “poverty can’t happen
to them. Many [students] don’t understand that some people in this small rural community
suffer for various reasons that are beyond their control” (P/O-Int, May 1, 2013). He also felt that
less affluent students were unlikely to share their personal accounts of “being poor” publicly
with their classmates. Mr. Byrne drew from his personal history to legitimate and humanize
subaltern (socio-economic) views to help guide students through difficult conceptions of
citizenship and to explicitly acknowledge social inequities.

When invited to share their solutions on a poverty card of their choice, one all-girl group
presented their ideas in relation to the card: *Behind every hungry child is a starving Mom.* They
proposed a universal childcare plan, affordable housing, and a living wage. The group named
one systemic cause of poverty, “prejudice against women in the workplace,” as causing
women’s unequal access to resources and having been accorded less value (in the workplace
than men) (Obs, May 1, 2013). Three of the five groups did not convey, either verbally or in
writing, an understanding of social stratification along social group lines (such as gender, race,
class or sexuality) as a cause of poverty. These three groups each included laziness as a causal
factor, thus overlooking (and/or ignoring) Mr. Byrne’s earlier appeal to students to think
critically (beyond individual behaviours) about the root causes of poverty. One of these three
groups did, however, acknowledge that parental mental illness could lead families to face
hardship. All five groups found it difficult to come up with justice-oriented solutions to
challenge social inequalities and injustice. Some solution examples included saving money,
accessing food banks and thrift shops, pursuing further education, and accessing contraception to prevent unplanned pregnancies (Doc, May 1, 2013). Two groups put forward “equality” as a solution; however, they did not give details concerning how equality might be achieved, suggesting that they did not yet have the knowledge, understanding, or skills (or possibly the desire) to conceptualize transformative justice solutions.

During one of our candid after-class chats, Mr. Byrne shared with me some of the persistent challenges he had faced in his efforts to teach students to probe the complex social, political, and economic dimensions of social injustice (P/O-Int, May 1, 2013). Constrained by a short 10-week instructional period, he expressed that he believed he could pursue no more than shallow analysis of social structural inequalities and relations of power. I sensed that much of this frustration stemmed from the difficult nature of his anti-oppression, transformational approach. It became obvious to me through my observations and our collegial conversations that Mr. Byrne had the desire to interrupt some students’ harmful assumptions: from blaming individuals for their hardships (e.g., poverty), to holding social institutions answerable for social injustice. At that time, he disclosed to me that he was still searching for strategies to represent pedagogically concepts associated with justice-oriented citizenship (“bigger picture” systemic marginalization and oppression; Othering and normalizing processes) to make them comprehensible and meaningful to all his students (see North, 2009). In the meantime, developing empathy remained a key ingredient in Mr. Byrne’s citizenship teaching. This is an important element in democratic citizenship education (Zembylas, 2014); however, empathy is insufficient on its own to transform the social and political conditions that enable the processes of marginalization and Othering (see Boler, 1997).
Mr. Byrne concluded the lesson by explaining that the purpose of the diamond task and poverty cards had been to increase students’ knowledge and awareness about social differences, to invite conversation about how social issues impacted the local community, and to demonstrate why social action non-governmental organizations were needed in Vandenberg. For their upcoming final research project, he connected some of the social issues listed in the diamonds to specific examples of local charitable organizations and encouraged students to select an issue (and corresponding organization) based on their interests and/or personal life experiences.

The culminating project in Mr. Byrne’s Civics course, referred to as the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative, was conducted in self-selected groups of two to four students: this emphasized collective social action (rather than only individual acts of compassion and kindness). The Toskan-Casale Foundation had founded the Initiative in Ontario as an “active” citizenship program to raise awareness among young people about philanthropy’s role (“any good act to help humanity”) in supporting civil society (Obs, Apr. 25, 2013). The project required students, in their friend groups, to visit, learn about, and develop relationships with representatives from a self-selected local, social service, non-profit charitable organization. It did not obligate students to actively participate and/or volunteer in any organization’s operations. Students, in their groups, later gave a 5-10 minute presentation to the class on their experiences (visiting with the organization).

All but two students fulfilled the requirement to visit an organization outside of class time and to conduct interviews with charity workers. Two female students initiated a class discussion about how “making the visit was really hard” for them because of a limited number of charities to choose from in the small town of Vandenberg. For example, a group of three
female students sought to visit and research the nearest women’s shelter, but they needed to travel at least 30 minutes by car because direct public transportation was unavailable. Mr. Byrne told students that, “one of the problems with living in such a small town that’s so far away from other places is that we tend not to get the same money and services that bigger communities get. So if people need the assistance of social service providers, families with low incomes in our rural area might not be able to access social service providers because they may not have the means” (Obs, Apr. 30, 2013). The three female students, unable to visit the women’s shelter because they could not “find a lift,” visited another charity they felt “less passionate learning about” (SGI, F, May 30, 2013). Thus, some students’ capacity to practice engaged citizen agency was limited by their rural location. This geographic factor narrowed the range of social perspectives and experiences students could encounter through the project.

For this culminating project, Mr. Byrne asked his Civics students to learn about their selected local, social service organization, and, if an opportunity arose, to engage with the stories of those who required its services. In this way, Mr. Byrne implemented an education about the Other approach (Kumashiro, 2000) through humanizing students’ understandings of marginalized people in the local community, thereby promoting empathy. For instance, two female students reported on their visit to the local food bank. They described how they had conducted their interview with the food bank manager in a location where they could observe how the facility operated and who it served. They expressed alarm at the apparent high level of demand for food and the wide range of clients it served:

Sara: The place was packed! I was surprised by all the people … and then I was sad because I didn’t realize how many people need this place.
Taryn: And some guy came in wearing a suit! Like an actual suit! I was like, he doesn’t need to come here. And (the manager) explained how it’s really hard for some people to go there, ‘cause it like, hurts their pride. And the man dresses up every time he goes ’cause like, it made him feel better about what was going on with him.

Sara: I just pictured homeless people going in there. But I learned that lots of people fall on hard times and need some support. (Obs, May 14, 2013)

I noted that, as in the poverty poster group activity, Taryn and Sara did not name the social injustices that might have caused sustained use of food banks in society (e.g., a low minimum wage), nor did Mr. Byrne probe for these perspectives. Teaching about the invisible causes of social class inequalities is difficult, and “means that complex feelings of ambivalence and anxiety about success and failure, possibility and constraint, entitlement and exclusion … are not open to self-examination” (Luttrell, 2008, p. 62). Social class, a less visible dimension of social difference, is also an uncomfortable topic for students to share their own realities.

However, Taryn’s ‘man in the suit’ story illustrated how the project brought some participating students face-to-face with people outside of their experiences, including those harmed by socio-economic inequities and having perceptions they did not normally share. Such encounters can be meaningful and transformational democratic opportunities to support students’ critical consciousness: to view socio-economic difference and inequity from multiple social group perspectives. At the same time, Sara and Taryn’s surprised description of their experience with Others might have further marginalized those students in the class whose families required food bank services.
The group presentation was a vehicle for some students (if they were willing and able to exercise agency through speaking with their own voices) to share their socially-located understandings of inclusion and exclusion. For example, an all-girl group commenced their presentation by distributing a piece of coloured paper to each classmate. Lisa asked students to stand if their paper was green, to illustrate that statistically 1 in 5 people in the room had a mental illness. Lisa disclosed that she was a 1 in 5, diagnosed with an anxiety disorder which caused her to be nervous most of the time, to speak quickly, to fidget, to be nervous when ordering in restaurants, and sometimes to avoid leaving her house. Her anxiety resulted in a variety of physical ailments that she also shared. She took deep breaths before she spoke, her hands trembled, and she did not look directly at her peers. “It’s taking a toll on me mentally and physically to share my story with you. But it’s important that I do so that you understand how [name of organization] supports people like me, with a mental illness, to function” (Obs, May 13, 2013). Lisa’s decision to publically disclose her struggles with mental illness surfaced a less obvious social identity difference that tends to remain suppressed in classrooms.

A male student, Jim, also presented on the topic of mental illness, focusing on the school’s special education department rather than a local charitable organization. This, and his decision to work independently, did not align with the explicit requirements of the project. However, Mr. Byrne had made an exception to support Jim (the only student to work alone) to exercise agency through sharing his personal circumstances with the class: “I’ve missed a lot of high school because of my mental illness. That’s why I’m 18 years old and in your grade 10 class (typically comprised of 15 year-old students). Maybe some of you wondered why I’m here” (Obs, May 28, 2013). He attempted to laugh. Sweating profusely, Jim was visibly nervous. He kept his eyes directed down toward his presentation notes on a desk, similar to Lisa,
and did not make eye contact with the audience – looking up only once to glance in Mr. Byrne’s
direction. Jim shared information from his interviews with the school’s special education and
student success teachers, and discussed how community organizations partnered with the school
to provide supportive, equitable spaces to “help people like me who need a little bit of help to be
as successful as you. As someone with mental illness, I can tell you we’re not lazy or stupid –
we just need a leg up.” This remark was important because it conflicted with and thus
challenged Adam’s viewpoints about laziness and poverty that he made in a previous class
session.

Mr. Byrne’s blended transactional and transformational pedagogical approach to
navigate social diversity in Vandenberg provided Lisa and Jim with the opportunity to express
their usually marginalized voices to their classmates. Drawing on and integrating students’ lived
social identity experiences into the implemented curriculum provided occasions for these
students to see themselves reflected in the learning, an important aspect of culturally relevant
pedagogy (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In each of their presentations, Jim and Lisa invited their
audience to unlearn Othering (Davies, 2014): the ways they might have stereotyped and
marginalized people with mental illness. Student group interviews revealed that some students
felt they had gained a “better understanding of mental illness,” a social difference that “we don’t
really talk about or know much about” (SGI, F, May 30, 2013). “[Mental illness] is like, hidden.
[Lisa and Jim] taught me that lots of people, and like, teenagers, don’t want [their mental
illness] out there. But if it’s not, then people think it’s a bad thing to get ashamed of” (SGI, F,
May 30, 2013). Both of these presentations silenced the class and provoked even the usually-
disengaged male students to exercise a type of agency: they put down their cell phones and/or
removed an ear bud, looked up toward the speakers, and actively listened to the (presumably) unfamiliar perspectives that were shared (Parker, 2010).

In this classroom case, Mr. Byrne infused social inequity issues from the local community into his Civics unit (as subject matter) so that students could examine questions of bias and unequal social power. This strategy opened opportunity spaces for students to experience contrasting perspectives and ways of living in relation to less visible social differences and conflicts (e.g., heterogeneities of socioeconomic status, mental health). He also sought to expose students to silenced perspectives that did not emerge in classroom talk to transform their initial beliefs and/or to challenge dominant voices in the room (*status quo* hierarchies) (Davies, 2004). For instance, to demonstrate to students the ease in which a family can fall on hard economic times and to legitimate subaltern views, Mr. Byrne disclosed his own family history of employment vulnerability. In summary, Mr. Byrne’s democratic citizenship pedagogy emphasized learner reflection about students’ own as well as Others’ social injustice experiences. He encouraged students to navigate their own biases, (under)privilege, and/or (acts of) marginalization as already citizens and knowledgeable political actors in an unjust society.

**Mrs. Thomas: “What does diversity look like in our rural community?”**

Mrs. Thomas told me that she found it challenging to facilitate teacher-student or student-student dialogue with her grade 9 geography class, because many students had one or more diagnosed learning challenges and lacked “the skills to understand how to speak politely to each other and take turns” (T-Int, Jan. 22, 2014). She had arranged the classroom desks in horizontal rows facing toward the front of the room, to minimize distractions and to encourage routine to settle some students’ anxiety. Mrs. Thomas determined who sat where, and with whom. She positioned the five high-status and often-disruptive vocal males, Austen, Jack,
Wyatt, Jimmy and Pete separately around the room. Seated next to each was a quieter student less likely to volunteer into class conversations.

To probe students’ understandings of diversity at the start of a three-week unit of study on immigration policy and multiculturalism in Canada, Mrs. Thomas facilitated a large-group forum around the first of the three unit guiding questions: *What does diversity look like in our school, community, province, and country?* (questions 2 and 3 will be discussed in Chapter 6). She wrote ‘DIVERSITY’ in the middle of the front board and posed information gathering questions (Dull & Murrow, 2008):

Mrs. T: So what is diversity, guys? That’s part of the big question of our unit.

*(there is a 7 second pause – students do not offer any suggestions)*

To understand what diversity looks like, we have to first understand what diversity is – what it means. Think of the word ‘diverse.’

*(Jack, sitting near the front of the class, takes a deep breath and sighs loudly)*

Jack: I’m stumped! *(he throws his hands up in the air)*

Jimmy: *(without raising his hand)*

I’ll give it a gamble. So like, football and soccer are like, diverse, than rugby. Is that a good example?

Mrs. T: They’re diverse in that they’re different than rugby? Is that what you’re saying?

Jimmy: No. Like they mix in… like if you mix soccer with football, that’s rugby.

Mrs. T: So two different sports, but coming up in another sport.
Jimmy: Coming up in one.
Mrs. T: Alright. So we have the mixture of the two sports.
Jimmy: Or like in Toronto there’s a bunch of different diversity people.
Mrs. T: Ok. What’s another word we could use for that?
Rodney: Uh, some people are more different than others.
Mrs. T: Yeah. So differences.

(on the board she writes: “Diversity = Differences”)

Rodney: Like, there’s a bunch of different skins, or types of people, in Toronto.
Mrs. T: Yes. So it could be different sports; it could be different people; it could be different ideas – because diversity doesn’t have to be people. It could be likes and dislikes. It could be differences of opinions too. (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013)

Rodney’s response, near the end of this exchange, implied that he associated diversity with visible racial difference: he linked this characteristic with urban Toronto, despite the presence of Damion, a black student, in the room. Mrs. Thomas built on Jimmy and Rodney’s knowledge by highlighting that difference of opinions, or contrasting ideologies, was also a type of diversity. In this way, she promoted an understanding of difference and conflict that included less visible social distinctions as well as everyday differences.

Next, Mrs. Thomas moved from soliciting abstract definitions of diversity to inviting students to reflect on their actual personal experiences with difference in their school community. A number of students raised their hands to offer examples – including some students whom I had not seen offer verbal responses openly before. Mrs. Thomas recorded on
the board a range of students’ own conceptions of diversity: clothing, hair, personalities, age, athletic skill, rural and urban (two students framed this as a social distinction between “country kids and city kids” and “hicks and slicks” – these terms also elicited a degree of conflict in the room among students who lived on dairy farms, and students who lived in town, but “dressed like farmers ‘cause they’re wannabe’s”), skin colour, religion, self esteem, abilities (articulated by students as “to communicate”, “to think”, “moving around” from place to place), opinions, and language (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013). Thus, asking students to share their personal knowledge of local differences was a means for Mrs. Thomas to invite and include diverse social identity content, including visible and less visible dimensions of social difference.

The male student who voiced skin colour made a noticeable hand motion toward Damion during his response, unseen by Mrs. Thomas. In this gesture, Damion was Othered: cast as different from the rest of the (white) students in the class. Mrs. Thomas challenged the (male) student who had suggested religion to “probe deeper” into the diverse types of Christianity. She asked students if they knew of any Catholics (3 students raised their hands), or Lutherans (5 hands), or “other kinds of Christians” (5 hands). In this instance, Mrs. Thomas used hand-raising as a non-verbal way to elicit input from all students, thus encouraging a deeper engagement with difference (and conflict) within Christianity than would have been achieved with only volunteers who spoke up. Austen proudly shared aloud that his family was of Mennonite heritage. Mrs. Thomas nodded and responded to the class, “See? There’s lots of different types of groups within Christianity. It’s a very diverse religion” (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013). She did not ask, nor did students suggest, if there were students in the school (or wider) community from non-Christian religions. This activity demonstrated how Christianity, in this classroom setting, functioned as a dominant discourse. However, two students said aloud that they did not have
any religion (this difference was not recorded on the board). Neither Mrs. Thomas nor her students recognized gender identity or sexual orientation as types of diversity in the school or wider community at any point during my observational period. These omissions limited opportunities to encourage acknowledgement and respect for diverse gender identities and/or sexual orientations by airing various marginalized and/or silenced perspectives (Davies, 2014).

Mrs. Thomas next facilitated an activity for students to consider their personal identities and life experiences through reflective writing followed by large group perspective sharing. To begin, Mrs. Thomas invited students to independently reflect on occasions when they had felt included (positively) or excluded (negatively) in cliques and social hierarchies in school. She asked students to respond individually in writing to the following prompts on their worksheets:

1. Recall a time in school when you felt especially included, engaged, and appreciated:

   *A time when I felt included, excited about what I was learning, and/or appreciated for what I knew, what I could do, or who I am, was…*

2. Recall a time when you felt excluded, alienated, or different from everyone else in a negative way:

   *A time when I didn’t feel I belonged, or I felt different from many people, was…*

(Doc, Dec. 3, 2013)

After about ten minutes of quiet independent contemplation and writing, Mrs. Thomas asked for volunteers to share their experiences with the class. Damion immediately raised his hand and told a personal story of in-school social exclusion based on his (non-white) racialized identity:

   Mrs. T: Tell us about a time when you didn’t feel included.
Damion: When I tried out for the football team. Well, because of my colour. I was the only black kid on the team. And everyone was picking on me.

Mrs. T: And it was an all-white team?

Damion: Yeeeeeaaah! (nodding)

Mrs. T: You were the only boy with black skin?

Damion: That’s right. (pause)

Mrs. T: And so you felt uncomfortable?

Damion: Yes.

Mrs. T: Is that the only time you’ve ever felt that? Because, to be honest Damion, we all know this school is not very multicultural.

Damion: No it’s not! (shaking his head, eyebrows raised)

(a few male students laugh at these last remarks. Damion smiles)

Mrs. T: Do you feel comfortable in this school? Or do you feel like you stand out because of your skin colour?

Damion: I don’t know…

(his voice sounds less confident now; he shrugs his shoulders and speaks more quickly; he is looking down at his hands resting on his lap)

Mrs. T: So just on that football team is when you really felt it?

Damion: Yup.

Mrs. T: So did you stick with that or did you leave that team?

Damion: I left and went to play in [name of city located a 1-hour drive away].

Because [city] is like, all different. There’s Muslims, brown people…
There’s all different kinds of kids from all over the place. So I’m not the only one.

Mrs. T: So you feel more comfortable there?

Damion: Oh yeeaaah. (nodding his head) (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013)

When Damion shared his experiences, both in this instance and in others I observed, the class turned very quiet and still. All students appeared to listen to him with interest; cell phones were shoved into desks and heads turned to face Damion when he spoke. This was the only instance, however, when I observed Damion volunteering to share his racialized experience. His disclosure illustrated, for listening peers, how he did not feel as though he could access the same citizenship opportunities, through participation in sport, as majority white students at Hoffmann. The democratic potential of this instance subsided, however, when Mrs. Thomas asked: “Do you feel comfortable in this school? Or do you feel like you stand out because of your skin colour?” (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013). Such an exchange, between a white teacher and the single racialized student in the class, led me to question whether such public elicitation is democratic, or stigmatizing.

I noted that Mrs. Thomas used the term ‘multicultural’ in the above exchange to signify racial difference, thus losing a democratic opportunity to center Damion’s experience of inequality within a context of racism and racial conflict (see Howard, 2008). Following Damion’s disclosure, Mrs. Thomas cautioned her students not to use the personal information they had heard in the class to start gossip, or dangerous speech, in the halls. “When we share things about ourselves in this space, we do so in trust. It may not seem like a big deal, some of the things that are said, but it could be to others. So please don’t share what you hear in this
classroom in a mean-spirited way outside of class” (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013). In these comments, Mrs. Thomas acknowledged that personal and sensitive perspectives might emerge in the unit and indirectly named Damion’s talk as risky. She felt that discretion might encourage students to feel safe enough to engage publicly with their personal narratives.

Mrs. Thomas introduced a second reflection activity, *Circles of My Multicultural Self* (Appendix M), to challenge students to individually recognize and consider their multiple (hybrid) social identities. Her worksheet and verbal instructions prompted students to identify up to four important aspects of their identity in a graphic organizer “that you feel [are] important in defining you” (Doc, Dec. 3, 2013). Example descriptors on the worksheet included *Canadian, Aboriginal, female/male* (binary only), *Christian*, and *gamer*. Mrs. Thomas designed this approach to encourage students to recognize the diverse and multifaceted nature of their social experiences.

Some examples of identifiers students generated included *dairy farmer, horse farmer, redneck, hick, artist, musician, daughter, son, sister, brother, proud Canadian, Christian, hunter, hockey player, and swamp mud runner* (Doc, Dec. 3, 2013). Some of the dominant males excitedly shouted their descriptors out loud as they worked. “I’m a redneck farmer!” howled Austen, waving a pencil above his head in a circular motion as though about to lasso some invisible animal. Two other boys turned in their seats and snapped their fingers at Austen in response. Wyatt shouted, “I’m a duck hunter!” and proceeded to make a duck sound into his hand, followed by shrieking laughter. Austen, sitting in front of me, turned around with a proud grin on his face and pointed down to his feet and said to me: “Do you like my milking boots? I worked in the barn this morning. No time to change!” This task seemed to unleash a strong sense of rural farm pride, represented both in the student work and in the behaviours I observed.
The boys appeared to dominate the classroom with their voices and snapping fingers while the girls usually paid no attention – focusing on their assigned written work. During my observational period, I noted that three male students regularly challenged Mrs. Thomas’ authority by interrupting lectures and teacher-led class discussions, through calling out, whistling, and/or incessantly snapping their fingers when she and others spoke. Such behaviours did not deter Mrs. Thomas facilitating classroom conversations almost daily. My observations revealed that such distracting behaviour did, however, limit opportunities for sustained back-and-forth and especially peer-to-peer dialogue by taking up class time and diverting teacher and students’ attention.

As the period drew to a close, Mrs. Thomas attempted to complicate students’ assumptions about identities they had named. She encouraged students to identify and challenge stereotypes they associated with one of their personal descriptors, by completing the statement: “I am (a/an) _____ but I am NOT (a/an) _____.” As had Mr. Byrne, Mrs. Thomas often guided students by modeling from her personal experiences. She revealed to the class, “I grew up a minister’s daughter, a preacher’s kid, but that doesn’t mean that I’m highly religious” (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013). As I observed in this instance, these disclosures seemed to motivate some students to practice agency and risk sharing their own social identity experiences with the class. However, some students appeared to find this task too uninteresting or challenging near the end of the 70-minute class session, and did not write down anything at all. Pete, for instance, expressed this by sharing his response aloud: “I’m thirsty, but [Mrs. Thomas] won’t let me go for a drink!” which caused the room to erupt in howls of laughter. Other students, like Will, offered thought-provoking statements: “I am a singer and a vocalist, but I’m not a girl.” Mrs. Thomas did not pursue the gendered implications of this statement.
In later lessons, Mrs. Thomas broadened her unit’s analysis beyond the school, to encourage students to consider the ethnocultural makeup of the wider Hoffmann area. Throughout the unit, Mrs. Thomas expressed her personal view that the school and local rural community were “not multicultural” when compared with the “rest of Canada” because it “does not match the ethnocultural makeup of the country in terms of numbers and where people are from” (Obs, Dec. 18, 2013). However, she also stressed to students that this did not mean that various cultural influences were not already embedded within their rural community.

To illustrate how the Hoffmann community differed from the wider ethnocultural makeup of Canada, Mrs. Thomas provided each student with statistical data in a chart from the Government of Canada’s 2006 Census to show the number and origins of immigrants in Canada (Table 3).

Table 3.
*Mrs. Thomas’ Geography Resource: Immigration in Canada – Looking at the Numbers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrants in Canada (from)</th>
<th>5,677,085</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>235,685</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>95,640</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean and Bermuda</td>
<td>248,155</td>
<td>4.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>198,235</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>1,940,240</td>
<td>34.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>374,565</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and the Middle East</td>
<td>2,525,160</td>
<td>44.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania and other</td>
<td>59,405</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two additional charts also displayed immigration statistics: one for the nearest urban area and another for Hoffmann and its surrounding rural area. Students constructed one pie graph based
on each chart to compare variations among Hoffmann, the nearby city, and Canada as a whole. Next, Mrs. Thomas prompted students to interpret their graphs and share any comparisons and contrasts they had noticed. For instance, some students recognized that: the majority of recent (first generation) immigrants living in Canada came from Asia and the Middle East, the population of recent immigrants in the nearest city far exceeded the number of recent immigrants that arrived in Hoffmann, and that the few immigrants who had arrived recently to the Hoffmann community were mostly from Europe (proportionately more so than in Canada and the neighbouring city). This task and ensuing conversation illustrated for students that the local rural area had fewer recent and non-European immigrants than the nearest urban area. I casually asked a pair of female students why they thought this was the case.

Becca: Well, they [immigrants] go where there are more of them – I think to be comfortable.

Alice: There aren’t many here. You see them in the cities.

JPM: How do you know if someone is an immigrant?

Alice: ’Cause of how they look. And their language. (Obs, Dec. 18, 2013).

The girls’ responses suggested that, for these students, immigrants were distinguishable (Othered) by their racialized appearance and use of non-English languages.

To invite her students to probe their own heritage, and to challenge some students’ understandings of racialized immigrant Other, Mrs. Thomas asked the class to make inquiries at home: to find out “what part of the world your family came from and how many generations

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12 To protect the identity of the case site, I have provided minimal information about the statistical data for the nearby city and Hoffmann area.
back they came” to Canada (Obs, Dec. 18, 2013). She did not acknowledge that some students might be of Aboriginal heritage. She did, however, recognize that some students may not live with a familial relative, and said that it was acceptable to find out the family history of their guardians if they could not learn their own. The following day, except for Damion, every student reported publically (by raising their hands when prompted by country names) that their families had come to Canada from Europe, predominantly Germany and the Netherlands as well as England, Scotland, Ireland and Poland. Again here, hand-raising elicited input from all students and provided an opportunity make visible for students their classmates’ diverse immigration histories. Some students disclosed that their (great or) grandparents had immigrated to the local area to start dairy farms. Damion, born in the Caribbean, kept his head facing downward as he uttered his birth country when asked by Mrs. Thomas. In this whole-group sharing task, Damion was once again Othered, now as the most recent immigrant. Overall, this activity illustrated for (white) students the complexity of their less recent immigrant history and how they were themselves sources of knowledge about different family immigration histories.

In a teacher-directed class conversation near the end of this unit of study, Mrs. Thomas argued that Hoffmann’s context could be considered multicultural (multiethnic) – despite the observably limited racial and non-Christian religious diversity. In the following classroom exchange, some students expressed curiosity and surprise to learn that the predominant white European heritage(s) in their classroom and local community context embodied elements of “multicultural” diversity.

Mrs. T: Even some of you who live way out in the country live near people having
different cultures. Like Austen, your family is of Mennonite descent, right?

Austen: Oh yeah. I’m Pennsylvania Dutch! Lots of Mennonites out my way.

Wyatt: What about even like, people who are Dutch … like, people who come from Holland to work on the farm?

Mrs. T: Sure! There are different cultures and different traditions that they bring with them and do things a little differently from us, like many of our families brought over.

Jack: So that counts too [as multicultural]? (he sounds bewildered)

Mrs. T: Oh sure! Understanding diversity might not look like turbans. They might still have white skin. So in school, just because we don’t have turbans doesn’t mean we don’t have a multicultural community – most times you just can’t see it. (Obs, Jan. 13, 2014)

A short conversation followed, led by dominant classroom speakers sharing their differing family cultural traditions linked to their European ancestries. Many students appeared interested to listen about the diverse (less visible) ethnocultural backgrounds and traditions to coexist among them (see Nieto & Bode, 2012).

Mrs. Thomas encouraged and guided her geography students to understand how their majority white classroom, school and community were not devoid of diversity, including ethnocultural differences. As a type of democratic citizenship education, she facilitated various task structures (‘open’ discussion, individual inclusion-exclusion written reflections, hand-raising) to enable all students (of various abilities), to reflect on and share their different social
identities and experiences. Mrs. Thomas offered opportunities for students, through probing their diverse (and multiple) social identities and immigration histories, to notice some less visible heterogeneities of their school and community. Such instruction challenged students to stretch their thinking about visible and less obvious social diversity concepts and allowed students to connect their personal (and community) experiences to the curriculum.

**Cross Case Analysis**

A crucial aspect of democratic citizenship education is to locate and explore difference(s) among students, as themselves sources of diverse knowledge, citizen perspectives, and life experiences – including diversities that are initially less visible or obvious. In this chapter, I presented and discussed how three social studies teachers in comparable rural contexts shaped democratic citizenship learning opportunities to raise students’ awareness of difference and conflict in their majority white classrooms, schools, and/or community contexts. The teachers, each in similar classroom settings, implemented multiple platforms to explore their students’ knowledge as citizens arriving in classrooms already equipped with various social identities, individual beliefs, and values.

Students may not recognize the diverse lived social experiences and/or divergent viewpoints among their peers unless the teacher draws upon these within-community differences as sources of social identity content for examination and reflection. Thus, teachers need to understand their learners so that they may plan activities to surface a range of their perspectives and expressions (Barton & McCully, 2007). Each of the three teachers presented and discussed in this chapter built upon the varied lives occupying their classrooms; each shaped curriculum to include students’ social identities, prior lived experiences, and local community relationships (Hemmings, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Miller, 2007). The teachers differently applied pedagogies to
integrate locally situated learning opportunities and to make learning authentic for students so that they could see themselves and/or their varied lived experiences reflected in the implemented curriculum, thus engaging a range of students. Similar to Villegas and Lucas’ (2002) observations about culturally relevant teachers, I too observed how the three teachers “use[d] what they know about their students to give them access to their learning” (p. 27). For instance, inclusive student sharing of instances of social inclusion and exclusion, as I observed in Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas’ classes, exposed a range of diverse views and intersecting social identity experiences existing in their classrooms and local rural communities.

Mr. Byrne’s culminating unit project about local social justice issues supported some marginalized students to practice democratic agency: the disposition and capacity to advocate for equity (Gordon, 2006). Student presentations provided a platform for Lisa and Jim to speak openly and to reflect critically on their status within society as individuals (and as members of marginalized groups) living with mental health challenges. Mrs. Thomas also facilitated opportunities for her students to acknowledge and reflect upon different forms of social inequity in their rural community. Damion’s public disclosure of how he felt too picked on because of his race to continue as a member of the school football team – a restriction of his citizenship opportunities – highlights a powerful expression of agency. Mrs. Thomas’ written (inclusion/exclusion) reflection pedagogy supported Damion’s capacity to speak from his own racialized experiences. Student agency exercised and supported through purposeful citizenship pedagogies that infused marginalized perspectives, created democratic learning opportunities for both the speakers and listeners (Parker, 2010). These disclosures, resulting from opportunities that invited students to include their personal experiences as part of the implemented curriculum, surfaced diverse social identity experiences (as curricular content) that often are not acknowledged in (mixed) public
classrooms (Hemmings, 2000). Each of these two disclosure pedagogies invited listening students to unlearn Othering (Davies, 2014): to challenge and perhaps transform the ways in which particular social differences were stereotyped and marginalized. Lisa, Jim and Damion’s voiced classroom reflections challenged normalized social constructs about mental health and race, perspectives outside of their peers’ experiences (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Parker, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

In addition to private disclosure strategies, Mrs. Thomas, working with slightly younger students, used a direct inquiry approach to open up and name some of the less visible dimensions of social expression than did Ms. Watson or Mr. Byrne. Early in the geography diversity unit, Mrs. Thomas prompted her students to explore what diversity ‘looks like’ within their predominantly white and rural context. This activity provided students with an opportunity to name and reflect on a range of differences within their classroom and community based on their own experiences. For instance, within Christianity (e.g., Mennonite, Catholic), physical and mental abilities, physical appearances (clothing, hair), feelings (self-esteem), opinions, and contrasting rural identities (e.g., ‘hicks’ versus ‘slicks’). In both Ms. Watson and Mrs. Thomas’ classes, students acknowledged a social identity division within their schools, between those students living out-of-town (country kids, hicks, farmers, or out-of-towners) or in-town (city kids, slicks, or in-towners) locations. Both groups were geographically rural; however, some students assigned group membership based on distinguishing characteristics such as clothing choices and whether or not a student lived on a farm or in town. Mrs. Thomas also invited students to acknowledge multiple, intersecting facets of their experiences, how they viewed themselves, and how they wanted to be seen by others through her Circles of My Multicultural Self reflection activity. Strong rural identifications also surfaced here among some,
predominantly male students’ responses, when naming aspects of their personal identities (e.g., dairy farmer, redneck, hunter). Mrs. Thomas encouraged students to express these social distinctions because she was already familiar with their usage among students (and parents) and so they emerged. In partial contrast, Mr. Byrne did not invite expression of these particular identity descriptors, opting to expose his own identity labels for discussion (e.g., see mind map elicitation themes in Chapter 6). In the case of Ms. Watson, the installation of wind turbines as a conflictual issue ideologically surfaced and divided some in-town (supporting) from out-of-town (opposed) students. Thus, these localized rural social identity distinctions, often overlooked in definitions of diversity (Atkin, 2003; Reed, 2010; Yeo, 1999), seemed an important influence on how some students’ shaped their social identity and/or political perspectives – a social difference that surfaced (or silenced) conflict as a result of how Mrs. Thomas and Ms. Watson connected local questions and topics with the curriculum.

Overall, my findings from all three case classrooms support the findings of previous studies which suggest that vertical classroom talk, dominated by teacher lecture and student recitation, was the most common form of classroom interaction (Dull & Murrow, 2008; Hahn, 2010; Hess, 2009; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Sears & Hughes, 2006). In each class, confident students dominated ‘open’ discussion, tending to respond directly to the teacher, as opposed to directing their responses, or posing their own questions to other students. In these “triangular configurations” (Bickmore, 2014b, p. 576), the teachers acted as moderators, holding the authority to influence the direction of discussions: who spoke (and who did not), when, how often, about what, and, as a consequence, the extent of views expressed. My observations revealed that when students did express disagreement on conflictual topics (e.g., religious rights and freedoms), this tended to rouse brief horizontal student-to-student exchanges. However,
such moments of emotional escalation were rare in all three classrooms, and seldom probed or sustained into extended thoughtful dialogue. Because students tended to hear (only or primarily) the teacher and dominant students speak during open discussions, not all views in the room were aired – thus providing infrequent glimmers of democratic dialogue and limiting the range of ideological diversity expressed.

As a more inclusive approach to classroom discussion, Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne both implemented small group pedagogies to encourage “horizontal exchange” (Bickmore & Parker, 2014) among students’ contrasting perspectives about various topics. Student-led discussion groups are important agentic learning opportunities that support students, rather than the teacher, to direct, examine, and reconsider ideas on common themes (Flynn, 2009). While Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne maintained control of the subject matter (topics), they did share some of their agency with students through facilitation of small group discussion configurations. Ms. Watson’s desk arrangement of 3-4 assigned students per pod group permitted many opportunities for student-to-student cross-talk to emerge: the exchange of different views and evidence. She chose this teacher-assigned seating to encourage students to learn about (and from) those they were unlikely to encounter in their friendship groups (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013), thus exposing and supporting students to hear perspectives that may have differed from their own (Banks, 2006; Hess, 2009). Most students appeared highly engaged (speaking and writing) in the group tasks I observed such as creating a children’s charter of rights and becoming experts on a particular aspect related to the conflictual topic of wind turbines. Mr. Byrne also frequently implemented small group dialogue activities. In contrast to Ms. Watson, he invited students to self-select groupings with their friends. On two occasions he tasked groups to discuss a topic related to social justice issues, record their findings, and share their work (either verbally or through displaying) with the class. Similar to Ms.
Watson’s class, most students, with the exception of a few boys, appeared highly involved in small group conversation formats about teacher-assigned social topics (e.g., causes of poverty). Such configurations supported inclusive opportunities for more students to practice agency through expressing their views (and to be heard) than did teacher-directed large class discussion. Both of these teachers sometimes required students to practice consensus-building (as well as dissensus) group skills through handout-guided tasks, as was the case with Ms. Watson’s children’s charters and Mr. Byrne’s diamond rankings. Unlike Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne, Mrs. Thomas did not employ small group structures as part of her everyday pedagogy. She told me that students’ behavioural challenges and social anxiety were her reasons for limiting opportunities for sustained student-student small group work.

In both Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne’s classes, high status students tended to dominate small group tasks (to a greater degree in Ms. Watson’s class). Pre-existing social hierarchies (e.g., academic and social popularity) among peers presumably influenced the direction and tone of the interactions and/or silenced some already marginalized students (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012). When low status students spoke in their groups (if at all), they were likely to direct their comments to the more influential students, thus reinforcing social group hierarchies (as Tara’s group in Mr. Byrne’s class). Both of these configurations may also have reduced opportunities for low status students to exercise agency (such as disagreeing with peer viewpoints), for fear of rejection from other group members (Schultz, 2010). When students choose their own group (membership), as they did in Mr. Byrne’s class, they seemed to cluster with others they already got along with. Encouraging students to assemble with friends assumes that every student would gain welcomed entry into a group; however, low status students might have felt excluded or devalued in this process, thus less likely to contribute their views. Intragroup dialogue among
like-minded citizens (talking with friends/peers whom you agree) may reinforce what researchers call ideological amplification, meaning that previous ideological tendencies become more pronounced (Schkade, Sunstein, & Hastie, 2006). Thus Mr. Byrne’s assemble-with-friends group formation strategy for some activities might have reduced democratic opportunities for students to engage with the ideological (and academic status) diversity in the room with unfamiliar peers. On the other hand, this process provided liberty for students who did develop confidence to voice differences to communicate with others with contrasting ideological views. As well, at least one less confident student, Lisa, shared her personal experience (status) with mental health, first in a caring group environment consisting of friends, and then with the larger class. For this student, small friend groups, as an elicitation and facilitation structure, were a supportive platform to practice agency through self-reflection and expression (Johnson & Morris, 2010) prior to sharing her marginalized perspectives openly with relative strangers in the classroom. Overall, the small group work I observed in these two classes appeared to encourage and engage more and wider-ranging student voices and perspectives, compared to most of the teacher-led, open class forums.

Mrs. Thomas’ teacher-facilitated whole class discussions tended to elicit perspectives from the more confident male students in the geography class. She shared with me that this strategy was intended to keep the dominant male students (who were more likely to misbehave) on task and to accommodate some students’ specific learning needs (e.g., reduce social anxiety). For this latter reason, she was unlikely to call on non-volunteer students, unless they were already frequent speakers. As a result, classroom conversation generally occurred between Mrs. Thomas and about 20% of the class: the confident male students who frequently volunteered to speak. This format limited all students’ exposure to a narrower range of student perspectives
than if more students had felt comfortable to express their views openly. Thus discussion, as a 
democratic learning opportunity, was less available to the students in Mrs. Thomas’ class 
context compared to the two Civics classrooms.

Ms. Watson, in contrast, told me that classroom discussion was the most important 
ingredient in her citizenship approach. To nurture students’ capacity to exercise agency by 
speaking in front of (and listening to) their peers, she taught for discussion (Parker & Hess, 
2001; Schultz, 2010) using a community circle activity at least once per week. Her stated 
intention was to build students up from less complicated to more challenging discussion topics 
and pedagogies (see Flynn, 2009; Hadjioannou, 2007). I noted that more students tended to 
participate in whole class discussions in Ms. Watson’s class overall when compared to the other 
two cases. By comparison, Mr. Byrne’s more spontaneous and usually unstructured approach to 
classroom discussions appeared a middle road between Mrs. Thomas (predominantly teacher-
directed) and Ms. Watson (consisting of a range of purposeful dialogic structures). Mr. Byrne, 
often in the role of moderator, regularly bumped forward (or even removed) posted agenda 
items to extend ‘open’ classroom conversation time when topics appeared to engage students’ 
interest. Thus, certain topics gained more airtime (e.g., social injustice issues) where contrasting 
voices were sometimes expressed – more often and more openly (with a higher percentage of 
participants) than Mrs. Thomas’ approach. However, in this unstructured approach, dominant 
voices prevailed and subaltern views from usually quiet students were rarely expressed and/or 
acknowledged.

Small and large group dialogue were not the only pedagogical processes teachers employed 
to provide openings for various students to participate and express their different views. All three 
teachers surfaced a wide range of students’ perspectives and experiences through non-verbal
disclosure (e.g., raised hands or moving to a location on an opinion spectrum). Ms. Watson provided various written follow-up tasks, most often in opinion paragraph formats, that provided all Civics students with opportunities to discern and express their views on the topics discussed. Mr. Byrne designed the (written) *Personal Beliefs* paragraph assignment as a self-reflexive, private disclosure tool for all students to independently navigate difficult questions about social identity and difference. The level of personal detail included in the student samples I viewed around marginalization, personal bias, and privilege suggested that some students, including some (especially girls) who were ordinarily quiet in oral activities, felt safe enough and willing to disclose their perspectives in this less risky written format. Similarly, many of the less vocal students in Mrs. Thomas’ class expressed their diverse identities and social inclusion/exclusion experiences more readily when invited through individual reflection pedagogies (e.g., *Circles of My Multicultural Self*). Some of the quieter students shared orally with the class what they had written down when invited by Mrs. Thomas. It appeared as though providing class time to independently contemplate and arrange their personal experiences on paper helped some students to volunteer into classroom discussion – as was the case with Damion’s disclosure. Thus, whilst I observed Mrs. Thomas employ a narrower range of questioning and dialogic processes than did Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne in daily classroom lessons, providing private reflective writing opportunities seemed to facilitate broad, equitable engagement among comfortably literate students in the class to acknowledge and name aspects of their social identities. The breadth and depth of views expressed in samples of student work in all three classes extended beyond those views I heard expressed verbally during class. This suggested that some students wanted to express their views, but preferred to do so in a lower-risk (writing or perhaps small group) task rather than share them publicly with the class.
In contrast, Ms. Watson was the only teacher of the three that I observed to frequently and purposively infuse multiple perspectives in subject matter so that students could develop substantiated, evidence-based opinions (and confidence) prior to entering into conflictual discussions (referred to as “engagement first”; see Parker et al., 2011). For example, her U-shaped (opinion spectrum) deliberation format provided direct personal engagement opportunities for all students to practice various citizenship capacities: to take on a perspective they may not have considered (or agreed with) previously, to recognize and compare their conflicting viewpoints with those of peers (by arranging selves in a line), to voice and listen to multiple and competing perspectives to an issue, and to use reasoned arguments and persuasive evidence to exercise agency through asserting a position, verbally or not (Bickmore, 2014b; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The activity allowed for some level of competitive debate without limiting participation to higher-status students. All participants could actively enter into the conflict, exercising a type of agency, to express their position without speaking aloud (similar to taking-a-stand task structures, see Bickmore & Parker, 2014). Thus, to encourage equitable participation among all learners, this format mitigated some risk for lower status students who might become further marginalized when faced with conversations of difference and conflict within their classroom group (Ellsworth, 1989; White, 2011).

This chapter has demonstrated a range of subject matter and evidently feasible pedagogical approaches to explore (often intangible or previously invisible) social and ideological difference and conflict in the three predominantly white and rural classroom contexts. Through facilitation of forms of dialogue that included participation from many learners, these teachers surfaced contrasting and sometimes conflicting student viewpoints, thus enabling some students to articulate and to listen across these diverse perspectives.
degrees and in varying ways, each teacher invited students to engage with views and lived experiences that were different from their own, thereby supporting them to coexist amidst difference in a heterogeneous, democratic society.
CHAPTER SIX
ENGAGEMENT WITH UNFAMILIAR OTHERS:
TEACHING FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP IN RELATION TO ETHNOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

The cultural diversities among racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic populations in Canada are extensive. Educational policy goals related to these differences have shifted from assimilation, to integration and anti-bias, and back to efforts that facilitate social cohesion (Joshee, 2004; Peck et al., 2010). Citizenship education has been a principal means to translate Canada’s multicultural policy into practice and to promote understanding and acceptance for the inclusion and accommodation (and retention) of differences (Bickmore, 2014a). As yet, we know little about the ways citizenship educators in majority white and rural classrooms in Canada teach material relating to ethnocultural diversity, or what they see as influencing their pedagogical choices.

A goal in multicultural citizenship education scholarship has been to mitigate a general “fear of deep differences and lack of understanding among Canada’s disparate peoples and regions” (Peck et al., 2010, p. 65). Teachers in Canadian classrooms generally avoid approaches to citizenship education that expose and explore the difficult, complex, and potentially conflictual aspects of ethnocultural identity (Bickmore 2014a; Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, 2008; Peck et al., 2010). Official curriculum in various Canadian provinces has focused more on “harmony building” and conflict avoidance than on understanding or transforming conflictual social relationships, and teachers also have tended to avoid or to feel unprepared for conflict talk in their implemented curriculum (Bickmore, 2015). Conflict avoidance reinforces (by presenting...
as uncontested) hegemonic knowledge and the status quo, thus does not reflect democratic education (Apple, 2004).

The uncertainty embedded in examining social issues linked to ethnocultural identities – that some students might publically articulate intolerant viewpoints – might motivate a teacher (and/or school administration) to deem some topics too sensitive for open discussion in a classroom (Washington & Humphries, 2011). In contrast, Davies (2008) argues that students’ expression in school of unpopular (and even racist) attitudes may not necessarily or always be destructive, because such views reflect those present in society, and when surfaced can be “taken advantage of” in the “interests of dialogue” (p. 123) for pluralist inclusive democracy.

Pedagogical orientations that invite (or impede) emergence of conflicting views (in relation to ethnocultural diversity), such as those presented and discussed in this chapter, provide students and teachers with valuable opportunities to hear and critique multiple and contrasting perspectives. Such approaches allow students to experience ideological diversity and sociocultural conflict as a normal condition for living in a democracy.

**Overview of Chapter**

The classroom case studies in this chapter bring to light some of the pedagogical opportunities and challenges for three high school teachers who taught for democratic pluralist citizenship in rural settings in southern Ontario where there was very little evident racial and ethnocultural diversity in the school populations. Thus, this chapter addresses my second research question: How and why do the selected teachers surface and facilitate various students’ expression in relation to ethnocultural diversity? The markers of ethnocultural diversity in this study include differences based on religion, cultural symbols, appearance, language, ancestry, values and beliefs (Peck et al., 2010). The three teachers, to varying degrees, tended to blend
transmissional and transactional pedagogical approaches to introduce and navigate such differences. All three teachers’ implemented change-oriented citizenship subject matter and pedagogies that were transformational in their intent. That is, each teacher was motivated by a common expressed desire to support their students to view diverse beliefs and ways of living from various ethnocultural identity perspectives (Banks, 2006).

In Ms. Watson’s grade 10 Civics class, student interest flourished on the (then) proposed Quebec Charter of Values, a law that would restrict public school students and government employees (including teachers) from wearing overt religious symbols (such as clothing or pendants). This controversial issue about accommodation conflict provided an opportunity for Ms. Watson to teach for democratic citizenship in relation to religious pluralism. The issue, rooted in sociocultural conflict about religious diversity, identity rights and the accommodation of difference in Canadian society, sparked questions, sustained engagement and controversy discussion among students.

As a graduate of Vandenberg High School, Mr. Byrne felt that he understood some of his grade 10 Civics students’ views toward marginalized racial and ethnic groups, based on his own roots and attachments with the local community. Implementing a mind map elicitation strategy, he shaped opportunities for students to express, reflect on and interrogate divergent views that had been expressed toward recent, non-Anglo immigrants and different social identity groups. Mr. Byrne drew on his personal history to guide students through multiple, contrasting conceptions of citizenship, and exhibited comfort when discussing sensitive identity issues. Key goals in his citizenship teaching were to inform students’ views about the political and economic importance of Canada’s current immigration policy as well as to prepare them for
increased encounters with ethnocultural differences from forthcoming diversification in Vandenberg.

Lastly, I discuss Mrs. Thomas’ grade 9 geography unit on diversity, immigration, and multiculturalism in Canada. She used a human relations approach to teach for democratic pluralist citizenship. She arranged for her students to participate in intergroup discussion activities with racialized and ethnoculturally diverse newcomer youth (less than three years in Canada) in a nearby urban center. Mrs. Thomas encouraged her students to exchange personal narratives to promote multiple, contrasting understandings of Canadian citizenship. At the end of the unit, she invited students to develop written recommendations concerning how their school and wider rural community could become more inclusive and accommodating to new immigrants of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. Immigration and multiculturalism, presented by Mrs. Thomas as “settled” topics (Hess, 2009; Hess & Avery, 2008), were viewed as sensitive by some of her students, as was expressed in their final course project and in student group interviews.

I apply the elements of democratic citizenship education to navigate difference and conflict (Inclusion of diverse social identity content, Surfacing conflict – ideological diversity, Student agency, Inclusion of multiple perspectives) from my conceptual framework throughout the chapter. I conclude by providing a cross case analysis to highlight some of the similarities and differences in teaching for democratic citizenship in relation to ethnocultural diversity.

**Ms. Watson: Religious Controversy – Quebec’s Proposed Charter of Values**

A key ingredient in Ms. Watson’s citizenship pedagogy was to incorporate current news stories into her lessons. On three different occasions I observed Ms. Watson presenting controversial contemporary issues to provoke and invite conflicting perspectives to emerge
among her students. The most engaging and divisive among these was Quebec’s (then) proposed Quebec Charter of Values. For this particular issue, Ms. Watson infused content learning about non-Christian Others through the use of a controversial news story steeped in sociocultural conflict.

During the time of my observational period, the province of Quebec’s ruling government (Parti Quebecois) had proposed a Charter of Values that, if approved, would ban all public sector (government) employees in the province from wearing visible religious symbols while in the workplace (e.g., hijab, yarmulke, crosses). The topic was hotly debated in mainstream news media and, as a consequence, in some classrooms across the country. Ms. Watson introduced the controversial issue to her students on the heels of a sequence of lessons about the history, content and implications of Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms. She framed the issue around the guiding question: *Would Quebec’s proposed Charter of Values create a fair and equal society?* (Obs, Oct. 8, 2013).

To introduce the issue, Ms. Watson provided in lecture form a brief overview of the controversy, followed by an information-based lesson about the different forms of religious dress affected by the Charter of Values. Her transmissive approach included a display of different photos depicting various religious garb and symbols on the front screen and providing each student with a handout to record information about each. All pod groups buzzed with animated, high volume conversations about the religious symbols – some students motioned to different parts of their body to try to explain to peers the variations between clothing pieces (e.g., hijab vs. burka). One female student demonstrated curiosity in the content by wrapping a scarf loosely around her head to “see what it feels like” to wear hijab (Obs, Oct. 8, 2013). The majority of students appeared to be captivated to learn about religious differences.
Most students seemed to have limited prior knowledge about the religious symbols and reasons why they are worn. Through my formal (interview) and informal conversations (during observations), students generally acknowledged that the religious symbols shown, with the exception of the Christian cross, belonged to faith groups they had had no prior contact with or teaching about. Two female students in a pod group near to where I sat acknowledged that they had never seen a woman wearing *hijab* in person. “You have to go down to the city to see them. We’re mostly Christians up here … But we see a lot of Mennonite (women) cover their heads. That’s kinda the same I think” (Obs, Oct. 8, 2013). For these students, non-Christian religious faiths were largely absent in Buchanan, though they did seem to recognize differences among local Christian groups.

Consistent with Banks’s (2006) ethnic additive approach and Kumashiro’s (2000) education about the Other, Ms. Watson’s lesson began by presenting specific knowledge content about the religious identity groups least familiar to these students. By making diverse religious expressions visible through photos, and inviting questions and comments from the whole class, Ms. Watson was able to surface and to respond to (interrupt) some students’ absent, incomplete and/or mistaken knowledge about particular religious differences. The symbolic images prompted seven students to raise their hands to pose clarifying questions. For example, a male student asked which country women’s head scarves came from. Ms. Watson explained that, “religious dress is not a symbol of a particular country – but [of] a religion that can span many countries” (Obs, Oct. 8, 2013). She related her response to the normalized Christian majority in Buchanan and how not all religious followers choose to wear a particular symbol to “announce their faith, just like many Christians don’t wear a cross.” Some male students shared their limited knowledge when they learned that men’s religious headwear does not denote a singular
faith group: “I thought Muslims wear turbans. What’s a Sikh? Aren’t they the same if they both have turbans?” Ms. Watson welcomed her students’ questions, educating about the religious Other through offering factual information and clarifying pronunciations of various religious terms. This particular lesson about religious differences surfaced a pedagogical tension: between a teacher’s good intention to provide content about the absent Other, to enhance students’ awareness and understandings of different religious expressions in Canada, and the danger of unintentionally essentializing that Otherness (that is, to overlook diversity within religious and cultural groups) in the process (Gorski, 2008; Kymlicka & Opalski, 2001).

Importantly, Ms. Watson made clear for students that even she, as their teacher, did not have all of the answers to their questions (e.g., about the religious significance of yarmulkes). She had shared with me during our first interview how she thought it was a challenge to introduce students to cultures and religious traditions that she and her students were not personally familiar with (T-Int, Sept, 25, 2013). Neither the high school nor the School Board had offered any religious or cultural diversity professional development for teachers, perhaps because the majority of schools in the region did not experience significant levels of such (visible) diversity locally. She relied on her own admittedly limited knowledge that she had taken upon herself to learn.

Many students showed a high level of interest in the different religious garb and beliefs based on the steady flow of hands in the air. Following each response, students talked in their pod groups of 3-4 students (discussed in Chapter 5) until Ms. Watson selected the next student among raised hands to pose a question. She seemed to purposely provide more time than usual for students to chat freely in their groups about the new information. Xenophobia was the final vocabulary term Ms. Watson introduced: “a fear of people who are different from you” (Obs,
Oct. 8, 2013). Her decision to introduce this concept seemed a means to help guide students toward understanding an important element underlying the Charter of Values controversy.

In an interview, one group of female students indicated that they could not remember any prior classroom learning about different faith groups outside of Christianity. They had been taught about foods from around the world in primary grades, consistent with a contributions approach (Banks, 2006), but not about diverse religious beliefs and the need for accommodations (SGI, F, Oct. 16, 2013). Seven interviewees expressed interest to learn more about religious differences; however, they viewed such opportunities as limited because they understood their school to be “mostly Christian.” Their view is troubling because it suggests that, for these students, education about ethnocultural diversity was given low priority by school leaders in their predominantly Christian school and community.

To present and help clarify the controversy surrounding the Charter of Values, Ms. Watson played a 2-minute news video, *What Quebecers think of the Charter of Values*. The clip introduced two opposing perspectives through interviews with Quebec residents. One female Muslim interviewee wearing *hijab* said that she might have to leave the province to find work as a teacher if the Charter of Values was approved. In contrast, a white female Quebec traditionalist argued that, “People wearing their veils [are] taking away from our identity which I find is unfortunate for us” (CBC, Sept. 10, 2013). The line dividing two distinct positions was clearly expressed in the filmed interviews. All pod groups erupted in conversation at the end of the clip; this identity-based conflict highlighting two opposing perspectives appeared to rouse student engagement. Before inviting students to discuss the issue aloud in the whole class, Ms. Watson had students read two recent newspaper articles to broaden their understanding of the viewpoints and issues involved in the controversy. One article described some of the arguments
against the Charter of Values; the other article explained some of the arguments in support.

Students’ worksheets included a t-chart (a graphic organizer with 2 columns) to help students to recognize, arrange and consider for and against arguments and evidence that had been presented in the video and articles. These media resources provided opportunities for students to understand why the Charter of Values was controversial (or supported), and to whom. Similar to the windmill controversy (presented in Chapter 5), Ms. Watson led her students in substantive knowledge building and research skills that included learning about contrasting viewpoints prior to making a decision and entering into conflict dialogue on a socially divided issue.

After students reviewed and discussed in their pod groups the contrasting viewpoints, Ms. Watson invited them into a whole-class teacher-led discussion: “Why are some people in favour of the Quebec Charter of Values?”

Cory: I think with that woman teacher … I think in public schools she should take that stuff off if she wants to be Canadian.

Ms. W: So the people who are supporting it, they are thinking that if you are in the public service, what? You have to represent everyone?

Cory: Yeah.

Matt: Well didn’t they say [in the video] it was common for people to say ‘go back to where you came from’ and all that? This [Charter of Values] would stop that. If she didn’t wear that [hijab] then people wouldn’t be pointing, staring, saying, ‘Go back to your country.’ They’d think she was just another Indian person. So there’d be no more religionism.

Ms. W: So it might actually curtail racism? Is that what you mean?
Some students nodded in agreement with Matt while some others turned to their neighbours and chatted quietly. Ms. Watson did not immediately acknowledge Cory’s comment about what it meant to (not) “be Canadian.” Because she did not explicitly interrupt his assimilationist understanding of Canadian identity, nor did she invite others in the class to respond to him, I wondered if the implicit message to the class might have suggested that “Canadian” did not include particular forms of religious expression (or that “Indians” are not part of contemporary Canada). When teachers do not disrupt remarks that perpetuate Otherness, or provide opportunities for their students to practice interruptive democracy by doing so themselves (Davies, 2004), then possible alternative, more inclusive and equitable visions for what society might look like are overlooked. However, in the brief discussion that followed moments after, Ms. Watson introduced an opposing perspective:

Ms. W: What were some of the reasons why people from the video didn’t support the Charter of Values?

Dana: Well, they don’t get to express their religion.

Ms. W: And it’s an important part of your identity too. And the thing is, it is in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Remember that section we looked at the other day? All Canadians are entitled to that. What was another reason?

Nick: Well the one guy said it had to do with xenophobia.
Ms. W: Yeah. That’s a really good thought. People who don’t support this are asking: what’s the *real* basis of this is? Are people scared of things they think are too different? (Obs, Oct. 9, 2013, emphasis added)

As before, the majority of students appeared to listen intently to the teacher-directed discussion, talking softly among themselves in their pods during brief pauses. Ms. Watson stressed certain words in her extended statements to emphasize that individuals’ religious identity and expression rights are enshrined in Canadian law. Rather than confronting Cory’s previous remark head on, which may have resulted in his resistance, she employed a more non-confrontational approach, using the Charter of Rights as a toehold to legitimize an alternate point of view.

Immediately in response, a usually silent female student, Rene, became particularly emotional in her public defense of the Charter of Values and what she viewed as a necessary legal measure to protect traditional French culture in Quebec. In a raised voice and using animated up-and-down hand gestures, palms facing upward, Rene argued aloud:

Rene: Quebec doesn’t change. History and culture is really important there and I don’t see anything wrong with us wanting to protect it … that *(pointing to the religious symbols on the front screen)* is not normal to me because it’s Quebec. It’s French all around … like you go to little towns like, just outside the city, and it’s all French … so it doesn’t make sense to me.” (Obs, Oct. 9, 2013).
I later learned from Rene, during a student group interview, that her family had migrated to Ontario from Quebec a few years earlier. Her firm social and political views had motivated her to exercise agency through speaking from her own French Catholic heritage. Some pod groups turned inward and spoke in low voices while Ms. Watson thanked Rene for sharing her personal views and clarifying one perspective related the Charter of Values controversy. This conflictual issue appeared to elicit verbal participation from even the quietest students in the room.

Following Rene’s disclosure, Ms. Watson shared with students on the front screen a recent public opinion poll result summary from a national news publication to illustrate public perceptions in Quebec toward the Charter of Values and multiculturalism in general. The poll reported that 50% of Quebec respondents thought that, “Immigrants to Quebec should abandon their native customs and dress and strive to become more like Quebeckers” and that 45% agreed that, “Multiculturalism leads to conflict and strife in a modern society” (Edmiston, September 16, 2013). Ms. Watson facilitated an anonymous classroom survey, modeled on four questions from the poll, to elicit students’ various views on the Charter of Values and ethnocultural diversity in general (Table 4). She asked students to put their heads down on their desks to preserve anonymity and to raise their hands when prompted to indicate if they dis/agreed with the statements she read aloud.

The private disclosure survey was a way for Ms. Watson to prompt a larger number and a more inclusive range of student views on the sensitive topic of religious freedom of expression, and in less time, than if she had invited students to volunteer their views aloud. Many student perspectives might have remained unexpressed had she not provided this low risk opportunity and encouraged students to exercise agency through locating themselves anonymously in relation to the contrasting viewpoints. The poll results indicated that about one-
third of students agreed with prohibiting public sector employees from wearing religious garb in
the workplace, while slightly more students disagreed. The responses also showed that a
significant number of students felt uncomfortable to come into contact with religious Others in a
public place (e.g., in a school or hospital). When some students expressed that they had never
encountered this type of situation before, Ms. Watson rephrased the start of the question (ii) to
ask, “Would you feel uncomfortable if you were served or attended to by … ?” (Obs, Oct. 9,
2013). Interestingly, Ms. Watson made no link to local ethnocultural differences (e.g.,
Mennonite identities) that had been discussed in previous classes in her line of questioning.
Samples of students’ written work (consisting of a brief position paragraph) further illustrated
that students were divided on whether the Charter of Values would create a fair and equal
society or not, with the majority taking the position that it would not (Doc, Oct. 15, 2013).
Through using the anonymous poll, Ms. Watson was able to elicit evidence of ideological
diversity among students, which she communicated to the class immediately after.

Table 4.
Anonymous Class Poll: Ms. Watson’s Civics Students’ Attitudes Toward the Quebec Charter of
Values and Ethnocultural Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) The government of Quebec has proposed prohibiting public servants from wearing religious symbols or clothing, such as hijabs, yarmulkes or large crucifixes. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Do you agree or disagree that you are sometimes uncomfortable being served or attended to by someone wearing a turban, hijab or a yarmulke in a public sector office or setting such as a school or hospital?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Do you agree or disagree that this proposal should be extended to the private sector as well, including retail clerks, restaurant servers and taxi drivers?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Do you agree or disagree that you are sometimes uncomfortable being served or attended to by someone wearing a turban, hijab or a yarmulke in a private sector setting such as a store or restaurant?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ms. Watson shared with me later that the perspectives some of her students had aired around issues of religious and cultural pluralism, such as those who did not feel comfortable in the presence of religious difference, highlighted a challenge in her citizenship teaching: “There’s just so much work in a small community, that’s so insular, to try to just get [students] to see past a turban, or whatever it is, even just the skin colour” (T-Int, Dec. 18, 2013). She expressed that because the town of Buchanan had a strong sense of established community culture rooted in European traditions, “it makes it difficult to bring people who they perceive as the Other in” (T-Int, Dec. 18, 2013). For this reason, she often felt compelled to invite and challenge some students through asking values questions (Dull & Murrow, 2008), that is, to reflect on their personal beliefs and biases. In this instance, she used their survey responses:

Ms. W: Okay … so I have a question for you. If I’m wearing a turban, or a hijab … is it going to affect how you are taught? Can what a person is wearing affect how they do their job?

Zach: For me personally, I think it’s okay to wear (religious clothing) in private, but not for the public … because like, if I’m going to a doctor or something, I don’t know, I’d just feel uncomfortable.

Ian: It seems like we’re just more comfortable dealing with these people in stores and public places than alone behind closed doors.

Ms. W: Is this something that we need to overcome? (5 second pause)
Or should overcome? (5 second pause)
Or is it okay to fear something that maybe we don’t have much understanding about or exposure to? (7 second pause)
Ian: I think it would be hard to change because people are comfortable with sameness. You just want to be with someone that makes you feel safe and comfortable … you might feel weird if you have to share your personal stuff with someone who’s different from you.

Ms. W: But is it okay that people don’t feel comfortable around someone who’s different? *(I sense slight frustration in Ms. W’s tone)*

Zach: Well yeah … it’s racist and problematic. But it will just take time for people to get used to it...

*(Obs, Oct. 9, 2013, emphasis added)*

The (male) students who responded to her questions were opposed to pluralism and, according to the survey results, did not reflect the views of the majority of the class. This discussion about xenophobia may have been too conflictual (or too difficult) for students who disagreed with the dominant, vocal boys to participate publicly and challenge their views openly. The discussion continued briefly for a few minutes until students started work on their individual position paragraphs (in response to the guiding question).

In the discussion above, Ms. Watson’s tone of voice suggested that she was frustrated by some students’ inability to see past visible cultural differences. She shared with me later that she understood that all student views needed to surface – tolerant and intolerant – to reflect the diversity of views on particular topics. Finding ways to respond respectfully that were potentially transformative while considering the standpoints of her students (e.g., with little experience with visible ethnocultural differences) were enduring challenges in her citizenship
pedagogy. During our first interview, Ms. Watson told me that she endeavored to present issues from what she saw as an impartial perspective, to be inclusive of students’ views:

Ms. W: I want all those kids to feel safe in this classroom … and feeling like (their) opinion is going to be respected … What if you have a teacher coming out and saying something that is completely the opposite of what you believe? What does that do for your sense of being valued in our class? (T-Int, Sept. 25, 2013)

Ms. Watson said that she was not overly concerned that she would influence her students ideologically by disclosing her personal views. However, she feared that asserting too strong a position would negatively interfere with the lively classroom climate and some students’ feeling of belonging, thus making those students less likely to express their views (openly and in written formats) if they differed from their teacher’s expressed standpoint.

Ms. Watson did not pick up this discussion the following day, explaining to me that she needed to push on to new curriculum content. However, she did provide students with an option later in the semester to select the Charter of Values as the focus of their final course project to explore the issue further (I do not know whether or not students pursued this topic). She said on several occasions that her democracy work was made difficult by the tight timelines of the 10-week Civics course. Thus the short supply of instructional time fuelled an ongoing struggle between Ms. Watson’s democracy-building aims and her need to push through official curriculum content.
This vignette describes how Ms. Watson’s transmissive approach, to transmit knowledge to students about different religious practices, prepared students (and piqued their interest) to examine a contemporary sociocultural issue from various social identity perspectives. This, blended with a transactional approach (facilitating teacher-led classroom discussion, an anonymous opinion survey), supported opportunities for students to express their viewpoints in relation to religious and political conflict. In this instance, Ms. Watson’s citizenship approach was democratic because she supported students to view the Quebec Charter of Values from multiple and contrasting perspectives – thus providing opportunities for students to explore the basis for equity and religious accommodations. Conversely, her focus on some students’ expressed intolerance and uncertainty in relation to ethnocultural differences, limited democratic opportunities to invite and support students with tolerant perspectives to themselves actively respond directly to their peers to interrogate and/or interrupt bias (Davies, 2004; Haroutunian-Gordon, 2010).

Mr. Byrne: Mind Maps to Explore the ‘Ignorance’ in Our Midst

Mr. Byrne recognized that the small town of Vandenberg was on the cusp of developing increased racial and ethnic diversity with the arrival of a planned rail transit link to/from nearby cities. He expressed to me an urgency in his citizenship teaching to draw attention to some of the uninformed, intolerant views he sometimes heard expressed by some students about people who were not reflected in Vandenberg’s “white norm” – perspectives he understood as rooted in family upbringing and the local community (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). During our first interview, Mr. Byrne reflected on his recent experience teaching in a previous semester’s “challenging” grade 10 Civics class comprised of predominantly male students. Many of those students, he said, had expressed “more shocking xenophobic and intolerant” views concerning particular
social groups (e.g., non-Anglo new immigrants, non-Christian groups) publicly in class than he had heard before (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). He felt that this earlier teaching experience, in combination with looming local demographic changes in the community, had a significant influence on the subject matter and pedagogies he selected for his citizenship work.

Some students in this class had explained in their Your Personal Beliefs paragraphs (discussed in Chapter 5) that because small town Vandenberg was predominantly white, there was little opportunity for violence (which they assumed would be caused by people who differed from the ostensible white norm). “Because [Vandenberg’s] a small town, we’re all the same. We don’t have much trouble ’cause of different people coming from different places” (F, Doc, May 23, 2013). This student’s view of Vandenberg as monocultural and thus safe was also expressed in one group interview:

Alyssa: Some of the people are super close-minded ’cause [Vandenberg] doesn’t have as much, like, we’re pretty much all one culture except for like a select few people. We’re like…

Jim: Isolated! (laughing)

Alyssa: Yeah, we’re kind of like a little pocket of white people.

Lauren: Like we’re all the same culture basically.

Jim: But one good thing is you don’t have to deal with certain issues or disagreements … it’s hard to explain.

JPM: Can you think of an example?

Jim: Like crime and racism I guess. (SGI, May 30, 2013)
These student excerpts suggest, for those students quoted, that non-Anglo differences were viewed as a potential cause of conflict – thus associating homogeneity, and whiteness, with social harmony. Such assumptions pose a challenge for democratic citizenship and citizenship educators to find ways to interrupt the status quo and stereotypes rooted in oppressive social hierarchies.

Though the requirement to cover such content was not explicit in the official (mandated) Civics curriculum, Mr. Byrne felt that immigration was an important political and social identity topic to include in the course given the likelihood of the town’s racial and ethnic dynamics to change. Each semester, he anticipated immigration to be “controversial,” because he had tended to find that his teaching about the topic in grade 9 (geography) and 10 (history) courses usually met “with a mixed response that was related to a negative connotation with immigration – specifically immigrants arriving now as opposed to historically” in Canada (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). He stated that some of his students did not acknowledge how their own Canadian families were usually descendants of immigrants: “which I find really interesting, because many students’ families in [Vandenberg] immigrated to Canada from somewhere and yet they don’t acknowledge this. They direct resentment at non-white immigrants and spew out negative stereotypes about what they bring to our country” (P/O-Int, May 24, 2013). Mr. Bryne’s observations were similar to findings conducted in Canada’s maritime provinces that showed mainly white students (grades 5 and 7) generally provided stereotypical and negative associations to immigrants (Peck & Sears, 2005; Peck et al., 2008; Varma, 2000).

I asked Mr. Byrne if he had taught recent immigrant students in previous courses, and if so, whether they had (publicly) shared their immigration experiences with peers in class. He

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13 Varma’s (2000) study, focused on multicultural education in white schools, was conducted in a predominantly white city situated in the Maritimes. Peck and Sears’ (2005) research in central New Brunswick, took place in a small, rural community.
responded that it was very rare to see that happen, as the very few newcomers he had encountered over the years had tried to keep their immigrant status “on the down-low … they don’t necessarily want to draw attention to themselves and have to answer questions directly from other students” (P/O-Int, May 21, 2013). This appeared to fit the situation in the Civics class I observed. Neither the female student whose family had immigrated to Canada from Scotland, nor the second-generation female student whose parents had immigrated to Canada from South Asia (information I learned from Mr. Byrne), made public reference to their personal experiences or views on immigration during my observational period or in interview. Thus personal immigration experiences were present in the classroom, but they did not surface as educative opportunities. Students’ decisions to self-silence during sensitive discussions may be a form of protection: to conceal how their personal experiences connect to the topic to avoid peer (and teacher) interrogation (Schultz, 2010).

From samples of students’ writing in a reflective paragraph (see Your Beliefs Paragraph, Chapter 5), I noted that many students cited their parents and families as having shaped some of their beliefs. One female student remarked that she did not agree with her extended family’s views “against anyone who isn’t the ideal … white, male, straight and religious” (F, Doc, May 23, 2013). This excerpt showed that even a student with intolerant relatives might express tolerance. A male student, in reference to how he treated others with beliefs and values different from his own, remarked, “I respect others beliefs but when u come to a country and try to change their beliefs that wrong. For example the happy holiday vs. marry Christmas. If u don’t like the culture don’t come here [sic]” (M, Doc, May 23, 2013). This student’s comment coincided with the view Mr. Byrne had worried about in his interview with me; however, these
two contrasting perspectives illustrate that such biases were not consistently expressed in all students’ work.

Mr. Byrne’s lessons about immigration in Canada commenced with having students write a sample version of the citizenship test. The test is administered to immigration applicants by the Canadian government as a partial requirement to attain citizenship. Mr. Byrne explained the purpose of the activity to students as an opportunity for them to experience a piece of the complicated immigration process (Obs, May 21, 2013). He also had an additional agenda: to provoke expression of students’ divergent ideologies about the topic of immigration (P/O-Int, May 21, 2013).

Many female students were audibly upset when they did not achieve a passing score on their own test and expressed sympathy for immigrant applicants: “This [test] seems a bit unfair. I mean, if we [Canadian citizens] can’t get ’em right [the questions], how can they?” (F, Obs, May 21, 2013). Two male students were not as compassionate and expressed audibly their disbelief at the undemanding nature of the test:

Adam: So you write a test, which you can study for on the internet, and then – tada! Come on in!

(he makes a grand welcoming arm gesture as he speaks)

Corey: Here’s free health care for you and all your family! And who’s paying for that? Us! (Obs, May 21, 2013).

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14 Test questions were based on subjects such as the rights and responsibilities of a Canadian citizen, Canadian values, and Canadian political systems, history, and political and physical geography.
Some students (girls and boys) laughed at the boys’ remarks while some girls appeared dismayed, turning to talk quietly with their neighbours. Students’ different ideological responses to the citizenship test experience confirmed that Canada’s immigration process was a conflictual topic among them. Mr. Byrne did not engage the views expressed above in further discussion. Instead, he transitioned into a written activity (described below) that provided a different pedagogical means to elicit students’ divergent views in relation to ethnocultural differences.

As a graduate of Vandenberg High School himself, Mr. Byrne told me in one of our early conversations that he felt he understood Vandenberg’s small town “frame of mind” and so could identify with some of his students’ perspectives about various ethnic and social identity groups based on what he thought he knew while growing up in the same community (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). This, in combination with years of hearing student remarks similar to Adam and Corey’s about immigration and some ethnocultural groups (e.g., Muslims), Mr. Byrne had designed and implemented a “mind map” activity as a means to surface and explore students’ multiple perspectives on a variety of identity-based themes. As a transactional pedagogical approach, he employed the mind maps to visually expose students’ (partial) knowledge, assumptions, and biases against Othered social groups that students may (or not) perceive to be different and/or had little to no contact with in their lives (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). It was a means to explicitly elicit a whole range of expressions and beliefs: from private to public.

To begin the mind map activity, Mr. Byrne instructed all students to spread their single desks out around the room to give them privacy from their neighbours. He then provided each student with one 8”x11” piece of paper: a mind map. Typed in the center of each was a different word or phrase, such as Muslim, Christian, Immigration, China, Migrant Worker, [Vandenberg] – town, [Vandenberg] – school, among others. Mr. Byrne told me in interview that he had
selected these topics because he knew they would draw out a variety of contrasting student responses (see Appendix N for sample mind map responses). Citing time constraints, mind map topics that Mr. Byrne did not select for the activity included: homosexual, female, male, gender identity, Canadian, and/or various Christian denominations (e.g., Mennonite, Lutheran, Catholic) (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013).

Mr. Byrne invited students to write on their mind maps “the first thought or idea” that came into their minds when they saw each topic. Their written contribution could be in the form of a word, comment, and/or question. Students had approximately 20 seconds with each mind map before Mr. Byrne yelled “Pass!” – directing students to hand their sheet to “neighbour left!” He asked students to remain silent for the duration of the activity and to refrain from reading comments written by the other students. Everyone became very quiet and settled while completing their fourth or fifth mind map in the rotation. During the activity, a usually quiet student asked Mr. Byrne for a pencil in exchange for his red pen because he did not want his “words to stand out” on the mind maps (Obs, May 21, 2013). Anonymity appeared to be important for this student.

One of the concerns I noted while observing students fill in the mind maps was how authentic their remarks might be. Did some students record their actual perspectives on each topic, and/or did some record silly comments to gain a reaction from Mr. Byrne and/or their peers? Did 20 seconds provide enough time for students to formulate a remark? After reviewing the mind maps after class, Mr. Byrne indicated to me that students’ remarks did mirror what students had expressed in the past. In group interviews, some students confirmed that what they had written down was what they actually thought about the topic – although some also said that they would not say some of these remarks aloud in public (F, SGI, May 30, 2013).
One student interviewee remarked that she enjoyed the activity because “it sort of like, let you know what other people feel about things, too” (F, SGI, May 30, 2013). Another stated, “I liked these [mind maps] because I like discussions that everyone’s involved in and everyone was involved in this one because you got to write your thoughts down” (F, SGI, May 30, 2013). The written component of the activity provided students a certain degree of anonymity, thus was a low-risk, inclusive format to express views they might not have opted to share verbally. The activity promoted democratic citizenship because it invited a wide range of students’ perspectives, including silenced and conflicting views, to surface.

At the start of the next day’s lesson and prior to reviewing students’ mind map responses, Mr. Byrne conveyed his personal reflections on the activity with students. Raised in Vandenberg himself, he claimed to have a degree of understanding about why some students held and expressed particular perspectives toward those they perceived as different.

Mr. B: I understand some of the things you wrote down, because I grew up in this small town in the same situation that you are. I understand that you have beliefs that are given to you, or you interpret based on how and where you live. And some of these [mind map remarks] might sound intolerant or worse to someone who doesn’t understand. So sometimes, I feel like I need to inform you so that you can come up with a more informed opinion on some of these [mind map themes]. (Obs, May 22, 2013)
In this statement, Mr. Byrne presumed that because some Vandenberg students had not been raised in racially and ethnoculturally diverse social settings, they might hold either incomplete and/or misinformed knowledge about absent, unfamiliar social identity groups. Rather than refer to some remarks as intolerance or prejudice, he instead framed them as ignorance, which he had defined in the handout as a “lack of knowledge or information”, a softer, no blame approach. Mr. Byrne went on to explain how “being ignorant” should not be viewed negatively or provoke disrespect, but might simply be a consequence of one’s upbringing:

Mr. B: I grew up believing that certain cultures were less important than my own culture. And when I say [my] culture, I mean ‘Canadian’ (he makes quotes in the air). My parents taught me what being ‘Canadian’ was. So we celebrate Canada Day, we drink beer, we eat maple syrup... But once I left [Vandenberg] … to go to university, I started to think that being Canadian was something different because there are lots of different people who do lots of different things. I had left what my parents had given me as ideas and began to question my beliefs. (Obs, May 22, 2013)

This is one of six occasions when I observed Mr. Byrne take considerable time to disclose his own experience, viewpoint and insight with students on a moral issue (Simon, 2001). The room fell silent when Mr. Byrne shared this piece of his life history and how he had reexamined and shifted his understanding of national and local identity, a key component in citizenship teaching. By relating his personal story, rooted in Vandenberg, he attempted to integrate some students’ home and community experiences that were similar to his own into the implemented curriculum
to develop cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Even usually-disengaged male students set down their cell phones and looked up toward Mr. Byrne as he spoke, appearing to listen intently. From these responses, it seemed that this personal, moral disclosure, a deliberate component of Mr. Byrne’s implemented curriculum, made an impression on many students. This approach helped to cultivate a classroom climate of respect. This is why I have chosen to quote these excerpts at length.

Following his disclosure, Mr. Byrne arranged the students into self-selected pairs. He distributed one or two of the completed mind maps to each pair to review on their own. He had added a second side to the mind maps that had not been included the day before, to guide the students in their analysis:

1. What words/ideas [on the mind map] were you surprised by?
2. Why do you think people put these words/phrases/ideas?
3. Can we blame those who are ignorant?* Should we blame?

*Definition of ignorant: lack of knowledge or information. (Doc, May 22, 2013)

While students read through their mind map remarks, many pairs laughed, pointed and shared the content of their map with those around them. The level of engagement (peer-to-peer discussion) in this partner task seemed to be higher than usual. When Mr. Byrne asked students to share their answers for questions 1 and 2, responding students tended to focus on stereotypical and/or confusing remarks (often garnering laughs and gasps from some members of the class) as opposed to drawing attention to tolerant and knowledgeable comments. Mr. Byrne’s third question centred students’ attention on ignorance rather than guiding students to compare responses (to notice contrasting perspectives as opportunities for learning), or exploring how they might have differed from their own.
Mr. Byrne told me privately that he had created the mind map activity three years earlier to provide his students with an opportunity to feel “comfortable enough to write down what they think … because that’s the only way [for me] to address [their bias]” (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013).

Through “addressing” certain views, he meant intolerant views. Mr. Byrne clarified that he did not intend to do so “negatively” – meaning, to censor or to scold certain views that were inappropriate – but instead to teach through offering “facts” (knowledge) to expose students to more information than what they may have started with. He told me that if he (instead) immediately censured students’ “uninformed” remarks, he thought that this might result in a backlash and close those students to becoming “more informed” (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013). Through focusing exclusively on students’ intolerant remarks, he may have missed democratic opportunities to discuss and reflect on those (taken for granted) remarks that revealed inclusive expression toward social difference.

In one instance, Mr. Byrne asked students to reflect on the mind map remarks for Name of City (near Vandenberg) (Appendix N). The city, in contrast to Vandenberg, is ethnically diverse and home to a high percentage of non-Anglo, recent immigrants. Many students (male and female) laughed when a student read aloud the comments (e.g., indians n curry, Brown Town, too many immigrants, violent). Mr. Byrne elicited students’ views using values questioning (Dull & Murrow, 2008):

> Mr. B: Some of those things on the map are factual. (‘Name of city’) does have a very high percentage of foreign-born, non-white residents. That’s a fact. Now, is that a negative thing?

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15 Note: Mr. Byrne’s original mind map included the actual city name at the center. To protect the anonymity of the case site I have concealed the name with this pseudonym.
Jim: Well to have all immigrants in one town isn’t a good thing.

Mr. B: Why do you say that?

Jim: It’s bad to have them all in one place because they take up all the jobs and change everything… (Obs, May 24, 2013)

Many students engaged in lively discussion with their neighbours after this last comment. A few students laughed at Jim’s statements; one female student turned to her partner with a shocked expression. Mr. Byrne called the group back to his attention. Instead of pursuing Jim’s comments through further questioning (from himself or opening opportunities for other students), he paused the discussion and moved into a teacher-directed pen-to-paper lecture about immigration policy in Canada.

The lesson consisted of a slide presentation entitled ‘Immigration: The Facts’. On multiple occasions Mr. Byrne referred to the statistic ‘95% of Canadians are immigrants or a descendent of immigrants.’ He reminded students that, if they were not descendants of First Nations, Metis, or Inuit, then their families, at some point in history, likely had been new immigrants to Canada. He presented students with a variety of statistics and graphs (e.g., population pyramids, fertility rates) from Canadian government sources, to illustrate how Canada’s current population growth was stagnating owing to emigration, an aging population and decreasing fertility rates. He told students: “If you aren’t looking forward to raising roughly ten children in your future family, then we have to look to new immigrants to fill the employment gaps” (Obs, May 24, 2013). He indicated to me after the class that Jim’s comments had “opened the door” for him to “inform their views” about what immigrants bring to Canada (P/O Int, May 24, 2013). Mr. Byrne’s teaching about the (immigrant) Other approach was a
change-oriented attempt to debunk harmful misconceptions and a false sense of threat – largely how immigrants take jobs from Canadians – through information-based, transmissional teaching linking Canada’s economic stability to sustained immigration. All students appeared engaged, attentive, and several (at least 6) asked questions in relation to immigration policy. While Mr. Byrne’s stated intent was to fill students’ knowledge gaps about marginalized, largely absent (and silent) immigrant identities, this initiative is an example of how he engaged some students’ harmful knowledges (e.g., Jim’s “they take up all the jobs”) that embodied oppressive perceptions (e.g., about new immigrants). Jim asked three questions about the immigration process, appearing to shift from a defensive stance (re: immigration) to a curious one. Mr. Byrne’s pedagogical choice could also be viewed as anti-democratic because he did not invite students to critique Jim’s comments through classroom dialogue. Instead, he closed down conversational opportunities to assume the expert teacher role to transmit fixed knowledge.

Another episode of Mr. Byrne’s transmissional education about the (immigrant) Other included showing students a documentary film about foreign migrant (Mexican) workers in rural Canada (Land & Sea – Farm Workers, CBC, 2011). He told the students that immigrants do not necessarily “steal jobs” from Canadians, but that there exist opportunities in agriculture that out-of-work Canadians do not want to take on because of the harsh working conditions and short terms of employment (Obs, May 27, 2013). The film was relevant to the context of Vandenberg because Mexican and Jamaican migrant workers worked on large commercial farms in the local rural area. One student shared in a student group interview, “… when we were watching about, like people coming into Canada to work, my thought was … why are we bringing other people in when we have people without jobs here? But talking and learning about it … kinda opened my mind that there are like, people who – not that they don’t want to work, but they either can’t
work, or the job is too demanding. So we do need people to come in and do the jobs that we
[Canadians] don’t want to do … as bad as that sounds” (F, SGI, May 29, 2013). Some, mostly
female students, were appalled to learn about the working conditions (e.g., long hours, low pay,
separation from family members) faced by some migrant workers and equated their work to
"modern slavery” (F, SGI, May 30, 2013). Mr. Byrne’s education about the (immigrant) Other
approach, in this instance, is an example of a kind of democratic citizenship education because
he exposed students to new perspectives as opportunities for learning (about immigration). His
intent was to increase some students’ apparent knowledge about the economic need for foreign
migrant workers in Canada and seemed to promote a feeling of empathy for the immigrant
Other among some students.

Mr. Byrne did not open up all twenty mind map themes (identity differences) for whole
class discussion because of time limitations in the course. Instead, he chose to compare and
contrast those in which he deemed some student remarks to be “very troubling,” such as those
reflected in the Muslim mind map (Obs, May 24, 2013). The pair who read aloud the various
remarks surrounding Muslim acknowledged that “about half” were negative, whereas these same
students understood only one comment (bias) to be negative toward Christian (Table 5). Mr.
Byrne had purposively positioned these two mind map topics together to illustrate for students
how more neutral/positive views toward the familiar Christian had been expressed than for the
unfamiliar Muslim Other.
Table 5.
Mr. Byrne’s Civics Students’ Mind Map Responses: Words Associated with Muslim and with Christian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mind map theme</th>
<th>Students’ written remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>terror, head coverings, terrorist, stereotyped, Rude, religion, mosk, discriminated against, human, [Name of City – Near Vandenberg], religion, hujobs, osama, Peace or violence?, Head wrap thingy, [name of city – from Appendix N]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>religion, Jesus, bias, Love, Jesus, church, Jesus, influential, god, religion, god, GOD, Love, Church, cross</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teacher-led conversation that followed opened a space for some students to interrogate bias and assumptions that perpetuate (Muslim) Otherness:

Mr. B: Do you think we could say positive things about Muslims?

(3 females): Yes.

Josh: No. (his arms are crossed)

Jessica: What are you talking about? (she turns to Josh, upset)

Mr. B: (to Josh) Can you explain your view? You can say what you want. I won’t get upset.

Jessica: I might.

Josh: ’Cause they’re terrorists. They blow stuff up. Didn’t they blow up Boston?

Caitlin: That’s a stereotype. You think that because of Osama Bin Laden.

Josh: Ok. Well they’re tight.

Emma: Do the women all wear those …? (motioning to the top of her head)
Caitlin: No. That’s another stereotype. In fact, many Muslim women choose not to wear [hijab].

Emma: We don’t know anything really. We only know the bad stuff ’cause of the media. We don’t learn anything helpful because [Muslims] are not here [in Vandenberg].

Mr. B: So do you think if we had more knowledge about Muslims we’d have more positive things to say?

(3 females): Yeah.

Bronwyn: It bothers me when I hear them called terrorists (looks toward Josh) because I know just some are. But I don’t know much to argue back.

(all students are listening: all eyes are following the speakers)

(Obs, May 24, 2013)

The conversation then turned a corner into examples of stereotypes associated with Christians.

The above exchange demonstrates how Mr. Byrne had created an opportunity for students to reflect on their understandings about Muslims as an Othered (and absent) identity in their community. Some students acknowledged that a lack of knowledge and face-to-face exposure to non-Christian religious difference had led to the expression of harmful biases. In homogeneous communities, where the media and family are the principal resources for students to learn about various social identity content, the danger to essentialize escalates (Camicia, 2007). Bronwyn’s comment suggests that teaching about ethnocultural differences and/or providing opportunities to humanize absent Others might support some students to unlearn Othering (Davies, 2014).
This approach, she thought, also wielded agentic potential to build her capacity (through knowledge acquisition) to interrupt some students’ biased perspectives.

Mr. Byrne shared with me, after this episode, that he often felt limited by his own lack of knowledge to effectively respond to students’ questions and lead learning in this area. The school and School Board did not provide teachers in this school with diversity or multicultural training. He indicated that he thought professional development opportunities would be useful to support all teachers (and students) to learn to live in a pluralistic democratic society – regardless of the ethnic makeup of the school.

This case highlights the work of a citizenship educator who used the flexibility of the mandated Civics curriculum to integrate content and discussion about immigration as a conflictual social and political topic. Mr. Byrne made the pedagogical decision to air students’ divergent perspectives about non-Anglo, immigrant Others in light of Vandenberg’s anticipated future demographic changes (ethnocultural diversification). The mind mapping activity is an illustration of a plausible, inclusive elicitation strategy for citizenship teachers to capture a wide range of students’ personal perspectives in relation to ethnocultural identity topics and apply them as part of the implemented curriculum. Selected mind map responses were presented to students as an educational resource – almost like a mirror – to gaze into and assess, discuss, and/or confront their own (and others’) viewpoints, while guided by teacher questions. Mr. Byrne mixed this transactional approach with transmissonal tendencies (e.g., lectures) to “inform” students’ assumed “ignorance” (e.g., about the economic and political importance of immigration to Canada). Mr. Byrne did not shy away from eliciting students’ harmful perspectives; he wanted them to surface. However, he was inclined to focus his teacher-led whole class discussions on the intolerance in the room (tending to disregard students’ expressed
tolerant views), thus limiting the democratic potential to build students’ capacity (and responsibility) to actively interrogate bias and to respond to peers’ contrasting perspectives.

Mrs. Thomas: Making Intercultural Connections Through Narratives of Difference

The official Ontario grade 9 geography curriculum requires teachers to explore with their students questions such as, “In what ways can cultural diversity enrich the life of a community?” and “How can schools help newcomers?” (sample questions, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, pp. 98-99). These questions can be challenging in some predominantly white and rural classroom contexts (like the three I studied) where students’ face-to-face exposure to visual ethnocultural diversity and recent newcomers may be limited. Mrs. Thomas had developed a 3-week unit of study on the topics of immigration policy and multiculturalism in Canada. She framed the unit through three guiding questions:

1. What does diversity look like in our school, community, province, and country?\(^ {16} \)
2. How does immigration contribute to Canadian communities?
3. What are the challenges and benefits of multiculturalism?

Using a transmissional approach, Mrs. Thomas presented facts in lectures about Canada’s immigration history and employed government statistics to reinforce her point that if Canada did not continue to accept new immigrants “from around the world, then there will not be enough workers to sustain Canada’s social programs such as health care and pensions” (Obs, Dec. 4, 2013). Throughout the unit, she explained to students that she thought the local community would, in time, become less “monocultural” (white and Christian) as immigration in Canada

\(^ {16} \) Discussed in Chapter Five.
increases and urbanization creeps closer to the Hoffmann area. Further, because of these demographic changes, she stressed that students would inevitably encounter more people of different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds in the future. Mrs. Thomas openly told students that she thought their lack of knowledge and infrequent interactions with different religious and cultural groups might impede their ability to respectfully interact with ethnocultural diversity in an always changing Canadian landscape (Obs, Dec. 4, 2013).

Subsequently, as part of her citizenship pedagogy, she created opportunities for students to engage with people belonging to cultural groups different from their own.

Prior to introducing information to students about immigration and multiculturalism, Mrs. Thomas adopted Mr. Byrne’s mind map strategy (see Chapter 4) to elicit and preview her students’ knowledge and personal opinions regarding various social identities. She used some social identities and themes that Mr. Byrne had used (e.g., Muslim, Christian, China, Africa, India) and added others to align with the community context (e.g., names of schools in the area). The activity surfaced mixed responses from students. For example, Muslim elicited remarks resembling correct knowledge (religion), confusion or fear (I don’t know!, different, scary, Turban, Hooded Black People), and intolerance (don’t come to canida!, terist, towel head) (Doc, Dec. 3, 2013). Like Mr. Byrne, Mrs. Thomas did not draw attention to the range of views expressed (e.g., tolerant to intolerant), but tended to direct her focus toward those comments she perceived to be intolerant. As well, she did not refer to students’ biased remarks as harmful, but as misinformed knowledge that could lead to “treating people unfairly” (Obs, Dec. 4, 2013).

In contrast to Mr. Byrne, Mrs. Thomas relied on mind map responses as reference points from which to strategize subsequent lessons throughout the unit of study. She selected topics based on some students’ misinformed and/or lack of knowledge about Othered identity groups
that had been revealed. She then constructed lessons by inserting ethnic additive content (Banks, 2006) to fill students’ knowledge gaps (e.g., about the religious significance of Sikh turbans).

She also used the responses as a means to further probe students’ perspectives through teacher–student classroom discussion. For instance, during one class, she held up the completed *Muslim* mind map at the front of the class and read aloud all of its contents (responses listed above). She then asked the class whether knowing more about who a Muslim “is and isn’t” was important. Austen expressed that he did not think so:

Mrs. T: Austen, why do you feel like, ‘Nope. Don’t need to know about it’?

Austen: I won’t go to where they are.

Mrs. T: Okay. I’m going to push back and ask … do you ever shop at Home Depot in [name of nearby city]?

Austen: No.

Mrs. T: Where do you go to get hardware?

Austen: *(he names a store in a small local town)*

Mrs. T: So what if [store] doesn’t have what you need?

Austen: *(he names another local store – the class is silent)*

Mrs. T: You know, [name of nearby large town] is becoming multicultural.

So my argument to you would be, Austen, your world is going to be more different than now. Your world is not always going to be all one culture.

But … if you go just 40 minutes down the road, people of all different cultures, including Muslim, live there. So, it would be good for you to understand a bit about the different people you’re likely to meet.
In this exchange, Mrs. Thomas challenged Austen’s personal standpoint in front of his peers. Fisher et al., (2000) theorizes that intensifying conflict is a means to introduce and make visible a hidden conflict so that it might be addressed. The mind map strategy, in this instance, produced student remarks that Mrs. Thomas used as a stepping stone to try to herself interrupt Austen’s disinterest in learning about religious diversity (Davies, 2004). It appeared to be a challenge for her to relinquish her teacher authority that tended to dominate and to instead create democratic, agentic opportunities to invite and support other students in the class to interrogate (peer-to-peer) Austin’s expressed viewpoint.

Austen’s perspective was not common to all students. For instance, in response to the above exchange, Austen’s best friend Jack expressed keen interest to learn about different religious beliefs and practices: “Well, I need to know more! I had [the turban] all wrong. This stuff is interesting!” (Obs, Dec. 4, 2013). Three male students nodded their heads in support of Jack’s statements that contrasted with Austen’s. On another occasion, one usually-quiet male voiced to the class his desire to learn about the significance of religious dress. “I get they [Sikhs] wear it [the turban], but I want to know why” (Dec. 3, 2013). This demonstrated, for those quoted, that some students were enthusiastic to learn about ethnocultural differences based on religion, cultural symbols, appearance, and values and beliefs. These comments, contributed aloud during teacher-led discussions, revealed to Austin and others (indirectly) that not all students agreed with his perspective.
Later in the unit, Mrs. Thomas adopted a human relations approach to multicultural citizenship education (Sleeter & Grant, 2009) in addition to education about the Other (Kumashiro, 2000) to support her students to understand, appreciate and gain respect for ethnocultural diversity. She devised a rural-urban intergroup encounter to bring her students together with diverse ethnocultural and recent immigrant youth, in a nearby city, to share their lived social differences. Mrs. Thomas had professional contacts in an urban public school located a 30-minute drive from Hoffmann. With their help, she coordinated a class trip to transport her “country kids to the city” to spend a morning (about 2 hours) to meet and interact socially with a special grade 7/8 class comprised of newcomer youth (T-Int, Nov. 8, 2013).

To introduce the trip to students, Mrs. Thomas shared why she thought this was an important citizenship learning opportunity:

Mrs. T: We should get out of our smaller community, this bubble, and into the city. (Name of city) is different from here, but it’s not that far away and it’s still part of our world – part of our Canada. I thought it would be interesting to actually have a chance to talk to people in those communities and circumstances. (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013)

Mrs. Thomas clearly demarcated between us (small, isolated ‘bubble’ – white rural) and them (‘those’ who are different), thus casting urban people as the Other. This standpoint was reinforced in the field trip form (Figure 1) whereby the compulsory excursion was presented as an opportunity for Hoffmann students to engage in a “rich cultural experience” in a “more culturally diverse” setting than their own. Mrs. Thomas explained to me that it was difficult to
teach for understanding of ethnocultural difference when predominantly Anglo students populated her classes. She felt that she needed to facilitate an “authentic” opportunity for her students to interact with ethnocultural differences, face-to-face as opposed to herself transmitting knowledge, outside of their predominantly white “bubble” (T-Int, Nov. 8, 2013). In our interviews, I could sense her enthusiasm to teach for democratic citizenship through this intergroup encounter – to support perspective sharing between her students and newcomers, to learn about different social identities and experiences, and to interrupt anxieties about ethnocultural differences, such as those expressed earlier by Austin.

**Geography Field Trip Details**

Our guiding question in geography class right now is “What does diversity look like in our community, our province, and our country?” In order to reach outside of our school community and connect with a more culturally diverse community, we are going to visit (name of public school) in (name of city). This is only a half hour drive away, but it will present a very rich cultural experience for us…

Figure 1. *Mrs. Thomas’ Geography Class: Field Trip Details from Permission Form*

Most of the students in the urban class were newly-arrived (less than one year in Canada) from (sub)tropical, conflict-affected countries. Several arrived in Canada having lost family members to war, fled their homes under duress, lived in refugee camps and/or leaving siblings or parents behind. The small class, comprised of 13 students, was preparing for integration into mainstream classrooms through accelerated English as a Second Language and numeracy learning. To protect the anonymity of the students, I will refer to their school and program as AIC (for accelerated integration class).

Mrs. Thomas spent the 8 class sessions leading up to the excursion preparing her students to engage respectfully with AIC students. For many, this was their first occasion to
meet and converse with newcomer Canadians about their pre-immigration and refugee experiences. One way she prepared her students for the intergroup encounter was to show news footage from one conflict-affected area of the world. “I want you to be sensitive to the fact that some (AIC students) did come from really heavy experiences. So to understand their stories let’s take a look at one situation” (Obs, Dec. 6, 2013). She showed a 6-minute video documenting the challenges of living in an over-crowded refugee camp near Goma, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, set in the middle of a war zone. One scene erupted in gunfire, showing groups of children fleeing from tarp-covered huts into nearby forests for refuge. Soldiers loot from the families they are meant to protect. The class observed the footage in complete silence. On this rare occasion, Mrs. Thomas did not need to first quiet the class to begin debriefing discussion after the video:

Mrs. T: What was going through your minds when you watched the video?
Logan: How that boy lost his family. He didn’t know where they were.
Mrs. T: How did that make you feel?
Logan: Sad. (he takes a deep breath and sighs loudly)
Jack: I’m shocked that soldiers just come in and take everything. They don’t think about the people.
Mrs. T: How do you think it works then if those children, they spend maybe five years in that environment, and they come to Canada? How do you think they might feel in a Canadian community for the first little while when they’ve grown up with that?
Jack: Free.
Mrs. T: So can you understand why people living in these circumstances would want to flee to places like Canada?

Jack: Makes me feel lucky to be here and not there. I’m happy to be Canadian.

(Obs, Dec. 6, 2013)

This conversation implied that at least one student believed refugees would be grateful to come to Canada, regarded by both Mrs. Thomas and Jack as a safe haven and “free.” Jack’s last comment suggests that the viewing experience served to sustain his appreciation for his citizenship privilege. Mrs. Thomas provided students, through graphic footage, with a vicarious experience to promote a feeling of empathy toward refugees (in general) by inviting students to contemplate what it might be like to grow up in war. Logan and Jack’s responses, body language, and general silence in the room suggested that Mrs. Thomas’ approach had evoked a degree of compassion among students. At the same time, this experience might also have supported stereotypes about a singular refugee experience.

In advance of the intergroup encounter, Mrs. Thomas assigned students into groups of 2 to 3 of her choice to develop interview questions to ask AIC students (AIC students had also prepared questions). On the day of the trip, each group would be placed with 2-3 AIC students to form “learning buddies” (Obs, Dec. 3, 2013). Mrs. Thomas told her class that they had permission (communicated through the AIC teacher) to ask newcomer students about their personal pre-immigration experiences in their home countries. She expressed to me in interview that she hoped the prepared interviews would act as starting points to ease students into more unstructured, friendly conversations.
On the day of the trip, before students disembarked from the bus, Mrs. Thomas turned to her unusually quiet class, sitting still in their seats, and said sternly, “Be respectful. Be polite. Make me proud.” Quietly, the students filed out of the bus – only the clicking sounds of some students’ cowboy boots broke an anxious silence. Two AIC students, one boy and one girl, greeted the group at the front doors; both were non-white, and the girl wore hijab. They led students to a classroom with chairs arranged in a large circle. A few desks were pushed together in the middle of the circle, covered in an assortment of food-filled dishes. A smell of fragrant spices filled the air. The AIC teacher, Ms. Clark, invited Hoffmann students to sit on one side of the circle, while AIC students, all non-white, sat opposite. This seating arrangement appeared to reinforce safety in Othering.

Ms. Clark broke the uneasy silence and extended a warm welcome to the guests. She explained that her students came from around the world and “have had life experiences that are probably very different from your own. But they are all Canadian – just – like – you” (Obs, Dec. 10, 2013). It seemed important for her to emphasize this last statement around the groups’ shared citizenship status. She went around the circle and invited each student to say their name and where they were born. AIC students shared that they were from a variety of countries, such as Sudan, Iraq, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Yemen, Pakistan, Myanmar and Somalia. Damion, non-white, was the last Hoffmann student to introduce himself, disclosing that he was not born in Canada. Some of the AIC students cheered and clapped when they heard this, enthused to learn that there was one recent Canadian among the visitors. Damion smiled broadly and waved with both hands to his supporters across the circle. Some of his fellow Hoffmann peers laughed and clapped as well – his Hoffmann neighbor patted him on the back – appearing proud. As a lesson

17 Pseudonym.
in citizenship, this circle process encouraged a climate of respect and offered all students an opportunity to participate (through speaking and listening) in the intergroup introductions.

Next, Ms. Clark and Mrs. Thomas led a series of human relations activities to draw attention to students’ similarities and differences. For instance, a teacher would read a statement, and students would step into the circle if the statement applied to them. Some questions demonstrated for students some of their cross-group commonalities, such as, “Step into the circle … if you like to grow things,” or, “… if you have a cell phone.” Establishing that similarities exist among students is key to help reduce tension and promote favourable intergroup relations (Parker et al., 2010). Some students laughed when difference between the two groups appeared stark, such as living in an apartment building (all Hoffmann students remained standing still while all AIC students stepped forward). However, the group grew quiet when the majority of AIC students signaled that they had experienced war.

After, teachers assigned students to small mixed groups. More than two-thirds of students easily transitioned into unstructured conversations after they had finished asking their scripted questions (e.g., favourite pastimes/food, reasons for coming to Canada). The room was abuzz with animated talking and laughter. A female AIC student asked her group why some of the Hoffmann boys wore camouflage clothing, because in her home country, only soldiers wore such clothing. A conversation in an all-girl group emerged on the topic of various religious head coverings (Hoffmann students: why do some Muslim girls cover their head and others do not? AIC students: why do some girls here [in the local area – referring to Mennonite] cover their heads and wear long dresses?). The AIC students in Damion’s group were very interested to learn more about his immigrant story, which he appeared to be content, if a bit embarrassed, to share. In another group, Alex, a Hoffmann student who had shown no previous visible interest
in the trip, appeared deep in conversation with a male student from Myanmar over photos Alex displayed (on his phone) of his family’s tractor. Cell phones were not used to text their friends or avoid classroom activities on this day, but acted as tools to promote student engagement, such as sharing their lived stories through photos with new acquaintances. All Hoffmann students appeared to be engaged talking and/or listening intently in the group conversations. The arranged interviews supported students to exercise agency by actively listening to the unfamiliar social and cultural perspectives that differed from their own (Parker, 2010).

The food at the center of the room also served as a talking point for conversations to flourish among intergroup members during lunch. AIC students stepped up to the table one by one and shared details about the particular dish they had brought for the large group. Ms. Clark explained that it had been the students’ idea, not her own, to each bring different foods, to teach about their diverse cultures. Mrs. Thomas shared with me later that she had been worried her students would react negatively when invited to try the food because it was so different (e.g., curry, spicy) from what they were used to. To her delight, all but two students sampled from the table, some filling their plates a second time. The sharing of traditional food, under these circumstances, did not appear to trivialize cultural expressions as Banks’s (2006) contributions approach would suggest, but served as an invitation to Hoffmann students to bridge differences and engaged students from both groups in cross-cultural dialogue using food as a frame of reference.

A few days after the visit to the city, AIC students travelled to Hoffmann High School to reconnect with the geography class, have lunch, and visit a local dairy farm – “to experience rural life in Canada” (Mrs. T, Obs, Dec. 16, 2013). Many of Mrs. Thomas’ students appeared enthusiastic to host the visitors, many wanting to share foods that connected to their own family
backgrounds and/or rural roots. Food appeared to inspire many Hoffmann students to recognize differences among their own European Canadian family traditions and thus ethnocultural diversity among themselves – assumed to be rather homogeneous prior to the trip. For example, Austen, of Mennonite heritage, arranged for his grandmother to bake a traditional dessert. Austen, the student who earlier had exhibited resistance to learning about Othered experiences, appeared keen to share his family traditions with AIC visitors. After the first visit, he told me how he thought AIC students were brave. “It’s really difficult for them – some of what they’ve been through. I think them coming (to Hoffmann) is important too, so they can learn about us” (Obs, Dec. 11, 2013). Dairy farming was a significant piece of Austen’s lived experience and social identity: the arrival of visitors provided him an opportunity to participate and share his farm roots with classmates and the guests. For Austen, citizenship education about different kinds of differences seemed to be more meaningful when the pedagogy included and supported his own social expressions (Hemmings, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

On the day of the second visit, Mrs. Thomas asked students to work collaboratively in their mixed Hoffmann/AIC pairs to complete a Venn diagram (Appendix O). For this, students chatted to first identify some ways they thought they were different (outer sections), and then to identify what they had in common (center). Mrs. Thomas employed this strategy to scaffold dialogue – for students to engage with and compare their personal stories with newcomer students. Advocates of a human relations approach to multicultural citizenship suggest that educators must cultivate skills that promote acknowledgement and respect for individual differences as well as commonalities (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

The expectation (or hope) that intergroup interchange may lead to affective dimensions of citizenship, such as empathy and understanding, centers on the presumption that learning
about the Other can inspire students to feel commonality – that ‘they’ are like ‘us’ and demystify differences (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). For instance, Jack shared in class his anxiety about meeting AIC students the day before the first meeting:

Jack: I can’t explain it. I feel nervous about tomorrow!

Mrs. T: You may find that the people you meet are very similar to you. You’ve been expecting them to be very different.

Jack: Like, do you mean similar to us now? Or back then? (in their home countries)

Mrs. T: I want to pitch the idea that your learning buddy may have had a dairy farm in their home country (similar to Jack). But maybe they don’t now because they live in (name of city) – but some of you might have that rural connection in common.

Jack: Really? I didn’t think about that. Cool! (Obs, Dec. 9, 2013)

Here, Mrs. Thomas eased the social distance between the two different groups to encourage positive interactions to develop. She applied the same strategy when she asked students to show their differences and commonalities using the Venn diagrams: to see the self in the Other. Both the structured intergroup interviews in the first visit and the pair-produced Venn diagrams in the second visit supported inclusive, conversational spaces for all students to perspective share and expose their similar and different lived experiences.

A democratic strength of this intergroup approach is that it may counter (interrupt) some students’ misconceptions about the immigrant Other. For instance, during Mrs. Thomas’ debrief with
her students, Jimmy shared that he was surprised to hear both of his learning buddies disclose that they had not wanted to immigrate to Canada (Obs, Dec. 17, 2013). They each hoped to return one day to their home countries because they were not happy here. This seemed to conflict with some Hoffmann students’ prior beliefs: they exhibited confusion about why a peaceful Canada, with its rights and freedoms, might not be a desirable place to live for someone who had experienced war. Two students (one male, one female) shared with the class that their buddies had had to leave family members behind to flee to Canada; one AIC student had not seen his mother in two years. This realization, a result of intergroup dialogue, evidently challenged some students to rethink their assumptions about the circumstances under which some people arrive to Canada and the hardships they endure.

This diversity-themed unit culminated in a final project that was completed independently by students. Mrs. Thomas invited the class to reflect on the content and intergroup experiences from the unit, and to apply their knowledge and understanding of ethnocultural diversity to the context of their rural school and community. The task (Appendix P) asked students to develop written recommendations: to suggest ways Hoffmann students could become more inclusive and accommodating of students having diverse cultural expressions, and how the local town council could nurture a more inclusive community to welcome cultural diversity and new immigrants. Before starting the project on their own, Mrs. Thomas invited students to suggest ways the community could be more accommodating of various ethnocultural groups:

Jimmy: Like have more of their kind of food?

Mrs. T: Could be. Jack?
Jack: Make a subdivision with houses where people from their countries can all live together. Some of them could all come into a house.

Jimmy: Kinda like a Chinatown.

Mrs. T: Ok. (pause) Do you think that’s a good idea?

Jimmy: I think it is. Like a subdivision for every different group.

Mrs. T: But would that be like, mixing people up? What if Damion (motioning toward him in his seat) came to Canada from (country) and he was only allowed to live in a certain neighbourhood?

(Mrs. Thomas looks to Damion, head facing down, focusing on his hands in his lap; the rest of the class is quiet)

In this exchange, Mrs. Thomas pointed out Damion, the only recent immigrant and non-White student in the class, as a reference point and resident expert to illustrate her position that segregation of minority groups may be detrimental. While classroom conversations about cultural and social identity topics are important aspects of citizenship education, they can also be harmful and demoralizing to students who may be sensitive to discussion that attracts attention to their differences (for example, see Quach, Jo, & Urrieta, 2009; Schultz, 2010).

When Mrs. Thomas introduced the project to the class, she reinforced her belief about the potential for changing ethnocultural dynamics in the local area: “Our community is going to change as immigration numbers in this country increases. And to prepare, we have to make sure we don’t have an ignorant town where people don’t understand about other cultures” (Obs, Jan. 13, 2014). The arrival of new immigrants and, as an assumed outcome in the community, an increase in ethnocultural diversity, was presented in the assignment handout as a settled topic.
This meant that accommodating different ethnocultural identities was not controversial and open to opposing beliefs (Hess, 2009). For example, in Piece 2 of the handout (Appendix P), students were asked to reflect on the “benefits” of a culturally diverse school community, but not on any potential challenges. In Pieces 2 and 3, immigration is framed as “good” for the school and community and precludes alternative positions.

In their final projects, the majority of students offered insight into how immigration would positively contribute to the local community, such as “possibly bring new buiznes” and “New flavors, food, music” (Docs, Jan. 20, 2014). Some normally silent students disagreed with the dominant-voiced view among classmates that immigration and multiculturalism were positive for Canada. Two students presented disadvantages that they attributed to increased immigration and ethnocultural diversity in their community. One female student wrote: “I think some people (that wear turbans) would come to our town and try to change everyone else. They might try to take our jobs. They may try to take over our town” (F, Doc, January 20, 2014). A male student, under his self-made heading, “What are some negatives of them coming?” wrote: “make our city bigger, take jobs, could make weird for people” (M, Doc, January 20, 2014).

One student group interview revealed similar concerns about access to jobs:

Daniel: See … personally for me, I think that it’s actually really fun to go out and see new other things and try new things. But in another way, the more people that come here, by the time we get out of school and those other people are here…

Tim: There’ll be no jobs left. (SGI, Jan. 16, 2014)
During my observational period, I did not hear Daniel, Tim, or any student speak out in class about their concerns relating to increasing immigration numbers and the potential for future job shortages. In another interview, two dominant male students also voiced uncertainty about changing patterns of ethnocultural diversity in Canada; however, they expressed unease and uncertainty about how new cultures might challenge the *status quo*:

Austen: I think if like, East Indians and everything else … if they start coming over, that will start a problem. And eventually they will overrun.

Jack: There’ll be more of them and they’ll want to take over Canada.

Austen: And they’ll just outnumber the Canadians and it will be like a Sikh culture and stuff.

JPM: If you have these thoughts, why don’t you bring them up in class?

Austen: Because the teacher thinks that she knows everything. And only wants to follow by her knowledge and has a hard time accepting other people’s.

(SGI, Jan. 16, 2014)

This interview suggests that one student, at least, did not feel comfortable enough to air his perspectives during whole-class conversations when they conflicted with those of the teacher. One study investigating the feelings of high school students in the U.S. about teacher disclosure and whether it has any influence on student engagement and learning revealed that the majority of students (80%) thought that teacher disclosure was appropriate (Hess, McAvoy, Smithson, & Hwang, cited in Hess, 2009). However, for Austen, Mrs. Thomas’ expressed viewpoints were not acceptable, serving to create a classroom environment that was not an inclusive, responsive
space to share his divergent views openly – as was evidenced in his earlier exchange with Mrs. Thomas concerning Muslims. The potential for future ethnocultural diversification in the context of Hoffmann’s majority white and rural surroundings was a sensitive topic for those students expressly dubious of such change.

In interview, Mrs. Thomas recognized that she had “taken more of a heavy hand … in guiding the discussion” toward the positive opportunities for Canada from increased immigration (T-Int, Jan. 24, 2014). She did so because she had heard students’ erroneous judgment claims in her previous geography classes, similar to Mr. Byrne’s experiences, and she did not want them expressed (legitimated) again openly here. Mrs. Thomas’ human relations approach focused on “harmony building” (Bickmore, 2005, p.168) and positive relationships rather than navigating the complicated aspects of social conflict that immigration policy, as a conflictual issue, tends to stir. Democratic classrooms are public forums that provide educative chances to have any view contested or questioned. To limit particular student opinions because they are deemed inappropriate (e.g., intolerant) may suggest to some students that their views are not valued, as was the case with Austen. Citizenship learning opportunities for Austin (and others) to engage with contrasting social perspectives among their peers (and teacher) were not always available. However, Daniel, Tim, Austen and Jack did acknowledge that the anonymous mind map activity presented them with an opportunity to express views on topics they were less likely to share openly.

This classroom case highlights how Mrs. Thomas taught for pluralistic democratic citizenship through creating opportunities for her students to dialogue, in person, with newcomer youth. She referred to the intergroup dialogue as ‘stories,’ or the sharing of personal narratives: a way to affectively connect her students with citizenship experiences and
perspectives different from their own (e.g., urban, newcomer, non-Christian). Tupper and Cappello (2008), based on their research about teaching treaties as a means to address racialization in curriculum, contend that such imparting of “(un)usual narratives”, or the “telling of other stories, particularly from the perspective of non-whites, is necessary if we are to interrupt the commonsense understandings” (p. 570). Mrs. Thomas’ pedagogical strategy was to introduce (un)usual narratives, facilitated through rural-urban intergroup encounters, as a means for her students to question their self-centered and socio-centered certainties (Rey-von Allmen, 2004), such as Jimmy’s realization described above. This case also reveals how a teacher’s expressed viewpoint, such as Mrs. Thomas’ presentation of immigration and multiculturalism as settled, marginalized some students from airing perspectives that contrasted with this view. This impeded classroom opportunities for students to engage with dissenting views, interrogate bias, and to experience social conflict as ways to practice living in a pluralistic democracy.

**Cross Case Analysis**

The three teachers each expressed a desire to enhance their students’ democratic (multicultural) competence by inviting them to think critically about and engage with unfamiliar ethnocultural identities, experiences, and/or conflicts (Dilworth, 2008). All three acknowledged that expressions of ethnocultural diversity viewed as rare in their predominantly white classrooms and wider rural communities influenced their pedagogical decisions. Each teacher practiced democratic citizenship by shaping the curriculum (through various subject matter and task structures) to support their students to view ideas and issues from (ethnocultural) perspectives and experiences that may have differed from their own (Banks, 2006). Ms. Watson demonstrated how applying controversial issues analysis opened opportunities for students to examine religious and political conflict. She employed an ethnic additive approach first to
expose students to unfamiliar religious differences prior to presenting the multiple and contrasting perspectives related to the (then) proposed Quebec Charter of Values. Mr. Byrne intentionally sought to surface students’ divergent views about recent, non-Anglo immigrants and social identity groups perceived to be different from the white (community) norm. His transactional approach opened possibility spaces for students to reflect on and critique how and why they (and others) positioned unfamiliar ethnocultural Others. Mrs. Thomas’ pedagogy, rooted in education about the Other and human relations approaches to multicultural citizenship, used intergroup discussion activities to fill an assumed gap in her students’ knowledge of racialized and ethnoculturally diverse newcomers’ experiences. She facilitated encounters with lived social differences (newcomer narratives) different from students’ own to enhance some undeveloped understandings of non-Anglo immigrant Other that had surfaced through mind maps.

Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas, both adopting a transmissional (lecture) approach, explicitly selected and presented content knowledge about the sensitive topic of immigration policy. They did so with the view that the social and cultural makeup of their predominantly white and rural communities will inevitably change to reflect an increasingly ethnoculturally-diverse Canadian (including rural) landscape. Students from both classes expressed a divided view on immigration (e.g., impacts on society; the citizenship test). From previous teaching experiences, Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas assumed that some students held biased views toward non-Anglo immigrants and so structured their implemented curriculum and pedagogy to “inform” students’ perspectives. Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas’ anti-bias approach entailed delivery of short information-based lectures about immigration blended with teacher-directed whole class discussions. Each presented similar statistical information to provide evidence and
to offer students insight into how and why continued immigration in Canada will benefit the economy now and in the future. Providing information about unfamiliar Others – in these two cases non-Anglo immigrants – is seen as one way to counter negative stereotypes (Parker et al., 2010) and reduce prejudice. Some of Mrs. Thomas’ students, however, revealed at the end of the unit that they did not think that immigration and multiculturalism was always beneficial for their community because they feared that newcomers would limit their future job prospects and/or impose cultural changes to their community. Mrs. Thomas’ teacher-directed transmissonal approach (providing rationalist explanations – e.g., about the economic need for immigration), in combination with students’ intergroup encounters, did not at this time allay some students’ suspicion and bias toward the immigrant Other.

One inclusive task structure used by all three teachers to elicit and facilitate alternative (e.g., tolerant and intolerant) viewpoints was to conduct types of private disclosure opportunities. The mind maps were one confidential means to engage (comfortably literate) students in a form of written discussion to elicit and visually depict their prior knowledge, assumptions, and stereotypes about various social identities. As a lesson in citizenship, the mind maps revealed contrasting views and understandings among students about the various topics. Similarly, Ms. Watson provided an inclusive opportunity for students to anonymously locate themselves, through putting their heads down on their desks and raising their hands, to respond to questions in relation to the divisive Quebec (proposed) Charter of Values and their level of personal comfort around various forms of religious diversity. The perceived anonymity of student speech in the above types of pedagogy was a key element in their implementation that provided lower risk openings (compared to whole-class discussions) for students to have direct personal engagement with the implemented curriculum – in a short period of class time. Thus
each teacher could elicit a more wide-ranging, inclusive range of student perspectives than those voiced in ‘open’ classroom discussions where dominant voices prevailed.

In interview, some grade 9 boys in Mrs. Thomas’ class shared how they felt that students were more inclined to write down on mind maps their honest opinions about various social topics anonymously rather than to say them aloud and risk public scrutiny (SGI, Jan. 16, 2014). Recall the male student in Mr. Byrne’s class who requested a more neutral-colour of pencil to write his contributions. This act demonstrated clearly that it was important for him that his views not stand out among the others so that he could exercise agency and freely express his personal views on conflictual topics (Johnson & Morris, 2010). A female student in the same class remarked in interview that writing down opinions in this way meant that everyone had an opportunity to contribute to a discussion – a feature of the activity that she valued (F, SGI, May 30, 2013). While writing down remarks did not represent discussion in the verbal sense, its structure did provide every student with an opportunity to discern and contribute their perspective with reduced concern for student or teacher censure (Bickmore, 2014b). These types of private disclosure elicitation strategies are important for democratic citizenship education because they provide openings for more students, including those who may feel marginalized and/or silenced, to participate and take a stand (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012; Davies, 2004).

Some, not all, of the written responses and/or classroom conversations in relation to ethnocultural difference in all classroom cases may have seemed intolerant (and perplexing) to those unfamiliar with the context of each (classroom) community. Teaching to unlearn Othering (Davies, 2014) and addressing bias is difficult for teachers because it involves a certain degree of uncertainty that entails “the unleashing of unpopular things” (Britzman, 1992, p. 151). In interview, Ms. Watson shared her apprehension with me about when presenting topics about
Aboriginal peoples: “I admit that I have to tread lightly. I always feel a little bit of, not quite anxiety, but I wonder what’s going to come out in class and what I’m going to have to deal with” (T-Int, Dec. 18, 2013). Biased perspectives to surface in all classroom settings cannot simply be dismissed as students’ attempts to gain reactions from their classmates and/or the teacher, but may tend to resonate with the ideological inclinations of parents, older relatives and media (Russell, Pellegrino, & Byford, 2007; Washington & Humphries, 2011). Mind map remarks provided Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas with structured opportunities to intensify conflict (Fisher et al., 2000) and to air sensitive stereotypes and misconceptions about topics and social identity content with which some students (though not all) were unfamiliar. Mr. Byrne, and to a lesser degree Mrs. Thomas, appeared undeterred by the nature of some students’ remarks – opting instead to draw on them as part of their implemented curriculum to share back to students as a written record to process their own thoughts as well as others’. In a similar way, Ms. Watson used students’ survey responses to probe their comfort levels with unfamiliar ethnocultural difference in a whole-class discussion.

A teacher’s expressed viewpoint on an issue can marginalize students from contributing multiple and contrasting perspectives to whole-class discussion. In Mrs. Thomas’ class, where opportunities to openly express divergent viewpoints were more controlled compared to the other two classrooms, there seemed to be less inclusive student participation and engagement. Some students chose not to contribute particular opinions to whole-class discussions because they felt they were in opposition to the teacher’s articulated view. Thus topics, such as immigration and multiculturalism, presented to students by Mrs. Thomas as settled, surfaced as controversial in student interviews and in some students’ final projects. Mrs. Thomas’ concern that some students might publically express anti-immigration viewpoints resulted in a classroom
environment that was not fully open to exploring or legitimating the more difficult aspects of social conflict. As Barton and McCully (2007) suggest, to respect the process and necessary autonomy of democratic discussion, teachers should consider “holding our nerve” and “accept[ing] that discussion will lead to better ideas, rather than trying to bias the process from the beginning” (p. 3). Feeling as though certain topics are too conflictual seemed to deter Mrs. Thomas from eliciting perspectives that did not always agree with her own. If teachers are discouraged, even intimidated from facilitating difficult discussions around social conflict (see Miller-Lane, Denton, & May, 2006 for discussion of findings in rural settings), students will lose structured opportunities to engage in democratic citizenship learning: to articulate, listen to, and interrogate a range of interpretations about what caused or constitutes a problem and to assess the strengths and weaknesses of various perspectives (Banks, 2006; Davies, 2004, 2014; Parker, 2010).

In contrast, students appeared more likely to openly contribute their opinions (e.g., Rene’s expressed opinion about Quebec identity), including some that conflicted with dominant views, in Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne’s classrooms. This was likely because their similar approaches appeared open to listening to students express and explain their viewpoints during whole-class discussions (e.g., when Mrs. Watson probed students to explain why people might feel uncomfortable around religious difference). In further contrast, Mr. Byrne’s personal disclosures (both here and in the previous chapter in relation to economic hardship) modeled comfort while speaking about difficult identity topics and may have eased some students into participating more fully and frequently (Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Research reveals students’ enduring view that disagreement discussions are more valuable if the teacher presents their
views in a manner that is authentic and honest (Hess, McAvoy, Smithson, & Hwang, cited in Hess, 2009).

Both Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne expressed to me their concern that if they were to rule certain positions inappropriate, they would convey to students that their beliefs (thus, their experience and knowledge of the world) were not valued, and that this could bring discussion (and learning) to a halt. To shut down students’ views may only serve to further entrench their beliefs and close possibility spaces for students to develop and practice types of agency: to experience and engage with the ideological diversity among their peers and reformulate ideas and views (Gordon, 2006). Mr. Byrne summed up his feelings in interview:

Mr. B: It’s tough, because I can’t just say stop thinking that because I don’t agree with them. You have to understand where they’re coming from first in order to explain where they could be going, not necessarily where they should be going. So I let them share it out: the good, the bad, and the ugly. And sometimes they come to realize that maybe this ignorance comes from a place that is not so well-informed (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013).

Ms. Watson, too, expressed concern that she would diminish the classroom climate of responsiveness and inclusivity if she too strongly expressed her own personal views. Hess (2009) refers to this as pedagogical influence: when the “teacher’s opinion interfere(s) with the discussions, the classroom climate, or with the student-teacher relationship” (p. 101). Mrs. Thomas, on the other hand, admitted that she did not want some students’ anti-immigration perspectives announced in the classroom. Her top-down messaging about immigration and
increased (local) ethnocultural diversification as inevitable and beneficial, denied openings for some students to air their dissent openly, and seemed to close opportunities for potentially educative and interruptive conflicts to emerge (Davies, 2004).

Unequal social identities in classrooms, along the lines of race, ability, and gender also limit inclusive practices of agency in classrooms (and schools in general). Well-intentioned dialogue in seemingly safe-enough classroom climates can harm already marginalized students. On at least two occasions during my observational period, I watched how Damion, the only non-white and recent immigrant was singled out as the single racialized and recent immigrant expert in the class. In predominantly white classrooms, the visible, racialized Other (e.g., a single black student) may be positioned to be the expert Other, asked by the teacher (or students) to explain their “minority” perspective (see hooks, 1994). This may reinforce the social divide between the assumed (white) norm and (racialized) Other.

Except for one student who had moved to Vandenberg from an ethnically diverse urban area, many students in all three cases expressed in interview that they had not had many opportunities to engage in sustained discussion (or to ask questions) about topics relating to ethnocultural difference in their previous classes. Interestingly, when the three teachers did present topics relating to ethnocultural difference and/or social conflict, all three classrooms buzzed with student interest. For instance, Ms. Watson’s lesson about religious garb and accommodation generated a steady stream of hand raising, student comments and inquiries, and sustained peer-to-peer conversation in all pod groups. Some students in Mrs. Thomas’ class also expressed enthusiastic interest to understand the beliefs and values driving various religious expressions (e.g., a Sikh turban). Mr. Byrne, leading a whole-class discussion about whether or not it is important to learn about different religious expressions (in debriefing the mind map
activity responses), roused curious questions from captivated students who appeared eager to know more. Thus, presenting content about ethnocultural difference and conflict stimulated student engagement from a range of learners in all three classrooms.

The classroom case studies presented in this chapter demonstrate practical ways that three teachers implemented citizenship education practices to elicit and facilitate various students’ expression in relation to ethnocultural diversity, in contexts in which such diversity was not particularly visible or evident inside the classroom. Each teacher reinforced how teaching about sensitive topics of social identity difference—particularly around expressions of ethnocultural diversity— is a complicated, uncertain, and usually daunting undertaking. Not surprisingly, no one approach (transmissional, transactional, transformational) to citizenship education can neatly make sense of the pedagogical complexity I observed in any one case. Subject matter invited students to view equity and identity issues and conflict (religious accommodations, newcomer experiences) from unfamiliar perspectives. Private disclosure tasks (mind maps, survey) and partner and small group structures (mind map debriefing, intergroup dialogue) supported perspective sharing and facilitated the airing of students’ different perspectives and lived social experiences. In the following chapter, I summarize and discuss the main findings of the thesis research project as a whole, scholarly and professional implications, and close with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of this study, and opportunities for future research.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION:

TEACHING FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP THROUGH FACILITATING EXPRESSION OF MULTIPLE FORMS OF DIVERSITY

This multiple case study research project has examined how and why three teachers chose and implemented subject matter and pedagogies to support their students to navigate various types of difference and conflict, in high school (grade 9-10) classrooms in southern Ontario. All practicing in predominantly white and rural classroom settings, the three teachers in this study sought to provide their students with meaningful democratic pluralist citizenship learning experiences in relation to the diverse make-up of Canadian society. I first investigated how each teacher surfaced and facilitated students’ expression of less-visible heterogeneities of social, cultural, and ideological differences as an important element of living in a pluralist democracy. I then presented and analyzed the ways these teachers taught for citizenship in relation to expressions of ethnocultural diversity viewed as rare in their classroom settings and wider communities. The findings reveal a range of overlapping transmissional, transactional, and transformational pedagogical approaches (Miller, 2007) intended to develop students’ understanding and respect for social diversity and (in)equity issues.

The research questions and application of my conceptual framework (Table 1) guide my summary and analytical discussion of the main findings. I now distill and portray, below, five types of democratic citizenship pedagogy participating teachers designed to juxtapose and explore different kinds of differences among learners, viewed as sources of knowledge. These include Explicit talk about: In what ways are we diverse?; Connecting curriculum to students’ lives to challenge injustice; Dialogue to explore conflicting perspectives about ideologically-
charged issues; \textit{Face-to-face contact pedagogies to humanize unfamiliar ethnocultural differences}; and \textit{Private disclosures of students’ contrasting views and experiences}. Next, I highlight the scholarly contributions of this study and its implications for the improvement of citizenship education practice (in comparable settings). I then discuss the strengths and limitations of my research methodology, offer recommendations for future research, and conclude.

\textbf{Summary and Discussion of Main Study Findings:}

\textbf{Democratic Citizenship Education for Diversity: Pedagogies for Different Kinds of Differences}

Something one student participant said has stayed with me in particular, replayed time and again in my thinking throughout my analytical journey. The following, from a group interview among some of Mr. Byrne’s grade 10 Civics students, revealed how she perceived diversity within her majority white school and rural context:

"There’s a lot of internal diversity. Like everyone here has very different opinions and styles and, um, beliefs and that kind of thing. So [diversity] is more than like, it’s not really any visible diversity, but it’s more like we’re all different kinds of people." (SGI, Vandenberg, Alanna, May 30, 2013)

I found Alanna’s candid reflection to be particularly meaningful because she does not seem to limit diversity to something overtly visible (e.g., race, religious garb) and reflects an appreciation of differences that are ‘internal’, such as beliefs, opinions and social experiences. She explained to me that contexts that may seem homogenous along lines of race and/or
ethnicity, like the three classrooms in this study, still inevitably express broader social and ideological diversity than would be met in students’ home environments (see Hess, 2009; Parker, 2010).

As I argued in Chapter 2, some multicultural education scholarship is inadequate, tending to limit difference to matters of race and ethnocultural diversity and to focus on urban (and suburban) populations. Supported by scholars such as Sleeter and Grant (2009) and Nieto and Bode (2012), I argue that narrow understandings of diversity embodied in some multicultural education and citizenship education approaches tend to overlook less visible social heterogeneities and oppressive stratifications that exist in all communities. Citizenship education for diversity needs to attend to all forms of human difference (social, cultural, ideological) to challenge ongoing contemporary struggles by marginalized groups to achieve equitable citizenship.

The three teachers in this study enacted pedagogies to support their students to explore different types of differences. These included ideological diversity, and the heterogeneities of religion, socioeconomic status, and mental health, thus expanding mainstream understandings of social difference that are usually associated with race and visible ethnocultural diversity. A key element in each of the three teachers’ approaches was to regard learners themselves as legitimate players in contested social spaces, already knowledgeable about social diversities – knowledge that was elicited from students as part of the implemented curriculum – such as the opinions and beliefs Alanna alluded to above. Teacher-facilitated whole-class discussions, small group work (in two cases) and reflective writing pedagogies provided opportunities for students to connect their personal and/or community experiences to curriculum, thus supporting inclusive understandings of democratic citizenship (Hemmings, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Miller,
I have distilled the various strategies that I observed in each case classroom into five types of democratic citizenship pedagogy to navigate difference and conflict. I present and discuss these findings below using brief highlights from each case.

(i) Explicit talk about: In what ways are we diverse?

Mrs. Thomas sought to support her students to recognize some of the ways diversity manifested as narrow and broad individual, group, and/or cultural differences within their predominantly white, rural setting. Using teacher-directed whole-class discussion, she explicitly asked students to notice some of the less visible social differences in their school and community (e.g., heterogeneities of religion, physical and thinking abilities, opinions, rural versus urban social identity). Her approach encouraged students to name various aspects of their personal identities and social circumstances, elicited through individual reflective writing pedagogies. For instance, her written activity *Circles of My Multicultural Self* asked students to identify their own individual (hybrid) social identities, to expose the diverse and multifaceted nature of their lived experiences. On a separate occasion, she also asked students to investigate their families’ immigration histories. Students’ findings, when shared with the class, revealed snippets of their diverse ethnocultural backgrounds and immigration stories. Mrs. Thomas explained that: “…just because we don’t have turbans doesn’t mean we don’t have a multicultural community – most times you just can’t see it” (Obs, Jan. 13, 2014). These strategies sought to complicate students’ understandings of diversity, that is, to extend them to include other kinds of differences (beyond racialized – e.g., turbans are not about race *per se*).

Mrs. Thomas showed students how they were themselves examples of complex identities, through opening up the less obvious aspects of social difference in their predominantly white school and rural community. As Reed (2010) recommends, “for rural
students, learning about their rural culture provides opportunities for them to see themselves as multi-cultural persons and rural as part of … cultural diversity” (p. 17). Other scholars argue that presenting rural and ruralness as a socially-constructed representation would attend to the difficulty (and/or resistance) of implementing multicultural citizenship education in white school contexts (Atkin, 2003; Ayalon, 2003). To understand any culture, including ‘rural’ culture(s), is to recognize the heterogeneity of multiple and contested social identities, lived experiences, and ideological differences within and among rural locations (Yao, 1999). Mrs. Thomas supported some students’ cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995) by drawing on their social identities, lived experiences, and family histories as instructional starting points (and as motivation for student engagement – see Hemmings, 2000) to lead them into a larger unit of study about immigration and multiculturalism in Canada.

Conversely, some other dimensions of social difference remained silent. Mrs. Thomas and her students did not recognize gender identity and sexual orientation in the diversity discussions, nor were they explicitly acknowledged in the other two case classrooms as platforms for diversity education. Non-inclusion of particular social identities such as these in implemented curriculum could make some partial knowledges difficult to counter because of their absence: “the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use” (Eisner, 2002, pp. 106-107). Naming of various differences is a step toward affirming and resisting associated social inequities (Bickmore, 2014a). The nonappearance of gender identity and sexual orientation among Mrs. Thomas’ list of diversities and social perspectives thus maintained heteronormativity and unequal values. Teachers may have tremendous influence in perpetuating or disrupting students’ perceptions and biases, through inclusion and exclusion of particular social perspectives (Niyozov & Pluim, 2009).
Lessons that exclude marginalized perspectives limit the potential for interruptive democracy (Davies, 2004).

(ii) Connecting curriculum to students’ lives to challenge injustice

Pedagogy that is inclusive of diverse students’ social experiences and ideologies provides transformational opportunities for students to make connections so that learning is “personally and socially meaningful” (Miller, 2007, p. 12). As Apple and Beane (1995) argue, it is “in the details of everyday life … [that] the most powerful meaning of democracy is formed” (p. 103). Learners, as citizens arriving in their classrooms already armed with diverse everyday life experiences, perspectives, and agentic potential, have knowledge that can be shared with peers to support the recognition and understanding of the visible and less visible dimensions of social difference. Democracy is a lived experience during which agency – the disposition and capacity to act (Gordon, 2006) – can be practiced. Two teachers in this study provided guided opportunities for their students to build the capacity to share openly with peers their personal social exclusion experiences as part of the implemented curriculum. Their pedagogies supported some students’ expressions of student agency to challenge injustice.

In one example, Mr. Byrne steered his students through a series of small group tasks to increase their knowledge and awareness of local social issues (e.g., unemployment, hunger) and to interact with citizens who took action to address those problems in the local community. One such task required students to visit a local social service non-governmental organization and later share their experiences to peers in a presentation. Mr. Byrne encouraged students to explore a social issue based on their interests and/or personal life experiences. The presentations provided a vehicle for two students, Lisa and Jim, to “construct themselves as agentic speaking subjects” (Gordon, 2006, p. 12) by speaking openly (and courageously) to the class about their
struggles with mental illness and some of the inequities associated with this social identity difference. Their personal disclosures were insightful, such as Jim’s remark about the role of local community organizations to “help people like me who need a little bit of help to be as successful as you. As someone with mental illness, I can tell you we’re not lazy or stupid – we just need a leg up” (Obs, May 28, 2013). This disclosure was a potentially interruptive statement (Haroutunian-Gordan, 2010) in light of some students’ previous remarks linking laziness and poverty. So, while Jim did not disclose these views during teacher-led whole class discussion, he did exercise agency when this different pedagogical format provided him authority to speak to peers from his lived experiences with mental illness (Morrison et al., 2008). Through opening up and exposing their personal private experiences in their (separate) presentations, Jim and Lisa invited their peer listeners (all of whom appeared to be engaged listeners) to unlearn Othering (Davies, 2014): to transform harmful social stigmas associated with mental illness. Their disclosures also affirmed a social identity difference and inequities that tends to be less visible and suppressed in mainstream classrooms.

Using a different pedagogical approach, Mrs. Thomas guided her students to consider their personal experiences with in-groups and out-groups through individual reflective writing pedagogies followed by whole-class perspective sharing. One student, Damion, in a rare speak-aloud moment, disclosed publicly how he had felt excluded as a minority black student in the midst of his predominantly white, rural high school. He revealed how racism that he had experienced on the local football team disallowed him from enacting his citizenship (participation through sports) in the same ways as majority white students. This disclosure, similar to Lisa and Jon’s narratives of experience, linked Damion’s personal and community
knowledge (citizenship exclusion) to the curriculum, to create an empowering agentic moment for interruptive democracy-building (Davies, 2004; Hemmings, 2000).

These two teachers facilitated classroom opportunities for students to develop critical citizenship capacity (agency) to speak about their marginalized status and to reflect openly on the social inequities they had endured (Johnson & Morris, 2010). Their inclusion of students’ different social experiences in the implemented curriculum created transformational democratic opportunities for listening students to view social inequities from multiple social group perspectives (Banks, 2006).

(iii) Dialogue to explore conflicting perspectives about ideologically-charged issues

As discussed in Chapter 2, dialogue for democratic education is a means by which teachers intentionally surface and air students’ diverse viewpoints regarding social, political, and/or interpersonal topics (Bickmore, 2014b; Davies, 2004; Hess, 2009; Parker, 2010). As a public forum, the classroom is the first opportunity for many students to air their knowledge and value claims, while they are simultaneously brought into contact with beliefs that conflict with their own (Hess, 2009; King, 2009). Various dialogic pedagogies I did observe in action included community circle activities, small group discussions (teacher-selected and self-selected friend groupings), teacher-directed whole-class discussion, and a U-shaped (opinion spectrum) partial deliberation. Two teachers, Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne, infused conflictual subject matter with dialogic processes to elicit political and sociocultural disagreement among their students. Examples of issues included freedom of expression and religious rights, a local environmental issue, immigration policy, and social issues in the local community. Inclusion of content that invites contrasting perspectives, such as these, suggests to students that public expression of conflicting views is a “normal, interesting, and productive” part of a
heterogeneous, democratic society (Hess & Ganzler, 2007, p. 136). Classroom discussion pedagogies that include discordant viewpoints are associated with building students’ capacities and dispositions to engage with pluralist democratic citizenship (Bickmore, 2014b; Hahn, 2010; Hess & Avery, 2008; Schultz et al., 2009).

Ms. Watson exhibited the widest platform of conflictual issues and dialogical possibilities, consistent ingredients in her classroom practice, to elicit students’ various ideological perspectives and social values. For instance, she presented a local controversial environmental issue (the installation of wind turbines in the surrounding rural area) to engage students to speak and listen to the differing viewpoints of their peers. To do this she purposively positioned (six) divergent standpoints to stimulate political conflict (Houser, 1996) and guided an information-gathering process for students to consider each. Her U-shaped (partial) deliberation approach provided every student with an opportunity to formulate and express views, to engage in active listening across difference (Parker, 2010), and to assess, critique, and maybe even reformulate their views – expressed (verbally or not) in relation to their physical position on the opinion spectrum.

When Ms. Watson and Mr. Byrne included subject matter about local issues that touched on nerves in students’ own lives, this strategy tended to rouse student engagement, sometimes among usually quiet students, to participate in brief horizontal peer-to-peer crosstalk. For instance, moments of emotional escalation surfaced on the topic of religion (religious rights) in Ms. Watson’s class – a less visible dimension of social identity difference that was sensitive for some Christian students and those who challenged Christianity as indoctrination. As well, teacher-facilitated discussion pedagogies that introduced topics about unfamiliar aspects of ethnocultural diversity provoked participation from the majority of learners. For instance, Ms.
Watson’s presentation of a current news story infused with political and religious conflict (the proposed Quebec Charter of Values). She used this conflict to draw out students’ disagreement as resources for reflection about religious identity differences, accommodation of these differences, and students’ (dis)comfort with religious difference in general.

To introduce the proposed Quebec Charter of Values controversy, Ms. Watson taught about non-Christian religious identities viewed as mainly absent in the Buchanan community. This instance brought to the surface a tension in democratic pluralist citizenship education: an awkward knot between teaching to provide content about the absent Other (e.g., immigrant, non-Anglo, non-Christian) (Banks, 2006; Kumashiro, 2000), to enhance students’ awareness and understandings of different kinds of differences, and the danger of unintentionally essentializing that Otherness through this practice. Ms. Watson invited and responded to students’ questions about different religious expressions (e.g., religious garb, symbols) with factual information to attend to knowledge gaps and contradict misperceptions. Such information dissemination alone does not necessarily constitute democratic education. For instance, some critical scholars theorize that teaching only factual knowledge (about the Other) is insufficient to promote justice transformation, such as religious accommodation (Gorski, 2008; Kumashiro, 2000; Kymlicka & Opalski, 2001). However, I, among others, argue that, “It is difficult to accommodate that which you do not understand” (Peck et al., 2008, p. 82). Knowledge and understanding about ethnocultural diversity is a necessary basis (though not sufficient) for respect from which justice transformation may grow. One study conducted with predominantly white grade 7 students in rural New Brunswick (Canada) used visual stimuli to explore students’ understandings of expressions of religious and ethnic diversity (Peck & Sears, 2005). Many of these New Brunswick students were completely unaware and/or emphatically
unsupportive of accommodation related to ethnic (including religious) differences, most likely because they did not have any experience with, or understanding of the basis for, such accommodations. I agree with the above authors that if students do not have “even a basic understanding of what it means to be Muslim, or Jewish, or Hindu, or francophone, or Jehovah’s Witness, or (fill in the blank)” (Peck et al., 2010, p. 70), then students may not have an understanding of or consequent openness to formal and informal types of accommodation and inclusion in Canada. Teaching at least some rudimentary knowledge about religious and cultural symbols (e.g., recognition and meanings), such as the information Ms. Watson provided, can act as a catalyst to build students’ capacities to critique and assess views about social conflict relating to equity and religious accommodation. Parker et al. (2011) refer to this pedagogical step as “engagement first.” Ms. Watson applied this theory to practice when she taught knowledge about unfamiliar religious identity differences to scaffold students to engage with contrasting perspectives and societal values that surfaced in relation to the proposed Quebec Charter of Values.

Some of the scholarship on the value and implications of controversial issues discussions in citizenship education tends to emphasize deliberation – that is, discussion toward making a judgment or decision (Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013, 2014; Parker, 2010). Perhaps unfortunately, I was able to observe very little such sustained, thoughtful exchange in the three classrooms I studied. Instead, my description and discussion of the three teachers’ implemented curriculum and pedagogies tended to emphasize the ways they recognized and opened up conflicts and differences (and, the ways they sometimes curtailed or shut down opportunities for educative conflict talk), more than deliberation or resolution. In the context of this study, conflictual issues discussion processes wielded a different kind of democratic potential than is
associated with democratic deliberation (Parker, 2010). I looked for the ways in which conflict was applied, using subject matter and pedagogies, to solicit and make visible for students the contrasting social identities and values coexisting among them that otherwise might be assumed or implicit. As Barton and McCully (2007) argue, “If teachers do not capitalize on students’ ideological diversity by bringing their ideas to the surface, students may assume a greater degree of consensus than actually exists” (p. 4). Thus dialogue was an important democratic component for these teachers, working with predominantly white classes, to expose competing perspectives and a diversity of views that were previously unconsidered (Davies, 2003). This demonstrated for students that they do not all share the same beliefs or worldviews concerning social and political issues (Barton & McCully, 2007; Hess, 2009; Hess & Ganzler, 2007). Such strategies highlighted for students that, as a result of their various life experiences and beliefs (their knowledge of the world), they come to school with different visions of what society looks like (and should look like) – and that these divergent views are valued as part of pluralist democratic citizenship. My findings reinforce prior scholarship that supports classroom dialogue as a means to provoke conflicting (contrasting) perspectives and lead to somewhat inclusive, democratic learning opportunities (Bickmore, 2014b; Hahn, 2010; Hess, 2009; Hess & Avery, 2008).

I found that how the three teachers presented a social issue to students sometimes inhibited potentially educative sociocultural conflicts from surfacing. For instance, when Mrs. Thomas expressed her personal positive views about the benefits of immigration and multiculturalism for Canadian society, she intentionally impeded some students from expressing aloud their own anti-immigration perspectives. To avoid conflict rather than to facilitate potentially transformational, conflictual social relationships does not support democratic citizenship (Bickmore, 2014b). Mrs. Thomas, similar to some teachers in heterogeneous
classrooms (Bickmore & C. Parker, 2014; Llewellyn et al., 2010), suppressed complicated aspects of ideological difference (e.g., around immigration) deemed to be too conflictual among her students. One small-scale study showed that teachers tended to avoid disclosing their views to students on conflictual topics because they feared backlash from the local, rural community (Miller-Lane, Denton, & May, 2006). In slight contrast, Mrs. Thomas sought to silence students’ judgment claims that she viewed as erroneous about immigrants and immigration through her personal disclosure because she wanted to restrict students’ conflictual (anti-immigration) views. To nurture students’ democratic capacity and the skills to reflect upon, and potentially interrupt injustice through discussion, means to actively guide (and invite) students to question (and/or respond to) conflicting perspectives and social values (Davies, 2004, 2014).

(iv) Face-to-face contact pedagogies to humanize unfamiliar ethnocultural differences

This study found that teaching for democratic citizenship in relation to ethnocultural diversity in primarily white, rural settings presented the three teachers with a common challenge. They each acknowledged that their students in general, largely owing to their predominantly white community settings located outside of racially and ethnoculturally diverse urban centers, had had limited opportunities to interact across race and ethnicity that differed from their own (based on religion, cultural symbols and expressions, appearance, and values and beliefs). Each teacher viewed this as both a deficit in their students’ citizenship education – particularly in the context of Canada’s pluralist democracy – and also as an incentive to democratize their citizenship teaching. In all three classrooms, ethnic additive (Banks, 2006) and education about the Other (Kumashiro, 2000) approaches were prominent, likely because opportunities for students to learn to recognize and understand various ethnocultural groups
(beyond the shallow and sometimes dehumanizing information available in popular media) were relatively few. Mr. Byrne’s mind map pedagogy sparked insightful classroom conversations about how students’ paucity of human exposure to unfamiliar ethnocultural (religious) differences, in general, could lead to harmful biases. One female student (Bronwyn) felt that despite her motivation, she did not feel equipped with sufficient knowledge (about the Other) to counter such expressions. Thus, some students identified critical media literacy (to deconstruct media depictions of particular ethnocultural identities and experiences) as desirable and feasible citizenship skills to support unlearning Othering and confidently challenge bias (Davies, 2004, 2014).

In light of their demographic challenge, one teacher deemed as a priority facilitating face-to-face human contact pedagogies to provide opportunities for her rural students to humanize ethnoculturally different and racialized young people. Some multicultural education theorists support such intergroup relations as a means to improve students’ social skills to interact effectively with different racial, cultural, and ethnic groups, as well as to mitigate discomfort and anxiety about social difference that can lead to prejudice (Camicia, 2007; Parker et al., 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Mrs. Thomas designed the rural-urban intergroup encounter with newcomer immigrant youth in a nearby urban area to provide her students with alternative narratives: to intermingle with, negotiate, and appreciate difference (somewhat comparable to the work of Gurin, Nagda, & Sorensen, 2011; Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004; Zuñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002). As Sleeter and Grant (2009) explain, “Although there is value in presenting information or in demonstrating an action, those strategies that place students in a passive role have less impact than those that place them in an active role” (p. 102). Mrs. Thomas’ intergroup contact dialogue pedagogy created social spaces for her students to actively ask about and listen
to unfamiliar people discuss cultural and social experiences (e.g., religious observances and refugee experiences) and speak about their own. Teaching for democratic citizenship in relation to immigration and ethnocultural diversity, from Mrs. Thomas’ (pedagogical) perspective, entailed inviting students to reframe their perspectives through arranging personal encounters with these human differences.

Mrs. T: [I] start with a self-centered perspective and I let them story-tell and then look for the stories of others, and compare their story to that story … If they don’t have a personal connection, and a teacher doesn’t make it for them, then they have a hard time showing empathy. (T-Int, Jan. 24, 2014)

Mrs. Thomas’ facilitation of students’ exposure to unusual narratives supported interruption (Haroutunian-Gordon, 2010): to dismantle assumptions and misunderstandings held by some students concerning immigrant identities. Through exposing students to identities outside of their own, as well as encouraging the building of bridges between differences, Mrs. Thomas hoped to nurture students’ understanding, comfort and respect for their different and similar (e.g., Venn diagram, Appendix O) lived citizenship experiences – albeit within only two intergroup visits. Such in-person dialogic interaction carries democratic potential to support students’ perspective sharing skills and their capacity to view human difference as desirable for democracy (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Zuñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002).

(v) Private disclosures of students’ contrasting views and experiences

Many students in this study did not contribute verbally in ostensibly ‘open’ and ‘whole class’ discussion around sensitive conflictual topics of social and/or political difference;
dominant student (and teacher) voices tended to prevail in all classrooms. These findings are consistent with previous classroom studies, which revealed similar frequent vertical classroom talk (Bickmore, 2014b; Dull & Murrow, 2008; Hess, 2009). ‘Open’ public displays of tolerance in large group classroom discussions do not promote democratic citizenship. Instead, they can conceal deep social divides if students are silenced or refrain from speaking when their opinions differ from the vocal majority and/or teacher experts (Hemmings, 2000; Hess & Posselt, 2002; Rossi, 1995). Teacher-student and peer status hierarchies in all three classroom cases limited the range of (divergent) views that were expressed verbally, thus impeding the level of open disagreement and democratic learning opportunities. Such classroom dynamics are also common in racially and ethnoculturally diverse classrooms (Hess & Ganzler, 2007; Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Bickmore, 2014b). To be more inclusive of student voices, the three citizenship teachers in this study explored private disclosure pedagogies to elicit a wider range of viewpoints and experiences than was available through open discussion. Such inclusion is a necessary element of democratic citizenship education to support students’ critical thinking through exposure to more points of view (ideological diversity) than is heard in the dominant vocal status quo (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012; Davies, 2004, 2014).

When each of the three teachers created lower risk opportunities for students to privately participate in disclosing their views and experiences (out of peer and/or teacher hearing), a more inclusive range of students’ perspectives emerged compared to verbal perspective-sharing alone (in small or large groups). Examples of this pedagogy included Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas’ mind mapping activity and Ms. Watson’s anonymous classroom poll. Mr. Byrne’s Personal Beliefs paragraph also invited students to explore, responding in writing to guiding reflective questions, about identity and difference (e.g., marginalization, personal bias, privilege). The
samples of student work I viewed revealed how (predominantly female) students felt comfortable and willing to share their deeply personal views out of the public (peer) eye. These private disclosure pedagogies offered low risk spaces for students to express unfettered viewpoints on social topics, with a degree of confidentiality.

Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas implemented mind maps to visually elicit all students’ views in writing regarding various social identities. The perceived confidentiality and inclusive nature of the mind map activity seemed to engage all students. Recall the male student in Mr. Byrne’s class who requested a writing device in a neutral colour so that his words could not be traced back to him; anonymity was evidently very important to him. In group interviews, some students said they were more likely to write sincere remarks about the topics than to share verbally and risk teacher and peer censure (e.g., Jack, SGI, Jan. 16, 2014). A female student explained in a group interview that she found the mind map format appealing because “I like discussions that everyone’s involved in and everyone was involved in this one because you got to write your thoughts down” (SGI, F, May 30, 2013). Capturing an inclusive range of peer perspectives was important for some students because this “let you know what other people feel about things, too” (SGI, F, May 30, 2013). Whilst writing opinions down on paper is not literally a dialogic pedagogy, mind maps, as implemented, provided an alternate form of discussion, in the sense of expressing and encountering opinions, for these two teachers to expose (at least the comfortably literate) students to perspectives outside of their own.

Mind maps and the anonymous survey surfaced many more students’ prior knowledge and assumptions than voice discussions. This inclusion of a wider range of students’ contributions also elicited contrasting perspectives toward social identity groups. Students could see the diversity of beliefs and attitudes among their peers when teachers shared back
(anonymously) to their classes the students’ private contributions. Thus mind maps constituted a democratic strategy to, first, bring to light divergent student views, and then to infuse these perspectives, as resources in the implemented curriculum. This supported students to view social identities from different peer perspectives. In this way, learners were viewed by their teachers as sources of knowledge – a key component of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Selected mind maps were presented by teachers to students – almost like a mirror – to gaze into and assess, discuss, and/or confront the views they expressed personally, or those of their classmates. For instance, Mr. Byrne juxtaposed some biased student comments made in reference to Muslims (an Othered religious identity) with student comments written about Christians (that appeared more tolerant). This opened up a class conversation between Mr. Byrne and some students regarding how limited and biased knowledge (partly owing to unfavorable media coverage) and these students’ general lack of interaction with members of different social identity groups (such as Muslims) can contribute to harmful biases.

Though well intentioned, these pedagogies did not always constitute inclusive democratic education because teachers tended not to teach with (using) the breadth of views that had surfaced privately. The full range of student viewpoints – from intolerant to tolerant – within various social identities (e.g., within the Muslim mind map), tended not to be used to its full democratic potential in all case classrooms. The three teachers each focused on the students’ responses that they deemed as intolerant rather than to navigate all viewpoints. Teachers implied, through lines of questioning and information dissemination, that there was a single correct response: tolerance. As I saw in all cases, teacher-directed, information-based transmission approaches did not always create spaces for transactional and/or potentially transformational (conflictual) dialogue about difference to surface. This detracted from
democratic citizenship education because potentially educative conflicts, among students’ contrasting in/tolerance, were not invited to develop. For instance, Ms. Watson, after sharing back students’ divided poll results about the proposed Quebec Charter of Values, framed her interpretive and values questions (Dull & Murrow, 2008) around the intolerant (or uncomfortable with religious difference) responses, even though these represented the minority view in this class. She did not invite expression of the majority view: tolerance and comfort with religious difference. Similarly, Mr. Bryne, when debriefing the mind map remarks, did not always juxtapose divergent viewpoints – intolerant and tolerant – to highlight the range of (in)tolerance in the room and to present incentives for students to engage horizontally (student-to-student) with their contrasting perspectives. These pedagogical choices limited democratic teaching opportunities to support students’ agentic dispositions to critically engage with (and/or to challenge) their peers’ contrasting points of view (Banks, 2006) and to practice interruptive democracy (Davies, 2004). Unlike Ms. Watson, who summarized her poll results for the class to show their contrasting views, Mr. Byrne did not give space or voice to recognizing that some students were tolerant; however, students themselves might have gleaned this observation when analyzing the mind maps. Instead, he tended to focus on the intolerant perspectives – as revealed in his three guiding discussion questions (Chapter 6), meant to focus students’ analysis on ‘ignorant’ remarks rather than to probe tolerant and/or informed views. Each of the three teachers had expressed a desire to teach for democratic citizenship, to varying degrees, to increase their students’ multicultural competence to live and participate among different kinds of differences. Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas both anticipated future racial and ethnocultural diversification to occur in their rural locations. In light of their uncertain population futures and increasing likelihoods that their rural students would inevitably encounter (deeper) racial and
ethnocultural differences, there was a sense of urgency to attend to intolerance – which might explain why they cast their gaze so intently in this direction.

In sum, each teacher enacted pedagogies to elicit and allow a range of perspectives, what Mr. Byrne referred to as “the good, the bad, and the ugly” (T-Int, Apr. 23, 2013), to emerge privately. However, these teachers did not relinquish their role as ideology experts to legitimate certain opinions, rather than to facilitate critical conflict dialogue (or other pedagogies) for students to engage with peers’ multiple and opposing perspectives and values that had been surfaced (Apple, 2004; Barton & McCully, 2007; Kumashiro, 2000). As I discussed above, unlike Mr. Byrne, Mrs. Thomas did not invite students’ anti-immigration and anti-diversity perspectives to air verbally. Both of these teachers denied openings for potentially educative conflicts to flourish by assuming the expert teacher role: to transmit incontestable truth-in-numbers about the economic benefits of immigration. This served to silence ‘troubling speech’ (North, 2009) by closing down conversational opportunities for students to themselves interrupt biased perspectives aired in the classroom. When any view is sidelined, so too are opportunities to support students’ development and expression of critical consciousness: their capacity to analyze society from multiple perspectives with a view to transforming it (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

**Implications of This Study**

This study adds to the existing body of literature on citizenship education and social studies, rural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and cross-cultural and anti-bias education in North American schools. Furthermore, it provides practical guidance to support teacher development and citizenship teachers’ pedagogical learning. The findings show demonstrably feasible ways that three teachers exposed and facilitated a range of views and experiences in
relation to social difference, social conflict, and (in)equality in their majority white and rural classrooms. Studying democracy and diversity education in these settings, steered by my conceptual framework, revealed descriptive accounts of democracy-building strategies to surface and affirm different kinds of social distinctions, including the heterogeneities of religion, socioeconomic status, and mental health, as well as ideological diversity. This study challenges mainstream understandings of social difference typically embedded in some multicultural education and citizenship education scholarship to include less visible social diversities as important elements of living in a pluralist democracy.

The findings have implications for conflict ‘dialogue’ and inclusion pedagogies. This study highlights how open and private discussion pedagogies about different kinds of differences provide inclusive opportunities to engage all students in democratic pluralist citizenship learning. The three teachers used a range of subject matter and disclosure processes to intentionally surface multiple and contrasting views and experiences among learners. Democratic learning opportunities for students to hear and reflect on their peers’ multiple and contrasting social, cultural, and ideological perspectives and experiences flourished when teachers invited inclusive conversations about difference and conflict issues. Recall Rene’s passionate plea to protect Quebec’s traditional French culture (her family’s roots) from religious Others. This example highlights how purposeful inclusion of provocative justice questions of social conflict in implemented curriculum encouraged students to speak about their identities and values, through sometimes uncomfortable, emotional and vocal engagement with sociocultural conflict. To elicit and facilitate a broader range of student voice, opportunities for students to ‘speak’ were made available outside of verbal perspective sharing alone. Private disclosure pedagogies (opinion spectrum, mind map, anonymous survey, and reflective writing
elicitation strategies) were inclusive means for all students to have a say and to enter into conflict dialogue alongside different peer perspectives. These pedagogical choices provided a feasible, low risk, democracy-building alternative to conventional classroom talk processes that would otherwise be less inclusive of students’ multiple, as well as marginalized and/or silenced, perspectives (Bickmore, 2014b; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008). Dialogue pedagogies that do not invite and include marginalized perspectives are less likely to be interruptive of injustice than those that do (Davies, 2004).

This study begins to attend to the urban bias (Corbett, 2014; DeYoung, 1987) that continues to dominate educational research in North America, particularly in citizenship education literature. Studies of how and why citizenship teachers implement pedagogy to elicit different kinds of differences, particularly in majority white and rural classrooms, have not kept pace with theoretical arguments. For instance, this study moves three rural and majority white classroom and community landscapes from the periphery of scholarly awareness into the broader discussion of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (2014), in her recent aptly-named article, “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the Remix” clarifies her theoretical model to adapt to changing classroom and community landscapes. All students, rural, suburban, urban, of all races, bring a complexity of experiences and beliefs to classrooms, which challenge teachers to develop cultural competency and nurture critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally relevant pedagogy, when applied to rural schools in research, tends to focus on settings that already underwent racial and ethnocultural diversification, typically in the United States (Heidlebaugh-Buskey, 2013; O’Neal et al., 2008; Rhodes, 2014). I found many instances of increased student engagement when teachers incorporated their students’ lived circumstances into the implemented curriculum. For instance,
Mrs. Thomas’ elicitation strategy that explicitly invited students’ knowledge of diversity (to form conceptual understandings around how are we diverse?) provoked participation from many students: to name (and thus affirm) their diversity experiences. In other instances, reflection and sharing pedagogies (either verbal or written) of social inclusion and exclusion experiences provided occasions for students to see themselves reflected in the learning – especially when these invited inclusive conversations about inequity and social conflict. Jon, Lisa and Damion’s disclosures of citizenship exclusion experiences infused (critical) personal and community knowledge into the implemented curriculum. As Hemmings (2000) contends, strategies such as these linking students’ identities to curriculum, open up democratic spaces for inclusion of diverse (somewhat democratized) citizenship representations. These instances also show potential for enhancing students’ critical consciousness, specifically to challenge normalized social constructs (stereotypes, assumptions) about mental health and race (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Inclusion of controversial political issues, such as the installation of wind turbines in the local area, also affectively engaged many students in conflict dialogue because of its relevancy to students’ own lived rural experiences. This research supplements the dearth of documented evidence to show how teachers may operationalize culturally relevant pedagogy in predominantly white (and, in this study, rural) populations (Morrison et al., 2008). Thus, my study shows how culturally relevant pedagogy can be ‘remixed’ to include white classroom contexts, and both visible and less obvious social diversities (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

The three teachers in this study do not represent typical rural citizenship educators, nor is this study in any way intended to generalize beyond the three classrooms. Skilled, confident, democracy-oriented rural teachers were difficult for me to locate because I found that what some teachers actually did in their classrooms (didactic transmissive approaches) did not
match what they claimed to do (nurture student-to-student horizontal transactional approaches) (see Evans, 2006). Each teacher who did participate brought with them a social justice outlook to their teaching as well as years of classroom experience using social studies curriculum and various pedagogies to surface multiple perspectives. All three teachers commented that they had not had access to any in-service professional development training opportunities to help navigate classroom topics and/or discussions about difference and conflict issues. Each did not think that their school and/or school board viewed as a priority such citizenship teaching and learning opportunities (especially in relation to ethnocultural difference in their predominantly white, rurally-situated schools). These considerations are consistent with the research reported in the Chapter 2 literature review (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004; Sleeter, 2001; Solomon et al., 2005). The three teachers expressed both a desire and need for professional in-service development (e.g., teacher collaboration, curriculum development) to support citizenship teachers to navigate diversity education in majority white contexts. Occasions for professional development with explicit focus on citizenship education and complex social and political issues, such as teacher collaboration and curriculum development, may promote teacher efficacy, and as a result, enhance students’ democratic skills and dispositions (Barr et al., 2015; Willemse et al., 2015). To reconnect my own teaching biography as a citizenship teacher practicing in a similar setting, I understand that such in-service opportunities may not happen without the political will from equity-minded administrators and school board leaders who support and prioritize democracy and inclusive education.

Methodological Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research Recommendations

This study illustrates, via three classroom teaching case studies, practices and teacher and student understandings of education for democratic citizenship in three comparable,
primarily white, rural secondary classrooms. In-depth qualitative, classroom-based research in relation to the ways difference and conflict are presented and explored, in any context, is rare. A strength of this research is that by using multiple sources of data – including a substantial number of classroom observations per case, (semi-structured) teacher interviews, (semi-structured) student group interviews, classroom documents (including anonymized student work), as well as cross case comparison – I was able to present a detailed and nuanced picture of each case study. The findings of this dissertation research, as with most qualitative work, are not intended to be generalized to other populations, but they are illustrative, to invite and inform further questions and reflection on pedagogical contexts and decisions for citizenship education.

Much citizenship education research, particularly in rural areas (because of distance), relies on survey data and/or interviews alone. In contrast, this qualitative study presents what occurred in three classrooms. I chose to study three teachers who had expressed exemplary commitment to teaching for democratic and/or social justice citizenship, and who had experience with surfacing multiple perspectives in their classroom. This sampling decision enabled me to examine how and why democracy-oriented teachers implemented particular strategies to guide students to navigate multiple social identities, experiences, and ideological differences. In teacher interviews, I was able to engage in reflective discussion with each teacher concerning her/his perspectives and pedagogical reasoning. Group interviews with students provided a means for me to compare and further develop my findings from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and analysis of classroom documents. Elements of democratic citizenship education (Inclusion of diverse social identity content, Surfacing conflict, Student agency, Inclusion of multiple perspectives) and indicators for each formed my conceptual framework (Table 1) and guided my observations of teachers’ content and pedagogy over a
period of between two and three months each. This length of time permitted me to see the
ranges and patterns of diverse pedagogical strategies practiced by the teachers.

Within-case comparisons allowed me to analyze across pedagogical moments and actors
to develop an understanding of diverse perspectives and implications in each classroom
population. Cross case comparisons were important to help me to understand principles and
options for democracy education for surfacing various differences. It was useful to compare the
cases to examine how the three teachers similarly and differently facilitated opportunities for
their rural, majority white students to examine various differences and conflicts. This helped me
to gain insight into various local conditions and to view a wider range of pedagogical
possibilities than if I had limited my study to one case – or chosen more contrasting cases (e.g.,
to include urban cases, or teachers not committed to cross cultural critical citizenship
education).

My findings are derived from classroom observations and teacher and student voices –
also often missing in prior published research – to represent a comprehensive view of the
messiness and tensions teachers (and their various students) face when selecting subject matter
and implementing pedagogical practices. My inclusion in the three teaching cases of student
work and student small group interviews helped me to understand teachers’ pedagogical
decisions from multiple perspectives, along with their implications for eliciting diverse students’
perspectives – more robustly than if I had implemented observations and teacher interviews
alone. When I recruited student volunteers to participate in group interviews, this resulted in a
high percentage (substantial sample) of students in each class choosing to participate: Ms.
Watson, 9 participants (of 25), Mr. Byrne, 10 participants (of 18), and Mrs. Thomas, 10
participants (of 22). This volunteer invitation approach also tended to engage more female
participants than male in Mr. Byrne and Ms. Watson’s classrooms: they were not representative of non-volunteers. Mrs. Thomas’ class was predominantly male, so I was not surprised to have more male participants than female. Gender imbalances thus limited the range of student perspectives that I heard on particular issues and classroom activities they had experienced. However, I found that arranging student interviews in friendship groups they chose, in contrast to individual interviews or teacher-selected groups, seemed to encourage students to feel comfortable to share their views with me. These students included some female students who did not participate orally as much in whole-class discussions, as well as some generally quiet male students in all cases. For example, in an interview, one normally quiet female student from Ms. Watson’s class indicated that just because she did not contribute verbally during whole class discussions did not mean that she was not taking in the different views that were expressed (SGI, Oct. 16, 2003). Student group interviews, together with observational data and student work, provided well-rounded evidence of students’ understandings and perspectives.

A drawback of the research design is that sampling was limited to similar social studies classroom contexts within one small geographical area of southern Ontario. For personal logistical reasons, the three cases were selected based on their accessibility to where I reside in southern Ontario. This limited the types of rural classrooms I was able to include in the study. I only studied three classrooms (one class of students per teacher), each comprised of primarily white students in grade 9 (geography) and grade 10 (civics). The three case classrooms do not represent the diversity of experiences of teachers or students in other rural contexts in Canada, even nearby (with homogeneous or heterogeneous populations), and especially contrasting settings such as remote Northern communities. Nor do they include rural classrooms in southern Ontario and elsewhere that do have racially and ethnoculturally mixed students, sometimes
including, for instance, families of migrant farm workers (e.g., from Mexico and/or Jamaica) in the local population (Rhodes, 2014). Future qualitative studies that focus on rural areas outside the scope of my research are needed, to show a wider range of teachers’ and students’ wisdom of practice in democracy-building education and to broaden our emergent understandings of citizenship education for diversity across Canada’s vast geographic and social landscape (Arnold et al., 2005; Cicchinelli, 2011; Reed, 2010). For instance, research in rural contexts that are not necessarily predominantly white, but that include racialized (e.g., Aboriginal) student populations, could further our understandings of how teachers may surface and address different kinds of differences, and guide their students to reflect on multiple understandings of citizenship and citizen issues in those contexts.

In each case study, I limited my observations to implemented curriculum that were part of a diversity-related unit. I did not observe how racialized and/or (anti)conflict implications were addressed (if at all) in lessons/activities that were not explicitly about diversity. Scheduling conflicts also meant that I missed opportunities to observe how each teacher promoted skill-building and classroom norms (to establish a climate conducive to mutual tolerance and educative discussion) at the start of their courses (Bickmore, 2014b; Hatch & Grossman, 2009). Future empirical studies need to build in observational opportunities to capture various strategies with which teachers prepare their students to engage respectfully and constructively with topics related to difference and conflict.

Another limitation of this study is its focus on teacher practice, including students’ apparent opportunities to learn, not on what students actually knew or learned, in relation to difference and conflict (and democracy). My scope of analysis included noting potential implications for students’ opportunities to learn, but not actually studying student learning in
relation to what they gained (understood) from classroom experiences. Future qualitative studies that focus on students’ perspectives in relation to dialogic citizenship pedagogies would open opportunities to examine what students actually do learn from these occasions. For instance, it would be compelling to investigate what students take away from their dialogue experiences and how such exchanges influence (or not) the process of learning to become democratic citizens. However, analysis of classroom documents in my study, particularly the anonymized copies of ungraded student coursework, did help to show how various students perceived difference and conflict in relation to teachers’ decisions about issues and pedagogy. My analysis of student work allowed me to examine how a teacher’s non-verbal task structures (e.g., written reflections, position paragraph writing, mind maps, responding to cultural diversity proposals) provided agentic opportunities for quieter and less confident students (as well as others) to share or dis/agree with viewpoints that had surfaced aloud in the implemented curriculum. Such openings mitigated risk of marginalization and supported students (in quieter, more private ways than public classroom discussion) to develop the capacity to speak from their personal experiences (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012; Johnson & Morris, 2010). I could not have captured such data through classroom observation (or even interviews) alone. A drawback of analyzing anonymized student work, however, is that I could not follow up and ask individual students about what they had done in relation to a particular teaching strategy. Future research, however, could include “elicitation strategies” in their data collection methods that focus on visual, verbal, or written external stimuli in interviews, to learn about participants’ thinking (and as alternatives to direct questions about sensitive topics that may be difficult to respond to) (Barton, 2015).
Throughout my observations of lessons in both Mr. Byrne and Mrs. Thomas’ classrooms, I noticed Asha (Vandenberg – second generation Indian) and Damion (Hoffmann – first generation Caribbean), the single non-white students in each of their classes. I wondered how teaching sensitive topics (e.g., immigration, the sharing of social injustice experiences) might make uncomfortable and/or silence racialized students in majority white classroom settings. Some students may be sensitive to discussion that draws attention to (and emphasizes) their perceived difference, potentially silencing their perspective and willingness to practice democracy (Quach, Jo, & Urrieta, 2009; Schultz, 2010). Future research would be useful for citizenship educators to understand how various pedagogies about difference and conflict position various students (perhaps based on interviews with recent graduates).

While this study provides a starting point to bring democracy-building education for navigating difference and conflict in three rural, majority white classrooms into the wider frame of citizenship education and rural education research, there is still much to learn. Research is needed to further illuminate the ways educators in other rural school contexts (some mentioned above) may be adopting democratic and equitable approaches to affirm democratic pluralism.

Conclusion

This study adds to the extant scholarly theory and literature on citizenship education, multicultural education, and rural education in North American schools. In particular, the findings help to bring democratic citizenship education in rural contexts (three classrooms in southern Ontario) out of “the periphery of awareness” (Wagner, 2014, p. 555). Through the wisdom of practice shared by three especially democracy-committed teachers working in similar rural high school settings, this research demonstrates (concrete) ways of teaching for democratic citizenship to navigate difference and conflict in majority white classroom settings, and applies
notions of culturally responsive pedagogy to those settings. Teachers’ implemented curriculum and pedagogies acknowledged and opened up a range of views and experiences related to social (identity) difference, social conflict, and (in)equity. Findings showed that students themselves, when viewed by their teachers as sources of diverse knowledge (through their different values, beliefs, lived social experiences), helped to expose (name and affirm) visible and less-obvious heterogeneities of social, cultural, and ideological differences. Conflict, when applied using contentious subject matter and various dialogue processes (verbal and non-verbal), made visible for students contrasting social identities and values to coexist in their midst. This study also highlighted pedagogical challenges and opportunities for the three teachers to affirm non-Anglo ethnocultural diversity and justice. This study may have implications for educational researchers, teacher educators, school administrators and citizenship teachers to make democratic citizenship education for navigating different kinds of differences relevant (and prioritized) in majority white and rural community settings.
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Appendix A: Parent/Guardian Consent Letter for Student Participants

(On OISE/UT letterhead)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am interested in learning about citizenship education. I have invited your daughter/son to participate in my study because they are in Mr/s. _____’s _______ class. By participating in this study, your daughter/son will help educators to address equity and inclusiveness in rural schools.

Your daughter/son will participate in one group interview with two to three other students from the same class. The group will be asked to describe some of their learning experiences in (e.g., Civics). The interview will last between 20-30 minutes.

The group discussion will be audio-recorded. Your daughter/son’s identity and any information that could identify them in the study will remain strictly confidential and anonymous. Pseudonyms will replace real names and locations in my research. The research data will only be accessible to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Kathy Bickmore, and I.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your daughter or son is free to withdraw at any time without penalty or hard feelings. Participation in this study poses no foreseeable risks or harms. At the start of the group interview, students will be encouraged not to answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable. I encourage your daughter/son to ask questions at any time before, during or after the group interview. Your daughter/son will be provided with a $5 gift card to be used at a local restaurant as a token of thanks for their participation.

If you give your son or daughter permission to participate in the group interview, please sign the consent form below. I will retain the signed copy and will also provide you with a copy of the form to keep.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study at any time, please feel free to contact me via email (pattison.meek@mail.utoronto.ca) or by phone (519-823-0481). Further, you are welcome to contact my thesis supervisor, Professor Kathy Bickmore (k.bickmore@utoronto.ca or 416.978.0237). Please contact the University of Toronto’s Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273) if you have any questions about the rights of participants.

Joanne Pattison-Meek
Ph.D. Candidate
pattison.meek@mail.utoronto.ca

I understand what this study involves and agree to allow my daughter/son ______________________ to participate. I have been given a copy of this consent form.
If you would like to be notified when the results of this study will be available, please provide me with an email or mailing address:
Appendix B: Teacher Participant Information Letter and Consent Form

(On OISE/UT letterhead)

Dear Educator,

I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I would like to invite you to participate in a thesis research project I am conducting about citizenship education. The purpose of the study is to explore what teaching for democracy and social justice citizenship looks like in rural high school settings. Your school has been chosen for its rural location. This study will make a contribution to helping teacher educators, administrators and teacher practitioners in rural schools, to address challenges of equity and inclusiveness. This study has been approved by my thesis committee.

I am looking to recruit teachers who express interest in teaching for democratic and/or social justice citizenship, and have some experience with surfacing differing perspectives in their classroom teaching. Specifically, I am looking for teachers who teach Ontario’s Canadian and World Studies courses, such as Civics (grade 10), Canadian History (grade 10), and Canadian Geography (grade 9).

This study entails four different parts: classroom observations, teacher interviews, student focus groups, and analysis of classroom documents in one of your social studies classes. I would like to observe your class about 25-30 times during one school semester. I am very much interested in seeing classroom activities whereby students learn about social difference and/or are asked to share opinions on social issues.

I would like to interview you once near the start of the semester, about your goals and understanding of your teaching strategies in relation to social diversity and citizenship, and again at the end of the semester to invite your reflections on the lessons I observed (about 45 minutes each time). I also would request your time for two 5-minute check-in interviews about what you are teaching, mid-semester. If you consent, I would audio-tape interviews. I will send you transcripts of each interview to check, inviting you to make any corrections or to delete information you do not want recorded.

I also would like to invite 6-12 students in your class (in 2-3 groups of 3-4) to volunteer for 20-30 minute interviews about their experiences in the class. At the start of the group interview, students will be encouraged not to answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable. I will require their parents’ or guardians’ permission for this participation. I will give each student volunteer a $5 local restaurant gift card as a token of thanks.

Lastly, if available I would like to review lesson plans and student handouts. I will request from you copies of student written work if they are relevant to my study. Of course, all student work would have names removed.
The risks of participation in my study are very low. I will strictly maintain confidentiality and anonymity: I will not name your school or any study participants, except by pseudonyms. I will conceal any details that would make your school or participants identifiable. The research data will only be accessible to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Kathy Bickmore, and I. Your school and all study participants retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time (or from any element of the study) without penalty or hard feelings. I will happily share a summary of study findings with you, by request. At the end of the study, I will provide you a $25 local restaurant gift card as a token of my thanks.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study at any time, please feel free to contact me via email (pattison.meek@mail.utoronto.ca) or by phone (519-823-0481). Further, you are welcome to contact my thesis supervisor, Professor Kathy Bickmore (k.bickmore@utoronto.ca or 416.978.0237). Please contact the University of Toronto’s Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273) if you have any questions about the rights of participants.

Sincerely,

Joanne Pattison-Meek
Ph.D. Candidate
pattison.meek@mail.utoronto.ca

Teacher Participant Consent Form

Research Project: Democratic and Social Justice Pedagogy in Rural High School Settings
Researcher: Joanne Pattison-Meek, Ph.D Candidate, OISE, University of Toronto
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Kathy Bickmore, OISE, University of Toronto

I agree to participate in the above named research study. I have voluntarily made this decision based on the information provided in the Teacher Participant Information Letter. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any concerns pertaining to this project. I understand that when I sign this form, I am indicating my willingness to participate in the study.

I understand that my interviews with Joanne Pattison-Meek will be audio-taped and transcribed. I know that I may decline to answer any questions and that I will have the opportunity to review the interview transcripts and remove any information I do not want included. I understand that all information gathered during the study will remain confidential. My name, the names of my students, the name of my school, the Board of Education and the community will not be identified in the study. All names will be given pseudonyms to conceal identities and locations.

The nature and purpose of my participation in this project has been fully explained to me. I understand that I may withdraw from this project at any time without it affecting my relationship with the researcher or the University of Toronto.
If I have any questions or concerns regarding this study, I may contact Joanne Pattison-Meek, and/or her thesis supervisor, Professor Kathy Bickmore. If I have questions about my rights as a participant, I may contact the University of Toronto’s Office of Research Ethics.

Participant Name: _____________________________________________

Participant Signature: _____________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________
Appendix C: Teacher Participant Recruitment Script

Hello, my name is Joanne Pattison-Meek and I am a Ph.D. Candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Thank you very much for finding the time to meet/speak with me. I am currently conducting research to explore what teaching for democracy and social justice citizenship looks like in rural high school settings. This study will make a contribution to helping teacher educators, administrators and teacher practitioners in rural schools, to address challenges of equity and inclusiveness. This study has been approved by my thesis committee.

I am inviting teachers who express interest in teaching for democratic and/or social justice citizenship, and have some experience with surfacing differing perspectives in their classroom teaching to participate in the study.

I can provide you with a Teacher Information Letter if you are interested in learning more about participation in my study.

Again, thank you for finding the time to meet with me. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email (pattison.meek@mail.utoronto.ca) or by phone (519-823-0481), or my thesis supervisor, Professor Kathy Bickmore (k.bickmore@utoronto.ca or 416.978.0237). Please contact the University of Toronto’s Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273), if you have any concerns or questions about the rights of participants in the study.
Appendix D: Administrator Information Letter

(On OISE/UT letterhead)

Dear Administrator,

I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. I am inviting your school to participate in a thesis research project I am conducting about citizenship education. The purpose of the study is to explore what teaching for democracy and social justice citizenship looks like in rural high school settings. Your high school has been chosen to participate for its rural location. This research will make a contribution to helping teacher educators, administrators and teacher practitioners in rural schools, to address challenges of equity and inclusiveness. This study has been approved by my thesis committee.

I would like to recruit one teacher in your school who expresses interest in teaching for democratic and/or social justice citizenship, and has some experience with surfacing differing perspectives in her/his classroom teaching. Specifically, I am looking for a teacher who teaches Ontario’s Canadian and World Studies courses, such as Civics (grade 10), Canadian History (grade 10), and/or Canadian Geography (grade 9).

This study entails four different parts: teacher interviews, classroom observations, student focus groups, and analysis of classroom documents in one social studies classroom. I would like to observe a social studies teacher with their class about 25-30 times during one school semester. I am very much interested in seeing classroom activities whereby students learn about social difference and/or are asked to share opinions on social issues.

I would like to interview the classroom teacher once near the start of the semester, about their goals and understanding of their teaching strategies in relation to social diversity and citizenship, and again at the end of the semester to invite their reflections on the lessons I observed (about 45 minutes each time). I also would request their time for two 5-minute check-in interviews about what they are teaching, mid-semester. If they consent, I would audio-tape interviews. I will send them transcripts of each interview to check, inviting them to make any corrections or to delete information they do not want recorded.

I also would like to invite 6-12 students in the teacher’s class (in 2-3 groups of 3-4) to volunteer for 20-30 minute interviews about their experiences in the class. At the start of each group interview, students will be encouraged not to answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable. I will require their parents’ or guardians’ permission for this participation (please refer to attached Parent Consent Letter for Student Participants). I will give each student volunteer a $5 local restaurant gift card as a token of my thanks.

Lastly, if available I would like to review teacher lesson plans and student handouts. I will request from the teacher some copies of student written work if they are relevant to the study. Of course, all student work would have names removed. These may include ideas written during brainstorm activities (e.g., think/pair/share), answers to questions based on readings (textbook or other readings), journal reflections, and/or posters and visual expressions. These
documents may provide some insight into the teacher’s pedagogical goals regarding democratic and social justice citizenship and how they make spaces for students to express their views.

The risks of participation in my study are very low. I will strictly maintain confidentiality and anonymity: I will not name your school or any study participants, except by pseudonyms. I will conceal any details that would make your school or participants identifiable. The research data will only be accessible to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Kathy Bickmore, and I. Your school and all study participants retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time (or from any element of the study) without penalty or hard feelings. I will happily share a summary of study findings with you (as well as with the teacher participant), by request.

At the end of the study, I will provide the teacher participant a $25 local restaurant gift card as a token of my thanks.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study at any time, please feel free to contact me via email (pattison.meek@mail.utoronto.ca) or by phone (519-823-0481). Further, you are welcome to contact my thesis supervisor, Professor Kathy Bickmore (k.bickmore@utoronto.ca or 416.978.0237). Please contact the University of Toronto’s Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3273) if you have any questions about the rights of participants.

Sincerely,

Joanne Pattison-Meek
Ph.D. Candidate
pattison.meek@mail.utoronto.ca
Appendix E: Initial Open-Ended Interview Guide for Teacher Participants

• How long have you been teaching?

• How long have you been teaching at this rural school? What courses have you taught here?

• Have you taught in other classroom environments? (If so) How did that/those experience(s) compare to teaching here?

• How are students different from each other in this school? Please explain.

• How do you choose which topics/issues to use for your lessons and how you teach about them?

• How do you provide opportunities for the students to express differences of opinion?

• Do you ever use topics/issues that might be considered conflictual? (If yes, conflictual to whom? Examples?)

• What are some of the benefits and challenges for you, teaching in this rural classroom? Please explain.

• What does teaching for democratic citizenship mean to you?

• What motivates you to teach for social justice at this school?
Appendix F: Open-Ended Interview Guide for Student Group Interviews

- How are students different from each other in this school? Please explain.

- When you’re in Ms/Mr _____’s class, what things do you talk about as a class?

- What are some things that you’d like to talk/learn about in class? Why are these things important to talk/learn about?

- Are there certain topics that come up in class that students have more to say about than others? (If yes, what are they?)

- Do you feel like you have opportunities to express what you think about topics that come up in class? If yes, please explain how. If no, please explain why not.

- What did you learn about [name topic]? Anything else?

- How do students like to learn about things in Ms/Mr _____’s class? What activities do students like the most/least? Why?

- Some students don’t say very much in class. Without naming anyone, why do you think this is?

- Did you notice any students’ opinions on (given topic) change after the class did (this activity)? or (had the discussion about _____?) How so? Why (or why not)?

- Class discussion seems to be a popular activity (or not). Why is this?
Appendix G: Classroom Observation Protocol

**Case Study Site:** *(Teacher and School Site pseudonyms)*

Name of Course:

Date: _______________ Start Time: ___________ End Time: ___________

**Participants:** (number of students, gender ratio)

**Context** (e.g., physical space of classroom, timing of classroom activities)

**Content of Lesson** (e.g., what are the topics of the lesson? how are they introduced and concluded?)

**Teacher Strategies** (e.g., what is the teacher doing to promote/activate awareness of social difference? this may include drawing on current events, four corners discussion, think/pair/share activities)

**Perspectives** (e.g., what opportunities do students have to express their opinions, and how are others able to respond, if at all? how are students exposed to multiple, contrasting viewpoints? how are students encouraged to speak from their own experience? how are they encouraged to take in perspectives from outside their own experience?)

**Conflict** (e.g., evidence of disagreement, tension, hostility, resistance – among who? gender, teacher-student, student(s)-student(s) – about topics that surface; how is conflict managed by the teacher?); linked to perspectives above.

**Tolerance** (e.g., student expressions of understanding toward those whose opinions/ experiences/ social group identities differ from their own, willingness to engage with subject matter about social difference)

**Student Participation** (e.g., what students speak, how often, and in what sequence? how do students appear to listen and/or ignore, disengage from teacher talk, and/or from other students’ contributions? what opportunities/formats are provided for students to express an opinion outside of classroom discussion? this may include journal reflections, written responses to readings, etc)
Appendix H: Ms. Watson’s Placemat Organizer (template)

Appendix I: Ms. Watson’s Fishbone Graphic Organizer (template)
Appendix J: Ms. Watson’s Fact Versus Opinion (classroom poster)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACT</th>
<th>OPINION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>testable</td>
<td>personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>precise</td>
<td>subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>certain</td>
<td>value laden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>emotional adjectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Looks like:*
- details
- examples
- definitions
- cause/effect
- comparison
- explanation
- quality attribute

Appendix K: Mr. Byrne’s Diamond Ranking Layout (template)
Appendix L: Mr. Byrne’s Poverty Cards

(The Center for Social Justice, see socialjustice.org)
Appendix M: Mrs. Thomas’ Circles of My Multicultural Self

(EdChange, see EdChange.org)

Circles of My Multicultural Self

How do you see yourself, and how do you not want to be seen?

Place your name in the center circle of the structure below. Write an important aspect of your identity in each of the satellite circles -- an identifier or descriptor that you feel is important in defining you. This can include anything: Canadian, aboriginal, female/male, son/daughter, athlete, student, Christian, hard-worker, 'book-worm', gamer, or any descriptor with which you identify.

1. Share a story about a time you were especially proud to identify with one of the descriptors you used above.

2. Share a story about a time you didn’t like to be identified with one of descriptors in the circles above.

3. Name a stereotype associated with one of the groups with which you identify that is not consistent with who you are. Fill in the following sentence:

   I am (a/an) ______________________ but I am NOT (a/an) ______________________.
Appendix N: Mr. Byrne’s Students’ Mind Map Responses

8. Name of city (near Vandenberg)

Dirty, Brown Town, violent, Indians n curry, no white people, Brown town, Where I was born, lots of immigrants, scary big city, Over populated with ‘immigrants’, Pakistan, gun, my old home, too many immigrants, Busy, people, Busy (Doc, May 21, 2013)
Appendix O: Mrs. Thomas’ Venn diagram
1 female AIC student (left), 1 female Hoffman student (right) (Doc, Dec. 16, 2013)

What did we learn about each other?

How we are different:
Name:
- like pizza, rice.
- Muslim.
- 1st language Arabic
- Eid
- from different country

How we are similar:
- like girls
- we all like sports
- we all have siblings

How we are different:
Name:
- like frozen yogurt
- Christian
- 1st language English
- celebrate
- from different country
Appendix P: Mrs. Watson’s Final Unit Project
(instructions for students)

Name: ________________________________

Putting the Pieces together: A Student’s Guide to Cultural Diversity at
(An Assessment Task)

Over the last few weeks you have been learning about cultural diversity and immigration. Our guiding questions have been: 1. What does diversity look like in our school community, province, and country? 2. How does immigration contribute to Canadian communities? In looking for the answers to these questions you also examined the term ignorance and stereotypes, as well you were able to meet someone who immigrated to Canada. Now it is time to show what you have learned.

Your task: Create a puzzle that has three pieces.

**Piece 1.**
Show what a newcomer should know about _________. Make sure you give information about the following:
- School schedule
- School routines
- School rules
- General things someone should know

**Piece 2.**
Show what a ________ should know about multiculturalism. Give information about:
- How to welcome newcomers (particularly those who are new to Canada)
- What assumptions we should or should not make
- Why immigration is good for our community
- What benefits come from having a culturally diverse school community

**Piece 3.**
As our community continues to grow, our community will become more culturally diverse.

Prepare a list of suggestions or advice for our city council to consider. Respond to the following:
- How is immigration good for ________?
- What can ________ do as a community in order to make new immigrants feel welcome?
- How can we make a more inclusive community?