

Jennifer A. Tupper
University of Regina

From Care-less to Care-full: Education for Citizenship in Schools and Beyond

This article attempts to disrupt liberal democratic understandings of citizenship as they inform social studies curricula in schools. Care-less citizenship is used throughout the article to describe the denial or propensity to ignore the deep inequities that exist in the world. The article also implicates schooling, and in particular social studies education, in the maintenance of citizenship as a falsely universalized construct through such practices as standardization and high-stakes testing. Conceptions and experiences of citizenship articulated by five secondary social studies teachers and 10 preservice teachers provide a means through which to improve understanding of how students are constructed as citizens in relation to the prescribed and negotiated curriculum encountered in classrooms. Finally, the article advances an understanding of citizenship as care-full—that is, attentive, relational, and caring—in which conditions of oppression operating to limit the realization of equity are continual subjects of interrogation.

Cet article tente d'ébranler la vision libérale et démocratique de la citoyenneté telle qu'elle se manifeste dans les programmes d'études sociales dans les écoles. Dans l'article, l'expression 'la citoyenneté négligente' fait référence à la tendance de faire abstraction des inégalités profondes qui existent dans le monde. L'école, en particulier les programmes d'études sociales, joue un rôle dans le maintien de la citoyenneté comme concept faussement universalisé et ce, par des pratiques comme la normalisation et les tests à enjeux élevés. Les conceptions et les expériences relatives à la citoyenneté telles que relatées par cinq enseignants des études sociales au secondaire et dix stagiaires servent de base pour comprendre la formation des élèves comme citoyens du monde par le moyen des programmes d'études imposés. Finalement, l'article propose une interprétation de la citoyenneté 'attentive', c'est à dire, relationnelle, empreinte de compassion et préoccupée par les conditions oppressantes qui se posent en obstacles à la réalisation de l'égalité.

Introducing Citizenship

The title of this article, "From Care-less to Care-full: Education for Citizenship in Schools and Beyond," reflects what I believe to be a primary concern of citizenship education in schools and particularly in social studies classrooms. In using the word *care-less* to describe liberal democratic understandings of citizenship in schools, I suggest that there is indifference, a lack of concern, and even negligence caught up in its construction and that because of this, many students leave their classrooms without fully understanding what it might mean to be and live as a citizen. Care-less citizenship denies or ignores the false universalism embedded in liberal democracies, and so fails to be aware of and thus understand the deep inequities that exist in the world. It divests individuals of their accountability to the physical and social world, and it does not require any interrogation of privilege or power. Care-full, on the other

Jennifer Tupper is an assistant professor who works in the areas of secondary education, social studies, and curriculum. Her research interests include citizenship, social justice, and treaty education.

hand, is marked by a deep sense that individual and group actions may have profound sociopolitical effects and that we must take care to understand as best we can how differences shape the degree to which we are able to engage as citizens in the world. We must also come to recognize our own privileges (or lack of privilege), grappling with the degree to which our privileges inform our own experiences of citizenship. In turn, this understanding has the potential to create spaces for the subversion of dominant forms of meaning. Care-full citizenship also entails a certain degree of attentiveness, a level of caring for self and others, for the world that may evoke a need to act in ways that ameliorate the conditions of oppression. In this respect, care-full citizenship is in and of itself an action, a way of being. To further illustrate my concern that citizenship in social studies is care-less, I explore how social studies curriculum and classroom cultures seem to construct students as citizens by sharing the thoughts of five high school social studies teachers about the (im)possibilities of citizenship education. Second, I discuss how 10 preservice social studies teachers conceptualized citizenship before their student teaching experience to illuminate the contradictions that seem to emerge for teachers as they struggle to realize their own visions of citizenship. First, however, I attempt to disrupt liberal democratic notions of citizenship and implicate schooling in the maintenance of citizenship as a falsely universalized construct through curricular practices, standardization, and high-stakes testing.

Schools as Discursive Sites of Citizenship

Because theories of liberal democracy embrace a universality of citizenship in relation to the rights and freedoms of individuals in a nation state, there is an inherent assumption that these rights function to equalize individuals, that citizenship is full membership in a community whereby differences become irrelevant to individuals' status as citizens (Marshall, 1950). There is also a notion that because rights are universally bestowed in liberal democratic nations, we are indeed living in a democracy. Yet Parker (2001) suggests that democracy is not an achievement, but something that must be continually aspired to, and Pateman (1989) maintains that for women, democracy has never existed. At its most rudimentary level, democracy may be understood as "government by the populace at large" (Ayto, 1990). At its most ideal level, understandings of democracy have also led to a belief that what is democratic is just and equal, so when democracy is used to describe education, it is often done so in a way that implies educational equality and justice for all students. It is my belief, however, that "democratic education" is a fallacy, operating as a convenient cloak to discuss the inequities and injustices that permeate curricula, classrooms, educational conversations, and understandings of citizenship in care-less ways. This fallacy is but a reflection of the larger fallacy of democracy in which the "realities of [democracy] have often failed to live up to [the] ideals" (Metzger, 2002, p. 30).

As institutions of liberal democratic education, schools are caught up in the discursive production of *good* citizenship, imagining all individuals equal regardless of race, culture, class, sex, disability, sexual orientation, and so forth. Citizenship in schools, Cogan (2000) suggests,

has typically been an important goal in courses of study in history and civics in most nations and has, for the most part, focussed upon developing knowledge of how government and other institutions in any given state work, of the rights and duties of citizens with respect to the state and to the society as a whole and has been oriented largely towards the development of a sense of national identity. (p. 1)

Similarly, Osler and Starkey (2003) ascertain that a central intent of citizenship education is “to ensure that young people understand their present and future roles within the constitutional and legal framework of the state in which they live” (p. 244). It is my belief that this approach to citizenship education does little to unpack experiences of inequity that many individuals experience at the hands of political organizations and policies. For example, the Canadian government’s commitment to dispute resolution for survivors of the Residential Schools is at best a superficial desire to amend past injustices and at worst is an example of entrenched racism in current government organizations that will not take responsibility for how Aboriginal peoples in Canada continue to be marginalized (Mahoney, 2004). When citizenship education in schools is limited to understanding the structures of governments without interrogating how governments may (and do) perpetuate conditions of oppression for many so-called citizens while simultaneously reinforcing the privileges of others, the possibilities for care-less citizenship abound. Yet for many educators, merely understanding the structures of government at local and national levels and awareness of individual rights and obligations in relation to membership in a state is sufficient citizenship education (Cogan, 2000; Niemi & Junn, 1996; Osler & Starkey, 2003).

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) argue that conceptions of *good citizenship* and conceptions of the *good society* are inextricably linked to democratic programs shaped by “ideologically conservative conception[s] of citizenship embedded in many current efforts at teaching for democracy” (p. 237). In this respect, citizenship is less often constructed in terms of understanding social problems and improving society, or understanding how existing conditions of oppression inhibit the realization of democracy, and more often constructed in terms of acting responsibly and working within existing sociopolitical structures (Tupper, 2006). Westheimer and Kahne refer to this type of citizenship education in schools as *personal responsibility*, whereby individuals do their part through such individual acts as obeying laws, shoveling sidewalks, and paying taxes. Alternatively, *participatory citizenship* promotes understanding of the workings of social and political organizations through participation in such organizations. This form of citizenship might involve organizing a fundraiser to combat homelessness, mounting a poster campaign to draw attention to existing social problems, or even campaigning for a political candidate.

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) suggest that these approaches have value, but ultimately fail to acknowledge the causes of social inequities. They describe *justice-oriented* citizenship as advocating an analysis and understanding of “the interplay of social, economic, and political forces ... [as well as] teach[ing] about social movements and how to effect systemic change” (p. 242) in pursuit of social justice. They cite examples of justice-oriented citizenship education programs that encourage students to become community activists, to recognize

how broader political forces can inform individual behaviors, and the transformative possibilities of engaging in collective action. At first glance, it seems that this orientation is most closely aligned with my conception of care-full citizenship as it attempts to reveal conditions of oppression at play in society. However, in many respects, justice-oriented citizenship is a way of doing or engaging in citizenship more than a way of being. My concern is those individuals positioned as *other*, the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised members of society, who by virtue of social, economic, and political forces, are unable to fully participate as justice-oriented citizens. I do not disagree that there is a great need to effect systemic change and engage in collective action, but we must be careful as educators not to do those things of which many of us have become so critical. We must not mistakenly advance an approach to citizenship education that is not accessible to some students or that inadvertently marginalizes students by constructing their experiences as projects to be undertaken.

Although I do not dispute the importance of enacting social change (indeed, I wholeheartedly embrace it), I worry that the justice-oriented approach identified by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) does not sufficiently (if at all) require students to account for their own privileges or even comprehend how privilege is caught up in an intricate web of systemic inequities. It is not enough to say "I am privileged because I am white" or "I am privileged because I am male" or "I am privileged because I enjoy many identities that afford me opportunities not available to others in the same way." Rather, care-full citizenship requires an acknowledgment of privilege and a thoughtful interrogation of how such privilege shapes experiences. Accountability for privilege is integral to care-full citizenship. It is not only working to improve the conditions of others, it is attending to the extent that our own privileges are implicated in the perpetuation of social, economic, and political inequities. This shifts the focus from the *other* to the self. For students it is important to ask, *What privileges do I enjoy? How am I less or more privileged than others and why? What are the historical conditions that contributed to these privileges. What are the implications of this for my own experiences of citizenship?* Justice-oriented citizenship does a great deal more than citizenship as personal responsibility or participatory citizenship, but it does not do enough. It is an approach that has the potential to situate social justice outside of the self, rather than requiring us to interrogate how we as individuals are implicated in the perpetuation of injustice through the taken-for-granted privileges.

As educators, we must also be aware of tendencies to standardize citizenship education programs regardless of whether they are personal, participatory, or justice-oriented. And we must also be aware of how the standardization of education disguises the conditions of oppression at play in society, strengthening a normalized vision of good citizenship, which identicalizes students, permitting privilege to disappear. The creation and implementation of standardized curriculum outcomes, uniform content, and common exams further reinforce the false universalism of citizenship embedded in education (Tupper, 2005b). It implies the existence of the *good* society, in that we are already all equal, and a desire to preserve this society through educational discourses and practices. The disavowal of differences

central to identities and subjectivities denies how students might experience each other and inequity (Dillabough & Arnot, 2000; Lister, 1997; Vinson, 2001; Voet, 1998). When difference is ignored or attempts are made to erase it, the result is negation of struggles that many groups are engaged in “for full inclusion and participation in society’s institutions” (Singh, 2001, p. 307). Not only might standardization be regarded as oppressive, it may also be perceived as constructing care-less citizenship that is itself oppressive and oppressing. Care-full citizenship should engage students in questioning what they think they know along with what the curriculum advances as content worth knowing. Care-less citizenship accepts curriculum and knowledge without question.

Social Studies as a Site of Citizenship

Social studies curriculum must be implicated in promulgating the conditions of oppression that exist in our society. It must be understood as existing within and being produced by traditions of knowledge that privilege certain groups while marginalizing and excluding others. Anyon (1983) suggests that the ideologies contained in social studies curriculum content “misrepresent and conceal inequalities in the structure of relationships on which social and cultural power is based.” Anyon describes ideology as a means of interpreting reality, which attempts to pass itself off as objective, but which is “demonstrably partial” (p. 37). Students are encouraged to interpret reality in seemingly objective ways, when in fact the reality that they encounter through the curriculum is anything but objective. The dominant narrative of social studies attempts to perpetuate certain cultural truths from generation to generation. Coupled with a failure to reflect critically on curriculum content, the ostensible *neutrality* of social studies supports care-less citizenship. Grelle and Metzger (1996) argue that social studies curriculum and teaching practices overwhelmingly support a standard socialization approach that discounts the realities of cultural pluralism. They maintain,

It [the socialization approach in social studies] has also often contributed to the 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—a conception of what it means to be a good citizen that amounts to “my country right or wrong, love it or leave it.” (p. 150)

In keeping with many of the criticisms leveled at social studies education since its inception, it perpetuates a falsely universalized construction of citizenship through the content and knowledge that students learn, and in Alberta, as in many other provinces, through high-stakes testing and common exams. The rhetoric of standardization and testing rigor that permeates much educational discourse ultimately allows students and teachers to enact care-less citizenship as classrooms become places to prepare for exams, focus on results, and participate in the testing game.

At this point, I turn to the voices and stories of five high school social studies teachers to illustrate the inherent tensions of citizenship education and the creation of good citizens. First, however, it is necessary to provide some information about the teachers and frame the educational contexts in which they teach, particularly as these relate to standardization and high-stakes testing.

Lois

When this research was conducted, Lois had been teaching in high school for 16 years. Most of her teaching career had been in a large and diverse school located in the downtown area of a major urban center. Lois understood herself as someone who persevered, who was committed to making the most of any difficult situation, whether in the classroom or in her life outside school. Her commitment to her students was evident in our many conversations, as was her dedication to issues of social justice and her desire to question what she thought she knew in her own practice.

Carol

Carol had been teaching for nine years when we began our conversations, and most of her teaching experience was at the high school level. She taught primarily social studies classes in a large and ethnoculturally diverse urban high school. For Carol, teaching social studies was a natural fit because it was the area that interested her the most and the subject she believed most relevant to students. Over the course of the research, Carol was working toward completion of her master's degree in social studies education. Her thesis research explored students' perceptions of Aboriginal culture and involved interrogating assumptions and stereotypes that informed students' understandings of Aboriginal people.

Denis

Denis had been teaching for 10 years at a Francophone high school in a large urban center, and French was his first language. Denis came to Alberta as a translator, but found that this life did not suit him, so returned to school where he received an education degree. Denis believed that Francophone schools in Alberta had a heightened responsibility to foster a strong Francophone identity. At the time of our first meeting, Denis was beginning his second semester teaching Social Studies 30 and seemed to be enjoying the challenge, but felt intimidated by the vastness of the course and the amount of content he needed to cover. For Denis, social studies seemed a natural fit coming from a family that enjoyed raucous political debates during the dinner hour. He commented that social studies was not for the faint of heart, but required teachers willing to engage in discussion and to talk with students.

Greg

Greg was in his first year of teaching at a rural high school in central Alberta with a fairly homogeneous population. He held a master's degree in English literature, and although English was his first love, he also enjoyed the challenges of teaching social studies. Before embarking on his master's degree, Greg had spent time working for a Western Canadian magazine and exploring the possibilities of journalism, but found his way back to university when he realized that he wanted more from a career. He had become disillusioned with the ideological constraints imposed on liberal journalists working for conservative publications. Greg found being a first-year teacher exciting and frustrating at the same time. Part of his frustration stemmed from working with students he perceived as lacking passion and motivation. He often spoke of his desire to work with students who were more academic and willing to challenge the material being taught.

Wayne

The child of an immigrant German father, Wayne grew up in a working-class home. He often spoke of his childhood in our conversations and how his identity was shaped in part by having a father who was German. Wayne also shared with me his own struggles as a student, and I learned that despite being a seasoned teacher, holding an undergraduate degree, and working toward a graduate degree, Wayne did not have a high school diploma. He suggested that his affinity for Social Studies 33 students, *the non-academic stream* (my emphasis), resulted from the challenges he faced in high school. Most of Wayne's teaching career had been in a large, fairly homogeneous high school in one of the bedroom communities of Edmonton, and he had also done some work for the provincial Ministry of Education. Wayne exemplified a commitment to teaching and a passion for social studies, actively struggling with the complexities of teaching and how he believed citizenship was being performed in schools.

The Research Context

This research was conducted in various educational settings in the province of Alberta. Provincially, all students are required to take social studies classes at each grade level, and because no separate civics classes exist, social studies has become the accepted location for citizenship education. The provincial social studies curriculum explicitly articulates the importance of citizenship education in its front matter, stating, "responsible citizenship is the ultimate goal of social studies" (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 3). It is important to note as well that Alberta schools are steeped in a climate of standardized testing that in some instances may be perceived as high-stakes (Agrey, 2004). For example, students in their final year of high school write a series of provincial diploma exams that account for 50% of their grade. Social studies is included as an examinable subject and has been since the mid-1980s. Students in grades 3, 6, and 9 write provincial achievement tests in a variety of subject areas, and although these exams were originally implemented as a measure of curricular effectiveness, they have been appropriated as a means to compare students, teachers, and schools throughout the province (Tupper, 2005b).

Each year, the major newspapers in the province publish a ranking of schools based on achievement test scores. In 2004, the number one ranked elementary school in Alberta was Windsor Park, located in an affluent Edmonton neighborhood in close proximity to the university ("Making the grade," 2005). The school ranked at the bottom of the list, 744th, Ben Calf Robe, serves mainly First Nations and Métis students and is located in what might be considered a transient and impoverished Edmonton community. Under a system of school-based budgeting throughout the province, the dollars follow the student to any school he or she chooses to attend. Thus although educational choice is applauded as a progressive educational initiative, in many respects it creates a situation where successful schools (those that score well on provincial achievement tests) attract good students who come from families that have the means to get their child or children to the school each day. Understanding the educational context in which this research occurred is essential to discussions of how citizenship is both understood and constructed by teachers in classrooms.

Engaging in the Research

Through a series of research meetings with each of these teachers over a five-month period, we came to understand citizenship education as filled with tensions and perplexing difficulties. Although each teacher spoke about the possibilities of education for citizenship, they also acknowledged the many difficulties in a subject that has historically approached citizenship as universal and that is now enveloped in a climate of high-stakes, standardized testing. For these teachers, citizenship was constructed in myriad ways that privileged delivery of particular knowledge (and particular identities) at the expense of other potentially more meaningful conversations; that saw students doing what they believed necessary to succeed on provincial exams; that required students and teachers to engage in uncritical classroom performances; that encouraged unquestioning acceptance and dissemination of information; and that encouraged students and teachers to make safe curricular and classroom choices. I touch briefly on some of these and then contrast them with the visions of good citizenship articulated by 10 preservice social studies teachers in their third year of teacher education at a Western Canadian university.

Citizenship as Consumption of Information

Each of the participants in this study grappled with the degree to which they emphasized information to be tested on the final (diploma) exam rather than the information that would better help students to live in and understand the complexities and inequities of the world. For example, Denis found himself teaching to the test, caught up in the ever-present reality of diploma exams, student achievement, and teacher results.

I know what's on the exams you know and I think sadly enough I will put more emphasis on [information] that I know is on the exam rather than homelessness in Edmonton or the lack of room for homeless people in Edmonton. Things that come up, I won't spend much time on. It's more important that I cover checks and balances in the US you know ... and that's sad.

Lois suggested that how she gained her students' attention at the beginning of class was by telling them that two marks on the diploma exam would be found in the topic of discussion for that day. She struggled with her pedagogical choices recognizing that

I would be doing it differently [teaching my students differently] if it weren't for the diploma exam. What is lost [for my students] is what I might be experimenting with, or different organization, or creativity or different emphasis, is lost.

Thus citizenship became much more about the consumption of information, both sociocultural and curricular, rather than a sustained questioning or critique of the traditions of knowledge in social studies. Often the relationship between education and consumption is framed as consumerism; that is, schools have become sites for the creation of consumers rather than producers (Hartoonian, 1997). Yet what my participants revealed was the degree to which schools have become sites for a different kind of consumerism with a deliberate purpose: the production of test results. No longer is it sufficient to frame education as simply a site of consumption or production (Hartoonian). Instead,

the interplays of consumption and production operate to inhibit or foster care-full citizenship in dynamic and complex performances by students and teachers.

Because of this desire for performance on the diploma exam, the participants found themselves performing choices as teachers, and ultimately as citizens responsible for the education of young people. There is nothing straightforward about these performances, no scripts to follow, no lines to be memorized. The most unyielding aspect of the performances is the predictability of the exam and the knowledge that so much is at stake, including the possibilities for care-full citizenship. In many respects, the diploma exam constructs citizenship as an outcome-based performance, measurable and graded. Although it might seem that teaching to the test is nothing if not straightforward, my participants talked about encounters with students or moments of self-reflection that disrupted the performance. These ruptures speak to the persistent possibility for deeper understandings of citizenship to emerge in the least likely of spaces, spaces that are bombarded by the pressures of testing and accountability, but that also symbolize for the teachers in this study, spaces of hope and possibility (Tupper, 2005a). Returning to the notion of responsible citizenship, these teachers seemed caught between their need to get students through the exam and their desire to liberate them from the constraints imposed by the exam.

Citizenship as Playing the Game

Citizenship as playing the game is perhaps the most care-less construction revealed through this research. In social studies, and probably in other tested subject areas, students learn to play a particular game, one that may require them to shut down their own need to question curriculum content and sidestep grey areas in classroom conversations. How students take up the concept of citizenship and construct themselves as citizens in social studies classes depends partly on what they perceive as the game of social studies. If winning the game means passing the exam and the course, then students do what they think they have to do in order to play the game. And if winning the game means fitting into an existing system or structure, then students may not want to engage in behaviors that put this in jeopardy. Greg's comments illustrate this point.

The students are going, "Hey, social studies we think about citizenship in this way, because that's what's going to be on the test." That's what's on the test and nary the twain shall meet ... [Students] become good game players and I guess we look at citizenship in certain ways and students pick up on those skills and they'll be able to fit in wherever they go. Back to the when in Rome ... [It's about] being part of a homogenous whole, not standing alone.

In social studies classrooms, the implication seems to be that students are good citizens insofar as they are able to fit into an existing system, which in turn helps them to succeed on standardized tests. The ability to fit in must be understood in relation to privilege. Above I discuss the importance of understanding how privilege (or the lack thereof) informs how citizenship is understood and experienced. This is central to the realization of care-full citizenship. The diploma exam is a tangible example of how the educational system

rewards those who are able to adapt to a dominant system of meaning and find success in this system. Students who are perceived as weaker, as potentially failing the exam, as not fitting in are marginalized by teachers who seek to *unload* them in lower level classes. One of the participants, Carol, believed that in her school, the culture of standardized exams was reinforced through choices teachers made in an effort to play the results game.

Carol indicated,

There's that pressure on principals from superintendent who's getting pressure from the government to produce. And how do you produce, well you integrate that into your system and in our school the particular instructional focus is goal setting. And really in the sense that goal setting goes in a couple of directions in terms of planning your future, planning your career but part in parcel of getting there is course selection and achievement in those courses. Which of course you do want to encourage success but it is determined by, as far as the board and schools are concerned, by achievement exams. And because I don't teach 30, I don't live in that reality but in the sense that there is a trickle down effect I really struggled this year. I was telling you earlier that I had a lot of weaker social 10 classes this year. Do I keep these kids in my class and work with them the best that I can until June and hope for the best, or unload them now, I'm going to use that word *unload them now* into a 13 class where they may have more success, and get them out of my hair? Because they're struggling in my class and bringing down the class average.

This suggests that good citizenship is measured by success on exams and that there are consequences for those students (and teachers) who fall short. Students may be unloaded to lower-level classes, and in more extreme situations be unloaded from the school or the district altogether. If tests results are poor, teachers may be informally sanctioned by administrators, losing the opportunity to teach academic classes.

A central concern of this construction of citizenship is that it lends itself to an understanding of citizenship that is self-interested, individualistic, and disciplinary. As with many games, there are rules, winners, and losers, but in this game it is the winners who will be held up as exemplars of good citizenship. As long as standardized exams are justified as rigorous assessment tools and as important indicators of the success of Canadian education in relation to other systems around the world, students and teachers will probably continue to be participants in this complex game. I worry that the students who struggle to succeed on these exams are those same students positioned as other by the traditions of knowledge embedded in the social studies curriculum. I am equally troubled by the exams as but one manifestation of inequitable social, political, and economic systems. In such systems, failure can only ever be the result of individual deficiency.

Citizenship as the Path of Least Resistance

Similarly, citizenship as the path of least resistance is highly individualistic and equally self-serving. It does not get to the deep issues of oppression, inequity, and privilege and as such becomes a care-less construction of citizenship. Wayne felt that as citizens we have a responsibility to speak up about injustices, but that we often accept the status quo because it is the path that seems safest. Speaking up, he believed, might make us vulnerable to criticism and

sanction, and he wondered whether social studies sufficiently created spaces for students to speak out against dominant points of view perpetuated through curriculum content. For students, it is often easier to accept the knowledge that is disseminated to them in class rather than engaging in a critique of the information or an exploration of its complexity. In the gaze of the diploma exam, students may be constructed as passive receptacles of information, learning what they have to do to get by and to get through (Couture, 2000). Teachers too may choose the path of least resistance in how they approach the dissemination of social studies content. Rather than unpacking the deep traditions of knowledge embedded in content, or accounting for how such traditions shape privilege, teachers may choose to approach social studies unproblematically and uncritically, avoiding potential conflict and anxiety. Again, however, this is care-less citizenship as it allows the oppressive and oppressing nature of social studies content to be perpetuated.

Imagining the Good Citizen

In contrast to the inherent difficulties and tensions of citizenship education experienced by Lois, Carol, Greg, Wayne, and Denis, a group of preservice social studies teachers offered a different understanding of good citizenship less encumbered by curricular constraints, standardized testing, and their own experiences as teachers in the classroom. This group of 13 students were preparing to teach social studies in a province that has yet to implement the same degree of standardized or high-stakes testing as Alberta. In fact in this location, social studies is no longer an accredited subject, meaning that students are not required to write provincial diploma exams in grade 12. Although there has been debate among educators about this move away from accreditation, it has created possibilities for teachers to make pedagogical decisions removed from an exam culture.

I began working with the preservice social studies teachers in the fall semester of 2004, and on the second day of classes, I asked these students to work in groups to create a visual representation of the *good citizen*. They spent the better part of an hour planning and creating their image and were given additional time at the start of the third class to complete and prepare to share their images. What struck me with the final products was not the variety of features and behaviors accorded each citizen or those that we might expect to be included, but the attention of each group to care, empathy, and connection. Without exception each citizen was depicted as caring, and as living in connection with others and with the world.

In the conversations that followed the creation of these good citizens, each group articulated what they perceived as the necessity of caring for others and the earth in deep and meaningful ways, and of understanding the inherent connections of humanity. Although they were not able to speak about awareness of the conditions of oppression that exist in society or their own privileges (for they did not yet have this language), they were able to recognize and express frustration at the inequities that exist among citizens. In many respects, the images embodied a commitment to human rights, to peace, to making a difference, much like the vision of citizenship advanced by Osler and Starkey (2003). Osler and Starkey advocate “cosmopolitan citizenship” as a means of equipping young people “with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable

them to make a difference ... to play an active role in shaping the world" (p. 252). Thus good citizenship is inextricably linked to responsibility beyond the traditional notions of voting, paying taxes, following laws, and so forth. Instead responsibility entails a way of being, a commitment to physical, aesthetic, and social worlds that always requires attentiveness and a deep sense of connection.

But what might account for the differences between the preservice and practicing teachers? Over the course of the semester, I talked with the students at length about what informed their sense of citizenship, and many spoke about their experiences taking a required Indigenous Studies 100 class. Many also spoke about their experiences in an educational foundations class that required them to consider the traditions of racism that shaped (and continue to shape) the Canadian landscape. These courses encouraged the students to consider their own understandings of education, and to some extent, citizenship.

Conclusion: Care-Full Citizenship

It is impossible to say definitively why the preservice teachers advanced such a different conceptualization of citizenship, and really this is not the point of this discussion. We might speculate it is because they have not yet been socialized to the culture of schools or social studies; because they have not encountered the same constraints faced by practicing teachers; or because they have a sense of social justice cultivated in university classes, but not necessarily experienced in k-12 contexts. It is also not the point to provide a definitive discussion of the constraints that practicing teachers face in the pursuit of care-full citizenship. Rather, it is important to note that these constraints are experienced in relation to educational traditions that inhibit an interrogation of privilege and that facilitate a climate of standardization and high-stakes testing as a means of disguising privilege, making it easier for teachers to adopt a care-less approach to citizenship rather than a care-full approach.

That being said, the visions of good citizenship expressed by the preservice teachers are not so far removed from the possibilities of citizenship that the five practicing teachers identified over the course of the research. Each of these teachers expressed a desire for citizenship to move beyond curricular "boxes" and limited ways of engaging in the world. Carol and Lois both spoke about the possibilities of citizenship as living connections with others and understanding the world in which we live. Denis and Greg expressed their desire for citizenship as the discovery of new meanings, new ways of looking at the world, and Wayne talked about the need for citizenship to be fluid, adaptable, and dynamic. The understandings of both the practicing and preservice teachers and their inherent beliefs in the possibilities of citizenship informed my conceptualization of care-full citizenship as attentive, relational, and caring.

Care-full citizenship may be realized in part through an interrogation of the conditions of oppression and privilege that operate to (re)produce inequities in the world. Schools are one such potential site of interrogation. However, a politics of care, or care-full citizenship, becomes tangled up in a curriculum that requires little, if any, accountability for privilege, falsely universalizing citizenship by ignoring how difference shapes the experiences one has as a citizen. Care-less citizenship is further supported through educational

structures that privilege standardization and high-stakes testing. I would propose that a central challenge before us is how in the face of standardization, oppressive curriculum, and constructions of citizenship that seem to support rather than subvert conditions of oppression, we educate our students to be care-full citizens within and beyond the classroom. As educators, we need to reengage with the concept of citizenship, particularly with how it is constructed and understood in social studies classrooms and curriculum, in an effort to move from care-less to care-full citizenship.

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