DIVERGENT INTERSECTIONS:

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND PEER INTERACTIONS IN SCHOOLS

by

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Abstract

For decades, Canadian multiculturalism policy has promoted a vision of integration in which all people have the right to practice and maintain their culture of origin while at the same time helping to build a diverse nation. Critics, however, argue that the policy tends to essentialize cultural identity and serves only to "manage" diversity. On a smaller scale, schools are a primary site for integration and identity negotiation for young people in Canada. In British Columbia, multicultural curricula in secondary schools aims to celebrate the contributions to society of "other" cultures, as well as acknowledge Canada's racist past. Critical questions of privilege, power, and oppression are often left out of this discussion, and scholars have rightly asked whether multicultural education is able to address systemic racism and inequities.

This research contributes to our comprehension of how and to what extent multicultural education in schools affects interactions among peers from many different ethnocultural backgrounds. I interviewed 30 students enrolled in a Grade 11 Social Studies course at a secondary school in Abbotsford, British Columbia to ask them how the process of multicultural integration materializes in their everyday lived experiences of identity formation, sense of belonging, and peer interaction.

I find that students' lived realities of multiculturalism, racialization, privilege, and oppression, both intersect with and diverge from the British Columbia Social Studies curricula. Their embodied experiences are far more complex than any simple definition or stated aim of multicultural education. These findings justify the implementation of critical multicultural education in schools, which might welcome students' lived realities into discussions of multiculturalism and racialization, thus bringing the hidden curriculum to light.

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Lay Summary

Multicultural education in British Columbia is often characterized by the recognition and celebration of students' diverse backgrounds. The purpose of this research is to understand the connection between multicultural curriculum taught in British Columbia public school classrooms and young people's interactions in school spaces. While the stated aim of multicultural education is to create a sense of belonging and equality for all students, this is complicated by the ways in which young people engage with multiculturalism in their everyday experiences. These processes are central to our understanding of how the "multicultural experiment" in our schools and communities transpires. Students' everyday lived experiences of intersecting systemic racism, oppression, and privilege justify a more critical form of multicultural education in schools that takes these realities into account when discussing privilege and power in the classroom.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, and independent work by the author, Tesia Derksen-Bergen. The fieldwork reported in Chapters 4-6 was covered by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate number H16-00252. The project title was "Reimagining Multicultural Education: Intercultural Relations in British Columbia's Public Schools" and the principal investigator was Dr. Daniel Hiebert.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1　A Case of Divergent Intersections

Students' lived realities of multiculturalism and racialization intersect with, but are also in friction with, the British Columbia Social Studies curricula. Their embodied engagement with multiculturalism, in the context of their families and at school, complicates simply defined notions of what it means to live in a diverse society. Although the Social Studies 11 curriculum celebrates difference, experiences of racialization justify a more critical form of multicultural education in schools that might attempt to integrate students' lived realities more closely with the curricula.

1.2　People are Different

At the end of September 2016, I was midway through the second week of conducting interviews. The interviewing process was beginning to slip into a comfortable routine; I had become a knowable quantity to the students, and they had seemed to settle into the ebb and flow of daily life at school as fall, and Grade 11, took hold. It was at the beginning of Devonte's[1] first interview that he said something no other student would replicate. In the same breath as giving a similarly generic definition of multiculturalism as his classmates – people living together while being defined by difference, in race, religion, and culture – he made the point that places, and therefore people, are "different, everywhere you go."

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[1] All student names are pseudonyms.

In this concise observation, Devonte encapsulated one of the significant takeaways from the piece of work I have laid out in the following chapters: the process of multiculturalism, as it is worked out in school spaces, is also "different, everywhere you go." At the same time as the discussion I present in the following pages has applicability for many classrooms and schools in British Columbia because of the similar curricular and institutional context, it also has a degree of specificity to it linked to the school and city I studied. The localized context is what gives the participants' commentary a sense of vibrancy: this is a real place, and the realities of the everyday, as told by students themselves, are indispensable for the analysis that follows. Therefore, this work exists as a case study of multicultural integration as it relates to the curricular context in schools, and accompanying processes of racialization, in a *particular* school, confined to a group of *particular* students. The way that the actors within the space of the school, primarily students, contribute to the learning experience is my focus in this thesis. I rely on these students' articulate and willing voices to tell their truths about how they experience this process everyday.

1.3   A Justification: Situating the Literature

The role that young people play in debates surrounding multiculturalism in Canada is often overlooked in research on multiculturalism and racialization in schools, which tends to focus more on educators themselves.[2] When young people are the subjects of research, too often their voices and perspectives are omitted or glossed over (Schelbe et al., 2015). There is a clear

[2] See Beynon & Hirji, 2000; Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2001; Beynon, LaRocque, Ilieva, & Dagenais, 2005; Epstein & Gist, 2015; Flynn, 2010; Gerin-Lajoie, 2008; Jacquet, 2008; Knight, 2008; LaRocque, 1999; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005; Wall, 2001; Wideen & Barnard, 1999.

need for more student voices in research on multiculturalism in schools that does not only examine policy or educators' practices, but students' everyday lives. Cui argues that "more needs to be known about the real lived experiences of racialized and ethnic minority youth despite their verbal acceptance of Canadian multicultural ideology, and their self-identification as Canadians" (2011-2012, p. 130). Studies of racialized youth that foreground their voices in describing their experiences are imperative in understanding how multiculturalism manages diversity and how white supremacy and racialized oppression manifest in everyday experiences. This study represents both an echo of and expansion on Cui's original point. Ostensibly, the aim of multiculturalism policy is to involve all Canadians in the process of integration. I see school spaces as areas where this process can be studied in terms of how a group of young people from two Social Studies 11 classes, some racialized and some not, take up complicated notions multiculturalism in their own lives and interactions with each other.

Much of the existing research does not address the gap between official multicultural policies or curricula and the everyday interactions of students (Millington, Vertinsky, Boyle, & Wilson, 2008). Studies focused on youth in Vancouver have found that racialized students face more discrimination and even explicit racism in their everyday school experiences (Creese, Kambere, & Masinda, 2011; Millington et al., 2008). Khanlou makes the vital point that integration for racialized children and youth often hinges on their sense of belonging, and their interactions with peers outside of their group (2008).

The multicultural content in the Social Studies 11 curriculum document is very much focused on celebrating difference and diversity as it relates to Canadian identity. It details various ethnocultural groups' contributions to society, along with Canada's linear development

in terms of the movement from a so-called racist past to the multicultural mosaic of the present, structurally freeing the present of any systemic racism.

I situate my research at the crossroads between critical multicultural education theory and the notion that there is a spatial geography of embodied learning in schools that refers to the ways students weave their own lived realities into their construction of school spaces (Holloway, Hubbard, Jons, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2010). Critical multicultural education theorists argue that no curriculum is neutral, and critical pedagogy can be employed to expose the way power works through the curriculum to privilege whiteness (Giroux, 1995; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; Steinberg, 2012). My exploration of the spatial geographies of learning (Holloway et al., 2010) can help further illuminate how students' understandings of difference are shaped. These embodied experiences of difference in school spaces lead some students to feel belonging, often implicitly related to "racial-ethnic belonging" (Thomas, 2009, p. 9) while others deny the very existence of racialized space.

1.4   A Research Positionality Rooted in a Pedagogy of Dialogue

My background as a trained Social Studies teacher propelled me to draw on pedagogical styles I had used in my teaching to establish a learning environment in which both interviewer and student participant entered into a discourse about the world as we saw it. As in teaching, when I began this research I took up Freire's theory of praxis as he describes it: by engaging in thoughtful reflection and action with each other, we create dialogue, our act of interpreting the world (1970). However, this dialogue can only exist if all members of a learning community are engaged in the process. In this case, I worked to establish a learning community between each

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participant and me. Furthermore, I engaged with the concept that identities are diverse and multiple, as are learners, and thus I grounded my methodology in an anti-oppressive pedagogy that asked students to reflect on their lived, embodied realities.

Razack writes that in classrooms, we must "work from the basis that we all have only partial knowledge, and that we come from different subject positions" (1998, p. 47). As the researcher, this includes me, and I acknowledge that the work presented here is partial and situated in a perspective grounded in the notion that multicultural curricula in schools can and should do more to engage with students' lived realities of difference, belonging, and racialization. As such, the account of multicultural integration and racialization I present here draws more on some students' voices than others. Processes of difference-making and racialization in schools privilege whiteness but often leave students to work out what these things mean in their daily lives and interactions with their peers on the micro scale. I have thus drawn more closely on interviews with students who discussed in depth how these issues play out at school.

I position the student voices foregrounded in this thesis not as the absolute truth, but as the truth they experience in their own everyday lives. I use multiple direct quotes in order to bring student voices to my work in their own words, regardless of slang, colloquialisms, or informality. This is the language of everyday life for these individuals, and if we are to treat young people as actors with agency in their own right we must leave space for them to speak for themselves (Jones, 2008).

My interviews with students, each of whom sat down with me on two separate occasions, were based on the research questions that have guided my work. Each separate question or set of questions guides Chapters 4, 5, and 6. I ask:

1. How do students conceive of multiculturalism in Canada and multicultural curriculum? In what ways can these understandings contextualize their identity formation?

2. To what extent does students' engagement with multicultural education in schools impact intercultural relations among students of various ethnocultural backgrounds?

3. How do students negotiate multicultural integration in school spaces outside the classroom?

1.5   Looking Forward: Chapter Outlines

According to Wright, Singh, and Race, "multiculturalism poses the fundamental question, who are we?" and more specifically, "who am I and how do we live together?" (2012, p. 7). In this thesis, I attempt to sketch out the answers to these questions in one city, one school, and two classrooms among a group of 30 young people.

In Chapter 2, I outline my conceptual and theoretical framework for the work that follows. I argue that curricular celebrations of difference do little to address systemic racism and ongoing colonial violence. Critical multiculturalism in education provides an opportunity to take seriously the intersecting privileges and oppressions students experience, and to bring their lived experiences to bear on the formal curriculum.

Chapter 3 is constituted by my explanation of how I conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 Grade 11 Social Studies students. I reflect on my position as a researcher and also on the teaching experience I drew upon in my interactions with young people. I also provide contextual information about Abbotsford and the school that was my field site.

In Chapter 4, I first discuss how students' definitions of multiculturalism are direct and often quite simplistic. However, this is complicated by their own family histories of migration and Indigeneity, which in different cases contextualize the students' personal identities in different ways. Students' experiences of lived multiculturalism are more complex than their definitions, and also largely indicated their embrace of multicultural beliefs, in contrast to some of the more critical discourses on multiculturalism in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5 consists of an exploration of the ways students take up and contest the multicultural curriculum they learn in class. Processes of racialization and divergent feelings of belonging are the result of the ways in which difference, in the context of multicultural curriculum, is understood and animated by students.

In Chapter 6, I turn to spaces outside of the classroom to analyze how racialized "jokes" and "positive" stereotyping take hold in the social learning spaces of the school. I examine the juxtaposition of how students with such clear initial ideas of multiculturalism participate in these casual processes of racism and racialization and work through their own critical, ambivalent, or dismissive responses to it.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I summarize my findings, provide implications of the work, and reflect with some concluding thoughts.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

High school students in British Columbia arrive every day to their Social Studies 11 classrooms expecting that they will learn about some combination of Canadian history, government, or geography. While the word multiculturalism may not always be used, it is built into the curriculum that this is integral to Canadian society. Questions of who is included in this multicultural Canadian society, who defines it in the first place, and who manages it are often implicitly part of both the formal curriculum and students' lived engagement with their classroom learning. In this chapter, I first trace the origins of multiculturalism and integration debates in Canada and their translation to public school classroom curricula in British Columbia to show how schools perform vital roles in the constitution of a multicultural society. I then provide a discussion of critical multicultural education theory, which has helped me understand how students' lived realities run perpendicular to the formal curriculum. Finally, I consider how we might conceptualize a social geography of learning in British Columbia schools in order to help the many players involved – students, educators, academics, parents – comprehend how students' engagement with the multicultural curriculum intersects with their daily lives and experiences.

2.2   Multiculturalism in Canada: Policies and Debates

2.2.1   In Search of National Unity and Inclusion

Multiculturalism policy emerged at a time of rapid socio-cultural change associated with an effort to reconsider and possibly redefine the nature of Canadian society. Canada's original multiculturalism policies at the federal level came about during Lester B. Pearson's 1963 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which was intended to emphasize "the equality of British and French as the 'founding nations'" (Kymlicka, 2015, p. 18). The commission's deliberations were meant to reassure Quebec nationalists at a time of great unrest, including the Quiet Revolution and FLQ mobilization (Wong & Guo, 2015). The commission's proceedings prompted other long-standing, European ethnocultural groups such as Ukrainians and Poles to demand recognition as equal contributors to Canadian society (Kymlicka, 2015; Yan, Chau, & Sangha, 2009-2010). At the same historical moment, Canada's immigration policies were changing towards a system based on education and skill rather than being restricted by country of origin or ethnicity (Hiebert, Collins, & Spoonley, 2003, p. 5).[3] Haque writes that Pierre Trudeau's eventual proposal of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" was not a philanthropic move or an honest attempt at changing the structure of society to be more socially just, but stemmed from a "need to balance competing forces and tensions in the overriding interest of national unity" (2012, p. 187).

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[3] For a fuller explanation of multicultural policy and changing immigration policy in the second half of the 20th century, see Hiebert, Collins, and Spoonley (2003).

Still, it is undeniable that multiculturalism policy did make tangible positive changes in terms of official laws and set admirable, if lofty, expectations for the functioning of society. Once multiculturalism was made part of the constitution in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, the official policy was to celebrate the diversity and rights of all Canadians, whether based on "race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability" (Canada, Ministry of Canadian Heritage, 1982). The Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1985 further outlined multiculturalism as a "fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity" (Canada, Minister of Justice, p. 3). It guaranteed the "freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage" (Canada, Minister of Justice, 1985, p. 3). While naming English and French as official languages, it also clearly stated that people of all religions and linguistic backgrounds have freedom to worship and use their native language with protection from discrimination under the law. Finally, the policy states that the government of Canada is committed to "promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in … Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation," and to encourage understanding and interaction between all groups and individuals (Canada, Minister of Justice, 1985, p. 3).

The issue of Indigeneity and Indigenous rights has been in tension with multiculturalism throughout its Canadian history. While the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1985 recognizes the "rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada" in the preamble (Canada, Minister of Justice, 1985, p. 1), it does not mention them again. The rest of the document reinforces the supremacy of English and French as official languages while recognizing the right of all Canadians to their cultural heritage (Canada, Minister of Justice, 1985). Many have criticized this as furthering of the colonial process of making Indigeneity both visible but managed, recognized but boxed in.

The tension between a multicultural settler colonial state and the rights of Indigenous people continues to play out in questions over how exactly Indigenous people "fit in" to a narrative of immigration that is based on their very erasure, along with repeated "ambivalence" towards or refusal of multicultural narratives by many Indigenous peoples themselves (Kunz & Sykes, 2007; Wright et al., 2012, p. 5). I return to this issue later in this chapter in regards to its implications within the education system.

2.2.2   Integration Debates and Critiques of Multiculturalism

Scholars have effectively argued that instead of viewing multiculturalism as located in a fixed temporal, spatial, or ideological position, it is more helpful to think of multiple perspectives on multiculturalism, encompassing everything from policy to public opinion to scholarly critique (Walcott, 2011; Wong & Guo, 2015; Wright, 2012). Today, Canadian multiculturalism policy is generally characterized by the right to one's cultural heritage, the integration services available to newcomers, and "anti-discrimination" (Hiebert et al., 2003, p. 7). As of the 2000s, multicultural policy has become increasingly marked by "integrative multiculturalism" (Kunz & Sykes, 2007, p. 6). Similarly, Banting and Kymlicka call this civic integration, meaning that aside from the obligation on the part of Canadians to celebrate diversity, newcomers must also become proficient in one of the official languages, learn about Canada's history, and attempt to fully integrate into Canadian society with the help of settlement services and programs (2012). Kymlicka argues that while multiculturalism in Canada was an unintended result of debates over the salience of "other" cultures to the building of society, this

"accident" is now "a framework that retains powerful potential to help build more inclusive models of democratic citizenship in Canada" (2015, p. 17).

Multiculturalism policy tends to engender pride in the nation on the part of both newcomers and those born in Canada (Banting & Kymlicka 2010). Wright and Bloemraad, in a wide-ranging study of newcomers in states with multicultural and liberal citizenship policies, corroborate these findings. They found that immigrants "perceive less discrimination" overall in countries with both of these policies (2012, p. 83). In Canada specifically, newcomers had "higher levels of trust" in the state and were "substantially more 'integrated'" than those in the United States did (Wright & Bloemraad, 2012, p. 84, 88). Wright and Bloemraad conclude that although ethnic identity was found to be important to all Canadians, it "does not appear to come at the cost of devotion to Canada" (2012, p. 84).

In opposition to those who argue for the apparent social benefits of multiculturalism policy, detractors point to perceived radicalism, anti-Western beliefs, and the isolating effects of ethnic enclaves. Banting and Kymlicka write that these fears are often exaggerated (2010). Kunz and Sykes, in their report on eight roundtables held across Canada with academics, policy makers, and community members, add that these fear-based debates are often "poorly informed and frequently simplistic" (2007, p. 4). Hiebert argues convincingly that while ethnic enclaves may be a reality in some cities, they are more diverse than we think and actually provide opportunities for support and integration (2015).

Still, others acknowledge that the "precise 'limits of tolerance' remains a difficult and unresolved issue" (Kymlicka, 2015, p. 29). This seems to be an inescapable matter that must be addressed as Canada's cities and schools become ever more diverse. Significantly, religious freedoms and the part they play in 21st century multiculturalism are more and more frequently

the centerpiece of integration debates (Kunz & Sykes, 2007, p. 4). Fears over radicalism and "illiberal" belief systems are often tied up in this debate over religious freedom. However, Kymlicka reminds us that "multiculturalism policy is framed as part of a larger human rights agenda" within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada, and that legally, "there is no possibility that multiculturalism can be invoked to justify abridging the rights of women or children within minority communities" (2015, p. 29). Canada's unique form of "multicultural integration" does not make room for "illiberal" practices, and ideals such as democracy, gender equality, and the established legal system continue to be dominant Canadian values (Banting & Kymlicka, 2012, p. 13). In other words, the Charter is still "a 'muscular' defence of liberal democratic principles" (Banting & Kymlicka, 2012, p. 13; Kymlicka, 2015).

From a more critical perspective, Fleras has argued convincingly that the enshrinement of individual rights within a liberal democratic framework of multiculturalism is less a defence of all peoples' rights in Canada, and rather a way to "manage diversity" and maintain the dominant group's privilege and structural power (2014, p. 256). Similarly, Sandercock and Brock refer to the "virtuous tolerance" for racialized minorities on the part of the dominant group (2009, p. 16). Questions regarding Canada's liberal values' system thus shift from what values are in danger to whose values are represented in the first place.

In his critique of multiculturalism policy, Joppke contends that because all cultural groups have different morals and value systems, it is impossible and perhaps not preferable to protect them all (2004). This is because values are relative and not all value systems can be correct, especially those that seem to be squarely opposed to Western normative behaviour (Joppke, 2004). Joppke's argument is that multiculturalism enables those from minority cultures to do little to become Canadian, and instead, to live in Canada without ever adopting "Canadian

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values," despite contested notions of what this means (2004). Bissoondath argues that multiculturalism spatially and socially marginalizes racialized minorities and should be dismantled, given the way that it fragments identity, resulting in hyphenated Canadians (1993). Multiculturalism is therefore no more than a symbolic and superficial policy that serves to simplify and homogenize ethnocultural backgrounds (Bissoondath, 1993). The essentializing of ethnicity is ironic in the face of policies that aim to celebrate diversity but end up creating superficial caricatures of complex and ever-evolving cultures. From the other side of the debate, Sandercock and Brock argue that this type of cultural essentialism becomes dangerous when the assumption is made that one's ethnicity equals one's identity (2009, p. 22). An individual's identity does not spring fully formed from a fixed notion of culture and difference in its many complex intersections with identity should be supported.

It is therefore important to examine what integration truly means for newcomers, especially people of colour, in a liberal democratic framework where multicultural policy often simply manages diversity, upholds dominant Western values, and fixes identity within narrow ethnocultural frameworks. Viewed in this sense as a form of boundary-making, multiculturalism represents the degree to which those belonging to the dominant group in Canada are willing to change to accommodate newcomers from "other" cultures (Sandercock & Brock, 2009). For those newcomers who are from non-European ethnocultural backgrounds, the boundary crossing they are tasked with in integrating into Canadian society can be difficult. In a study of the African diaspora in Vancouver, Creese details how "migration is a profound dislocation that involves lifelong processes of negotiating the very borders of 'Canadianness,' creating conditions in which belonging is always contingent and partial" (2011, p. 4). Here, belonging depends on how close one can come to assuming dominant Canadian values, meaning liberal

values sanctioned by the majority. The accessibility of "looking" Canadian is also a privilege not accorded to all newcomers. For some, systemic racism and discrimination is an everyday reality.

Multicultural policy in Canada as a form of nation-building has come under criticism for simultaneously obscuring a history of colonialism, genocide, and racist immigration policies, and thus reproducing an ethnocultural "other" who is regarded as "inferior" and "less civilized" (Sandercock & Brock, 2009, p. 26). The banner of celebration and acceptance often veils ongoing colonial and racialized violence, and the focus thus shifts to surface level group markers that are palatable for the white cultural majority to consume. Haque reminds us that from a critical standpoint, multiculturalism was and still is a method of integration that "entrenched a racialized, hierarchical framework of difference and belonging – articulated on the terrain of language and culture" (2012, p. 236). That is, Canada was reified as a "white-settler nation" and the policy was geared towards racialized others from the start (Haque, 2012, p. 187).

This is not to say that there has not been tangible social change since the implementation of multiculturalism policy. Both law and public perception of Canadian identity have indeed changed since the 1970s, but the failure to acknowledge the starting place of Canada as a modern nation – that of a racialized state – undermines the multicultural project more than multiculturalism does anything to solve racial injustice or discrimination (Fleras, 2014; Willinsky, 2012). This ignorance of history will continue to hinder the multicultural project unless real inequality and uneven privilege is acknowledged as a starting place (Fleras, 2014). Indeed, "managing multicultural diversity is a work in progress" (Kunz & Sykes, 2007, p. 3), but perhaps the framing needs to shift. It seems that "most Canadians understand multiculturalism as a policy to facilitate the integration of non-European newcomers and their immediate descendents" rather than as a policy meant to encourage the equal integration of all Canadians

with each other (Kunz & Sykes, 2007, p. 3). Wong and Guo call this the difference between multiculturalism "from above" as opposed to multiculturalism "from below," at a grassroots, real-life level (2015, p. 4). The implications here are that multiculturalism as state policy is very different from how it is worked out on a neighbourhood, community, or school level, and this will become important for my focus on multiculturalism in schools over the rest of this thesis.

2.3   Multiculturalism in British Columbia's Public Schools

2.3.1   Provincial Education Policies: Diversity and Celebration

It is from this perspective that I wish to connect multiculturalism writ large at the federal level to educational policy at the provincial level. Despite the continuing debates over the efficacy and the extent of multiculturalism's reach in Canada, there has not been a rejection of or retreat from multiculturalism as has taken place in some European states (Joppke, 2004; Ley, 2010), and the continued presence of multiculturalism in the curricula of Canada's public school systems makes this clear. In British Columbia, where multiculturalism became part of provincial policy in 1993 (Guo & Wong, 2015), it is also a mandated part of public school curricula from kindergarten to Grade 12. In schools, multiculturalism in the curricula has similar goals to policies at the federal level: to integrate newcomers and all Canadians, celebrate difference, and increase social cohesion. Schools are thus seen as the idealized microcosm for Canadian society; they are places where difference is celebrated (multicultural days with a different geographical or cultural focus each day have become *de rigeur*), and ethnocultural frictions ostensibly decrease.

No central agreement exists among academics or policy makers regarding the meaning behind the term multicultural education as it is currently employed in the British Columbia

public school context generally, and it is pertinent to recall the diverse ways of viewing multiculturalism when considered from various political, policy, societal, and individual perspectives. For the purposes of my research, I use Gerin-Lajoie's definition as gleaned from her research in the Canadian educational context: the celebration of difference and recognition of "students' racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds" which materializes in tangible markers such as food and language (2008, p. 17). The most recent supporting curricular document from the British Columbia Ministry of Education, *Diversity in B.C. Schools: A Framework* similarly notes that multicultural education is about "honouring" and "respecting" diversity (2008). Its ongoing goals from kindergarten to Grade 12 are to raise awareness, integrate multiculturalism into the curriculum, and ultimately "eliminate racism" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 22).

Interestingly, *Diversity in B.C. Schools* refers almost interchangeably to multicultural education and anti-racism education. Kunz and Sykes note the common misconception that multiculturalism and anti-racism are the same thing, even though the two concepts are quite different (2007), and this conflation applies to provincial curricular policy documents as well. Multicultural education tends to emphasize tolerance, diversity, and the idea that more education and awareness will implicitly fight racism; anti-racism education puts the "focus on the historical and societal structures that give rise to racism" (Brock, 2009, p. 73). True anti-racism education, then, would follow more closely Freire's notion of praxis in education based on both action and reflection, leading to true dialogue and transformative learning (1970). It is concerned with critical pedagogy that takes seriously historical inequities, premised primarily but not exclusively on race, that continue to maintain power hierarchies in the present educational system (Hoodfar, 1997; Razack, 1994). The power hierarchies scrutinized by anti-racism education are those

internal "policies, procedures, and practices in the school system" that "are racist in their impact, if not their intent" (Gerin-Lajoie, 2008, p. 19). An example of this is in-school suspension policies that affect a disproportionate number of young people of a certain race, gender, or class. Conversely, certain kinds of grading practices and modes of teaching may disproportionately reward some students while punishing others.

Although it calls for anti-racism education in British Columbia schools, the framework document's language belies this goal, and is much more aligned with the celebratory nature of multiculturalism in saying that schools must "preserve," "honour," "celebrate," "respect," and "value" diversity (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 22). Wright observes that the displacement of the word and concept of multiculturalism for others such as "diversity" or "anti-discrimination" marks a troubling moment for multicultural education in Canada, despite its generally widespread acceptance as a core Canadian value (2012, p. 109). He cites a national study of Canadian textbooks that found multiculturalism was increasingly referred to as a historical artifact instead of "the overall framework for Canadian social diversity and culture" (Wright, 2012, p. 109). However, in the same article, Wright concedes that no alternative has rushed to fill the void, and so for now, "a liberal, tolerant, celebratory multiculturalism" remains "as Canadian as the Mounties and maple syrup" (2012, p. 105). This is likely reflective of the fact that multiculturalism is rooted in the very constitution of Canada, and major policy changes would have to occur for it to be replaced at the federal government level. Nevertheless, multiculturalism from below at the school level often adopts the notion of diversity rather than using the term multiculturalism.

Because the word diversity in discourse around schools and Canadian society in general has come to denote the presence of racialized minorities, this language often leads to cultural

essentialism and ahistorical thinking. When these essentialized differences are celebrated in typical multicultural educational models, they become "performed mainly through folkloric attributes, such as food, clothing, or traditions" (Gerin-Lajoie, 2008, p. 17). All of this tends to encourage vast generalizations about race, culture, and ethnicity, none of which denote an individual's whole identity (Sandercock & Brock, 2009). Lived realities are often tied intimately to constructions of race, culture, and ethnicity, but we must not make the mistake of using these constructions interchangeably with identity. The concept of intersectionality takes seriously the complexity of peoples' everyday lives, and the notion that one can experience both privilege and oppression in regards to different aspects of identity (McCall, 2005).

2.3.2   The Social Studies 11 Curriculum

The language in the rationale and goals section of the *Social Studies 11* curriculum document is very similar to *Diversity in B.C. Schools*. The course focuses on Canada in the 20th century and covers everything from the building of the CPR and the abuse of Chinese labourers, to the "peopling" of the prairies, to the World Wars, to the contributions of various minoritized and racialized groups to society, to the issue of multiculturalism and Quebec, to the treatment of Indigenous peoples after Confederation, to the changes made to immigration policy in the 1960s and the enshrinement of fundamental rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2005). The goal of the course is to "develop thoughtful, responsible, active citizens who are able to acquire the requisite information to consider multiple perspectives and to make reasoned judgments" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 13). There is much talk of rights, active citizenship, equality, democracy, respecting others'

diverse viewpoints, creating feelings of classroom safety, and instructions for teachers to show

"sensitivity to diversity" through teaching "themes such as inclusion, respect, and acceptance"

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 14). Furthermore, students are expected to be

able to determine the political or ideological bias of various texts, such primary sources, and

make critical connections between past, present, and future.

In once again asking the question of whose values this curriculum document represents,

many of the stated goals are coded in the language of liberal democracy. The curriculum states

that in striving to be 'active citizens' all students should exhibit "ethical behaviour, open-

mindedness, [and] respect for diversity" while "advocating responsibly for own and others'

rights" and constantly undergoing an "examination and reassessment of own beliefs" (British

Columbia Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 31). While the document relays the importance of

these ideals, they are left as ambiguous terms. What does it mean to show ethical behaviour and

open-mindedness while defending one's "rights"? As Fleras and Elliot argue, this kind of

orientation can sometimes lead to "subliminal racism" when people "genuinely accept egalitarian

values, but … often unconsciously invoke double standards when evaluating or predicting the

actions of different racial groups" (as cited in Brock, 1999, p. 71-72). It is not difficult to

imagine a situation where one can claim to be defending one's "rights" while being explicitly or

implicitly racist or sexist at the same time.

It is important to ask, then, with each prescribed learning outcome and suggested

assessment piece, why and how it is framed the way it is, to what educational, political, or

ideological end, and whose values it is based on. Multicultural education needs to take power

relations and hierarchies within the school system seriously. This is especially true in terms of

the dominant values the curriculum is imbued with, and the people who have the privilege of

already living by these values, as opposed to those who must integrate to them (Gerin-Lajoie, 2008, p. 10). This is the subject of the section I turn to now.

2.4   Power and Privilege in British Columbia Schools

2.4.1   Invisible Whiteness and Multicultural Education

Critiques of multicultural education have rightly called into question the claim that it is a viable vehicle for change in intercultural relations among students, but have often seen multicultural education in British Columbia as merely symbolic (Echols & Fisher, 1992; LaRocque, 1999; Wideen & Barnard, 1999). Actors with a stake in the ongoing process of multicultural integration, such as community members, politicians, and educators tend to believe that simply having a policy fixes the problem; in reality, the policy often serves merely as a band-aid (Wideen & Barnard, 1999). In schools, good behaviour from students is often seen as proof that no racism exists and that therefore, the policy is working (Knight, 2008, p. 93).

In particular, recent critiques of multicultural education have focused on the invisibility of whiteness as a continuing process of privilege that goes largely unexamined in the curriculum aside from references to the racism perpetuated by white people in the past against those of racialized identities. Multicultural curriculum such as the *Social Studies 11* document continues to lightly acknowledge historical wrongdoings but perpetuate the myth that those wrongs have been "righted" now that racism is no longer the problem it once was. Lund contends that "such unsavoury aspects of Canadian history have been excluded, distorted, or downplayed in virtually all current social studies school materials, and by many in political and administrative positions" (2006, p. 38). Steinberg similarly calls it a "whitewashed official history," arguing that power

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blocs such as whiteness and maleness continue to obscure the structural and systemic issues of power at play to place themselves outside the curricular narratives (2012, p. 361). Razack argues that by naming "the organizing frames, the conceptual formulas, the rhetorical devices that disguise and sustain elites, we can begin to develop responses that bring us closer to social justice" (1998, p. 16).

Without a place in the cultural part of multiculturalism, the dominant culture of whiteness recedes from visibility, and is thus surrounded with its noticeable opposites in exhibitionary spaces such as classrooms, gymnasiums, and theatres. What follows from this is that multiculturalism as a celebration of various stereotypical or essentialized cultural attributes makes ethnicity an attribute of racialized minorities, but not the dominant group (Sandercock & Brock, 2009). On school sharing days when white students are at a loss as to what to bring because they "have no culture," the irony is just that; their culture is invisible because it is as ubiquitous as air. It is all around them. Only if whiteness is excavated as a system of power and privilege will students be able to see, feel, and truly realize its impact.

Conversely, racialized students who voluntarily or involuntarily carry their culture with them are relied upon to explain cultural traditions or speak to a "different" experience than that of the invisible majority. Classroom discourses that compare cultures create dichotomies of "us" and "them" but make true power differentials invisible, and are often subtly intertwined with lessons that ironically seek to displace these oppositions in the first place (Knight, 2008; Razack, 1998; Wideen & Barnard, 1999). Just as Fleras (2014) speaks of essentializing culture in the context of Canadian multicultural debates, this notion is present in school spaces as well. Multicultural inclusion becomes symbolic when it only allows certain artificial aspects of culture

to enter school spaces; for example, students are often prohibited from speaking their native languages in classrooms.

Wall writes that using hooks' notion of engaged pedagogy and storytelling in the classroom can help elucidate systems of whiteness (2001). This mode of storytelling involves facilitating student sharing about their everyday lives, and can include difficult issues of discrimination and oppression. Razack adds that this form of criticality in regards to the learning moment can create space for oppressed voices and centre the lives of students who actually inhabit the learning space (1998, p. 42-3). However, this could easily devolve into tokenization without proper educator training. There are clear dangers in asking racialized students to mediate their native cultures for the rest of the student body as though culture is an unchanging, homogenous entity. This tokenizes and turns the student into the "native informant" who must perform culture for the benefit and understanding of the white majority (hooks, 1994, p. 44)

2.4.2   Educators and White Privilege

White privilege conveniently erases histories of colonialism and imperialism that implicate whiteness as having a position on the social hierarchy that thus affects different students differently (Knight, 2008). Discourses of individual merit can be "academically and emotionally debilitating to the 'racial other'" because students who face systemic barriers to achievement may see their struggles as personal failure (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005, p. 147). In order to prevent these discourses, white educators must do the hard work of "de-centering themselves" and examining their own privilege as it relates to their power and authority in the classroom to enact narratives that may not seek, but often serve, to reinscribe

whiteness as cultural hegemony (Beynon, LaRocque, Ilieva, & Dagenais, 2005; Jacquet, 2008, p. 75). There is no way to look closely at issues of racialization and marginalization without also inspecting the "privileges that are simultaneously being retained by a dominant majority group" (Knight, 2008, p. 83).

For many educators, white privilege is not a consideration until it is threatened, often by new waves of immigration or increasing diversity in the classroom. Knight writes that when asked about the ethnocultural make-up of their schools, educators only spoke of whiteness "when it [was] perceived as being under siege or overwhelmed by a 'crowd' of recent immigrant children" or when it was compared to how many students of each group were present in schools (2008, p. 99). When educators discussed falling numbers of white students or the possibility they might become a minority, they did not consider that this does not change the "systemic ways in which dominance and power operate" (Knight, 2008, p. 99). Other scholars have rightly drawn attention to teaching as a relatively "white" occupation, with educators being afraid to discuss race and unaware of how their own white privilege reifies beliefs in individual meritocracy (Dei, 1999; Jacquet, 2008; Solomon et al., 2005, p. 147).

In a survey of public school educators in British Columbia and Ontario, both groups indicated that diversity in their schools denoted the presence of non-white students in classrooms (Jacquet, 2008; Knight, 2008). In this way, "the majority group remains outside the hierarchy of social relations and excludes itself from the politics of difference" (Jacquet, 2008, p. 66). The dominant group is thus constructed as raceless, while visible minorities are the "others" that occupy racialized positions and bodies. This worldview implies that it is only important to teach about diversity and multiculturalism because of the presence of visible minorities, which is highly concerning. Teaching a classroom of all-white students does not mean examinations of

structural inequalities in society should not occur, or racism and discriminatory practices or assumptions are not present. In effect, relegating diversity in a multicultural sense to only racialized students ensures that the norm of whiteness will be maintained and left unscrutinized. It also ensures that diversity will be seen as an issue that individuals, whether educators or students, must deal with only when specific situations arise in order to ensure smooth social interactions, rather than viewing it as part of the structure of a socialization process of inequality (Gerin-Lajoie, 2008, p. 10).

Although many Canadian educators acknowledged diversity and made proud claims celebrating it, many claimed at the same time to be colour-blind (Gerin-Lajoie, 2008). For Knight, this perpetuates the "myth of racelessness or sameness" that so dangerously continues to marginalize non-dominant groups (Knight, 2008, p. 90). This lends itself to deficit models of viewing racialized students' struggles with school as stemming from their class or family backgrounds, which are often discursively tied to race and ethnicity. This approach ignores the structural and historical factors that may be at play, conveniently obscuring issues of marginalization and racism that continue to persist in schools and the wider society.[4] One educator's comment that "our school is like the United Nations" encapsulates this dangerous notion perfectly (Knight, 2008, p. 81).

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[4] It is important to be clear that my argument is not that students who are racialized minorities will struggle simply because of ethnocultural background. Indeed, certain ethnocultural groups tend to do statistically better than dominant groups in educational attainment (see Portes & Zhou, 1993). My point is that all students do not start from an equal place in life, and historically racist policies or systemic racism may impact their educational attainment much more than a student who comes from the dominant group.

2.4.3   The Hidden Curriculum

Schools are complex settings and places of learning where students are schooled in much more than simply the official curriculum. There are tacit and intangible lessons students learn every day about "school norms and values as well as their places in school and social hierarchies" (Cui, 2011-2012, p. 135). The hidden curriculum is the lessons students absorb by way of the unwritten rules, assumptions, and social structures established in the school or classroom. These normative values of "legitimate culture" (Apple, 2004, p. 77) mediate what is taught and learned in profound and complex ways, so that while the official learning outcome may be to identify how all cultures are celebrated in Canada, the hidden curriculum may reinforce notions of "otherness" for certain cultures.

Educators, students, texts, and other classroom objects work simultaneously to construct the learning environment, and students may learn as much from their interactions with each other as they do from their teachers (Bauer, 2015). The values and contexts that all of these actors bring to the pedagogical moment work to create undercurrents of learning which either oppose the formal curriculum or send unintended messages to certain students, often those who are already marginalized. This is why the privileging of whiteness, or masculinity, or heteronormativity, though of course not officially endorsed in the curriculum, may come through strongly in the hidden curriculum (Rahman, 2013). This hidden curriculum is taught alongside the formal curriculum in the way lessons are framed or the questions that are asked or not asked. Despite the formal curriculum, "teachers teach 'who they are,'" and while there may be certain official anti-racist or multicultural policies at the school, everyday interactions between students

and teachers may work to subtly obscure or even supersede these policies in ways that can be

incredibly damaging for racialized or minoritized students (Millington et al., 2008, p. 206).

Despite this not being the explicit goal of the teacher or school or curriculum document, often

students learn more from the "covert" curriculum than from the formal, or overt curriculum

(Slattery, 2013).

2.4.4   Indigeneity: Problematizing its Intersections with the Multicultural Curriculum

Indigeneity has historically been marginalized in schools, both by the formal and

informal curriculum. Although there has long been Indigenous content in the British Columbia

curriculum, it has been limited, often reducing an incredibly diverse sphere of Indigenous

peoples in Canada to a homogenous group with similar ideological and political perspectives, or

to a temporally fixed figure of the pre-contact Indigenous person instead of representing

Indigenous peoples in terms of their lived realities today. Mackey writes that this representation

means "the key features of the story of settler nationhood persists, a story which can only

recognize limited and unthreatening forms of difference" (2002, p. 73). The curriculum has also

failed to take seriously Indigenous ways of knowing and being as legitimate forms of knowledge.

On the other hand, the dominance of settler narratives fills history books with stories of

working the land and the pioneering spirit. Family memories of struggle and sacrifice are used

"to claim status as nation builders, while simultaneously negating the ownership or admission of

participation in the colonial project" (Bertram, 2011, p. 172-173). The common refrain, both in

schools and Canadian society, that Canada was built by immigrants obscures racialized

differences in experiences, muddles the separate, albeit somewhat connected, processes of

colonization and immigration, and crucially, erases Indigenous existence (Sharma, 2011, p. 85-86). In the popular imagination, colonization is often still justified as a takeover of empty land that was free for the taking because Indigenous peoples were seen as one with nature (Mackey, 2002, p. 77).

Canada today thus provides an example of how constructs of the landscape and wilderness as empty, apolitical, and yet imbued with nationhood coalesce around multicultural beliefs to form dominant notions of Canada as a *post*-colonial society. Baldwin writes that in this sense, wilderness and multiculturalism as "inherently" Canadian are mutually comprised to maintain the dominance of white privilege and obscure the profound violence of settler society's impact on Indigenous communities (2009, p. 529). Indeed, wilderness and multiculturalism are often intimately tied together in the Canadian imaginary in order to construct a peaceful land with all its multicultural inhabitants working together in harmony (Baldwin, 2009; Mackey, 2002).

Outdoor education programs designed to encourage a return to nature for Canadian children of the 21st century are often infused with these colonial discourses of empty land and wide open space to be explored, "signifying wilderness and the environment as a white space" which inherently "reproduce[s] colonial ideas of race and space" (McLean, 2013, p. 354). McLean persuasively writes about her experience teaching these programs and the use of liberal notions of individualized solutions to environmental issues that do not engage with a history of "colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy" (2013, p. 357). Without this engagement, wilderness is written as an empty text, free to be occupied by those who wish to use it for whatever reason. Leading children who attend these programs (often with significant race and class privileges) to think critically about how colonialism as a project was and is intimately tied

to resource extraction and the wide-scale genocide of those who already occupied the land can begin to turn a scrutinizing gaze on a system of whiteness that is far from "natural" (McLean, 2013; Preston, 2013).

For Indigenous youth in some Canadian secondary schools, systems of whiteness operate inside their schools that invoke legacies of colonial history as contextualized by the residential school system (Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). Indigenous leaders in Canada have portrayed children's survival of the residential school system, along with every attempt to destroy their language, culture, and sense of identity, as an act of political resistance (De Leeuw, 2009). In a study of urban Canadian schools, Aboriginal young people felt they were targets of surveillance from white teachers, and that teachers' failed attempts to be "colour-blind" contributed to the ways "white privilege is written into the school landscape" to cover the "hidden subtext of race and racism" (Van Ingen & Halas, 2006, p. 392). Histories of erasure and white supremacy were lived realities for these young people.

It is important to note that this curricular context is changing in British Columbia. The new school curricula will be officially rolled out for all subject areas for the 2018-2019 school year, and it includes a deeper focus on Indigenous ways of knowing in all curricular areas at all grade levels. The document *First Peoples Principles of Learning* outlines this focus by highlighting that "learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge" and that it is "embedded in memory, history, and story" (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, learning is recognized as being a holistic process that takes into account oneself, one's community, and one's identity (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2015, p. 1). The document also appears to take an explicitly constructivist and individually situated approach to learning, with a comment on the "reflexive, reflective, experiential, and

relational" nature of learning as well as themes of "connectedness … reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place" (First Nations Education steering Committee, 2015, p. 1).

These are changes that we might be cautiously optimistic about, depending on implementation and engagement on the part of both educators and students. The new curricular integration of Indigenous epistemologies may also represent a way of approaching the tension between a multicultural settler society and territorial acknowledgement in schools, along with colonial violence, and the reconciliation process. For Indigenous students, a stronger sense of belonging can be fostered through the integration of more Indigenous ways of knowing in schools; Rahman found that without this, they may experience conflict between their home identities and the identities they must take on at school (2013). Lawrence remarks that for Indigenous people, "individual identity is always being negotiated *in relation to* collective identity, and *in the face of* an external, colonizing society" (2003, p. 4). Here, "identity is a highly political issue" and students no doubt feel the difficulty of this constant negotiation (Lawrence, 2003, p. 4).

2.4.5   Practical Issues: Institutional Support and Questions of Implementation

At this juncture, it is important to acknowledge that while many educators have intentions of delivering the curricula through critical frameworks and some are successful in doing this, all of them naturally bring their own values, cultural assumptions, and systems of morality to implement the curricula as they interpret it. There is also the issue of support, resources, and training for educators who are tasked with teaching in more critical ways. A lack of professional development support from the British Columbia Ministry of Education in actually implementing

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the multicultural curricula in British Columbia contributes to its uneven delivery precisely because educators do not teach in a vacuum; they work in multiple and diverse local frameworks which include both their own internal values systems as well as the values systems and systems of resource availability in their districts, schools, and classrooms (Wideen & Barnard, 1999; Yan et al., 2009-2010). Teachers in British Columbia report that they are given very little training to integrate multicultural content into their lessons (Jacquet, 2008). In the case of my study, all participants were in one of two classes taught by the same teacher, and this has inevitably coloured their understanding of key concepts. Likewise, many also drew on their past experiences in different Social Studies classrooms where they would have been exposed to other points of view.

Schools and districts often operate as distinct and disparate entities, and might have radically different ways of implementing policy. Although education is a provincial jurisdiction, school districts are relatively autonomous and the delivery of multicultural education is ultimately tied to the local context (Gerin-Lajoie, 2008; Wideen & Barnard, 1999). Furthermore, students bring their own ways of mediating language and learning to the classroom, and might take up multicultural teaching in their own lives in very different ways (Wideen & Barnard, 1999). Educators have long extolled the virtues of a more differentiated and individualized approach to learning with proper funding and support for all players, one that Courage argues would mimic the "harmony jazz" metaphor of multiculturalism in the 21st century (2012, p. 211). Still, as long as curricular policy remains a text written at the highest levels without involving those who are marginalized in the school system, multicultural education will remain unevenly implemented, with practical issues often blocking the way (Wideen & Barnard, 1999).

2.5   Reconceptualizing the Curriculum

I turn now to my framework for deconstructing the British Columbia Social Studies curriculum. My analysis of curricular documents as politically and socially situated is informed by a work that originated in the 1970s that has been called the reconceptualization of curriculum studies. This was a veritable postmodern explosion of theorizing in curriculum that was decidedly not cohesive or singular within the field of education studies (Flinders & Thornton, 2004; Slattery, 2013; Wright, 2000). It represented a movement from a more bureaucratic-focused field, which viewed curricular documents as simply content to be taught, to a theoretical focus, which viewed them as the powerful, value-laden documents they are (Malewski, 2010; Pinar, 1988, 2010). The reconceptualization of curriculum studies was marked by contributions from multiple academic traditions, which established curricula as "historical, political, racial, gendered, phenomenological, autobiographical, aesthetic, theological, and international" (Pinar, 2010, p. 2). This revamping of the field of study is often thought of as an event or even a "historical intervention" (Wright, 2000, p. 8) that, in its successful justification against more traditional forms of curriculum research, established a new normative frame for viewing curricula (Malewski, 2010; Pinar, 1978, 2010).

Specific discourses came about from the reconceptualization movement on multiculturalism in curricula and how these documents often function to reinscribe dominant narratives, values, and white supremacy in a nation such as Canada. Wright emphasizes that much of the discourse in the reconceptualization literature has centered on multiculturalism, with an emphasis on whiteness and race, largely in response to the continued dominance of liberal multicultural paradigms at work in school curricula (2000). The post-reconceptualization era

opens new possibilities to link curriculum studies to other fields such as critical geography and to shift the dialogue towards research that examines privilege and privileged positionalities, not just marginalized positionalities (Malewski, 2010). Others argue that there should be more focus on conflict in society rather than consensus, because by implying that consensus happens easily in democracies, we are obscuring the very real social struggles and conflicts that various groups in society have fought in order to overturn unjust and oppressive laws (Apple, 2004). Only if students understand the non-dominant history behind labour demonstrations, civil rights movements, feminist movements, and if one were to extend this, movements such as Black Lives Matter and Idle No More, will they come to see how struggle and conflict are often the catalysts for change.

Many scholars have written extensively about curriculum as a political tool that is never neutral, and one that supersedes simple descriptions of the paper on which learning outcomes are written, and I firmly situate my perspective on curricula within this framework. Paulo Freire wrote in detail about reflection and thoughtful action creating praxis, or respectful dialogue that is intimately tied up in naming and creating the world (1970). This very act of learning through dialogue about the world was for him, inherently political; facts are not just facts. Following on Freire, Nieto, Bode, Kang, and Raible write that

> Curriculum is understood as the result of collective action undertaken by cultural workers – students, teachers, and others in the community. The theory or practice divide is addressed by grounding curriculum in the lived experience of teachers as well as of students and of the communities they inhabit. (2008, p. 192)

Slattery similarly argues that curriculum is grounded in the situated knowledge we wield as teachers and students and that we must recognize that

> Curriculum development programs in the past have tended to ignore issues of race, gender, and ethnicity because curriculum was seen as something that

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reflected an objectively knowable structure that existed 'out there,' independent of race and gender, and simply waiting to be discovered and memorized by students. (2013, p. 185)

Much of this can be condensed to the questions Flinders and Thornton ask: "What do schools teach, what should they teach, and who should decide? And what beliefs, values, or attitudes are learned from the way classrooms are?" (2004, p. xi). As a framework for my critique of multicultural curricula, I adopt a critical multiculturalism perspective in order to explore why for many students, the answers to the questions above are not mirrored in their own ways of being in the world or lived realities. Indeed, the reconceptualization of curriculum studies has taught us that curriculum is political, that no question is neutral, and that learning is embodied. The possibilities for an emancipatory critical multiculturalism in curriculum are hindered by a hidden curriculum that is often interlinked with an invisible whiteness which privileges certain learners and contributes to the racialization and lack of belonging of "others."

2.6   Critical Pedagogies and Critical Multicultural Education Theory

Critical pedagogy is the style of teaching and learning – knowledge production – in a classroom that can enable critical multicultural education to illuminate the ways school systems perpetuate processes of racialization and privilege (Jacquet, 2008, p. 61). It begins with the premise that no form of education is "politically neutral" (hooks, 1994, p. 37), whether one is teaching from normative perspectives or from alternative perspectives. Hoodfar describes critical pedagogy as "the rejection of the traditional view that classroom instruction is a neutral and objective process removed from the crossroads of power, history, and social context" (1997, p. 211). Critical pedagogy therefore acknowledges and highlights the intersections of historical

processes, hierarchies of power, and social constructs that perpetuate racism in order to "unlearn privilege" (Hoodfar, 1997, p. 213). If teaching is a "performative act" then each act contains within it "space for change, invention, [and] spontaneous shifts" (hooks, 1994, p. 11). In this sense, dedicated educators, with the engagement of their students, have the opportunity to make changes in the context of their everyday decisions and interactions that can effect change, albeit on a small scale.

Educational scholars identify critical multiculturalism as an alternative for teaching and learning that might provide a new way forward to revitalize multicultural education and make it truly emancipatory (Naseem, 2011; Steinberg, 2012; Wright, 2012). Taylor and Hoechsmann argue convincingly from a critical multicultural standpoint that the curriculum should be read as a "racial text that perpetuates racism through the racial organization of knowledge" (2012, p. 317). This kind of text is also present in schools in implicitly and explicitly racialized policies (May, 2012). This "ontological and epistemological hierarchy" that locates "racialized and indigenous knowledges" outside the frame of normative ways of knowing (Taylor & Hoechsmann, 2012, p. 319) subjugates and relegates these knowledges to the margins as objects of curiosity. Critical multiculturalism acts as a challenge to this. It is used to argue for the centering of

> perspectives, lived experiences, intellectual legacies, histories and memories of under-represented, racialized communities … igniting students' appreciation of the complex processes and negative consequences of racism/Euro-supremacy as they operate in interlocking systems of prejudice, discrimination … and privilege. (Taylor & Hoechsmann, 2012, p. 320)

The possibilities for critical multiculturalism to engender agency and alliance-building are explored by Heer. In his paper on media images of both Indo-Canadians and Indigenous peoples, Heer expounds on the possibilities of critical multiculturalism to enact an emancipatory

education by examining the privilege of image creation in the media in order to create agency within and alliance between these two groups (2012, p. 179). This can be construed as representative of Giroux's notion of a borderland for learning, "a site of crossing, negotiation, translation, and dialogue" (1995, p. 121). Through de-centering Eurocentric perspectives and knowledges and learning about Indigenous ways of knowing, students begin to appreciate that all knowledge is situated. They can then gain "a literacy about the politics of one's own location" (Giroux, 1995, p. 121) and explore the borderlands outside of their own location.

Interrogating locations of whiteness and privilege is incredibly important from a critical multiculturalist perspective (Giroux, 1995; Kanpol & McLaren, 1995). Indeed, education that does not fix privileged positions squarely in its gaze "implies that multiculturalism is relevant only to minority groups in order that they may adjust to the social order" (Ghosh, 2011, p. 7). In drawing on postmodernism, critical multicultural scholars construct identity as "fluid, multiple, and complex" and not "fixed, unchanging, and essentialist" (Nieto et al., 2008, p. 177). Living in Canada, a nation with a history of white settler colonialism and continued Euro-Canadian cultural privilege, Nabavi opens up the possibilities for critical multiculturalism to make space for citizenship education to be more inclusive of students with culturally hybrid identities by focusing less on nation-building and more on students' real political voices (2012). I turn now to spatial conceptions of learning, and the role that the relatively recent geographical subdiscipline of children's geographies can have in our analysis of young people's agency to make their voices heard as part of their own education.

2.7   Spatialized Geographies of Learning

In this section, I bring together the concepts of children's geographies and students' embodied experiences of racialization in schools to establish that there is indeed a spatial geography of embodied learning for all students in schools. For some students, the awareness of difference is an everyday reality. For others, it goes unacknowledged. Either way, the concept affects the way students interact and weave their own lived realities into their construction of school spaces (Holloway et al., 2010).

2.7.1   Children's Geographies and Education

There is a large literature in children's geographies[5] regarding the agency of children as political actors in their own right, and Holloway traces this call to give due attention to children's voices to the influence of feminist and post-structural approaches (2014). Jones convincingly argues that children are in a constant state of becoming, and that adults cannot fully assimilate children into known subjects (2008). The unknown subject of the child can be a productive space that is "politically and ethically vital" (Jones, 2008, p. 197). Other contributions to the discussion have provided a counterbalance, arguing that children are not to be conceived of as purely individuals, but also as moving parts in the interdependencies that help buttress their agency:

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[5] Although various scholars give varying age ranges, children's geographies generally refer to both children and youth under the age of 18.

friendships, peer relations, parental influences, and the accompanying identity development (Konstantoni, 2012).

Holloway et al. call for closer linkages between the geographies of children and education in order to understand how children's subjectivities in these spheres of learning might be understood (2010). The theme of children as active boundary crossers within, between, and across school spaces is also present. For example, international students have been theorized not simply as students, but as actors within systems of international study and knowledge creation (Madge, Raghuram, & Noxolo, 2015). This was the case in a study of two classrooms of grade four students, writing letters back and forth to each other over a year's time, actively participated in breaking down 'narratives from the other side' of the U.S.-Mexico border to understand their penpals' sense of home, belonging, and identity (Perez, 2010). This hints at what Bauer calls the in-between spaces of learning in schools, comprising neither the official nor hidden curriculum (2015). These examples of boundary crossing also point to an issue that is increasingly important in a world where students, many of whom have multiple national or ethnicity-related aspects of individual identity, are digital boundary crossers in a globalized world. Wright argues that we cannot just leave multiculturalism defined by methodological nationalism; the global context is as important, if not even more salient, for the framing of multiculturalism in young people's lives (2012; Kunz & Sykes, 2007). Recent methodological appraisals have also considered how we might situate children as (de)constructive actors in the inclusionary and exclusionary processes of creating belonging in school spaces (Bauer, 2015; Konstantoni, 2012).

2.7.2   Embodied Experiences of Racialization

Students' experiences of and participation in processes of racialization are clearly articulated in many studies of how race is constructed in classrooms. A study of Canadian students who were the children of Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong revealed that they felt they had to strike an imperfect and often unsatisfying balance between embodying what it means to be "Canadian" by performing the language, the fashion, and the normative youth culture, while at the same time trying to maintain ties to family and culture (Kobayashi & Preston, 2014). They enacted this positionality often through "othering" newer arrivals from Hong Kong (Kobayashi & Preston, 2014). Nabavi explains this as having to carry "multiple social identities" or being caught between cultures (2012, p. 154). Others have pointed to second-generation young people who feel that they have to fill the gap between their parents and their "Canadian" selves, whatever that might mean (Wong & Simon, 2009).

A study of American students of colour found that many carried essentialized notions of race and internalized racism into their history and language classes (Epstein & Gist, 2015). Racialized minority youth in England used strategies of either making themselves visible to other visible minority peers to create social solidarities in school spaces, or used strategies of invisibility, especially if they could phenotypically "pass" with their white peers in order to obscure their own family histories of migration (Giralt, 2011). Students in the former category tended to feel less of a sense of belonging to their communities and school spaces than did those in the latter (Giralt, 2011). Reitz and Banerjee's study of second-generation visible minorities revealed that the children of immigrants felt less of a sense of belonging, and reported more

discrimination and feelings of vulnerability than their parents did (2007). These children held

expectations for "social acceptance, economic opportunity and equal participation" which they

did not feel they received (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007, p. 3). An earlier study by Portes and Zhou

revealed similar outcomes for the integration of second-generation minority youth (1993). A

study focused on religion and belonging found that second generation children of any religion

have less sense of belonging in Canada than their parents did (Wong & Simon, 2009).

The hidden curriculum is instrumental in reinscribing processes of racialization for

students in British Columbia. In a study of physical education classes in one Vancouver high

school, demonstrations of masculinity on the part of white boys which served to inscribe Chinese

bodies as "other" was the hidden curriculum that perpetuated continued marginalization

(Millington et al., 2008, p. 197). In an analysis of the integration of sub-Saharan African refugees

to schools in Vancouver, students found it very difficult to fit in. They described falling behind

in the their work because they were held back unnecessarily, being targeted as the objects of

racism, feeling like teachers did little to stop it, and having to negotiate the grey area between

standing up for themselves and performing "good" behaviour (Creese et al., 2011).

Processes of segregation in and between schools also create racialized spaces. Thomas'

study of an American secondary school documented the "territoriality of school social spaces"

and the way that crossing the boundaries between them can have consequences for different

bodies (2009, p. 8). These spatial geographies, and the fear for many students of "being caught

'out of racial place'" was central to how they experienced the learning space and the spaces

outside of formal learning sites (Thomas, 2009, p. 9). Unlike the white majority, racialized

students do not always experience the privileges of access to all spaces without consequence;

they are often stereotyped as a group and do not "rise and fall as individuals" (Taylor & Hoechsmann, 2012, p. 318).

Segregation between schools in recent years can often be traced to neoliberal educational regimes. Schools of choice in many jurisdictions in the Global North mean children are allowed to go to the schools they and their parents choose (Quiroz & Lindsay, 2015). This often contributes to uneven geographies of educational opportunity for children, with the race- and class-privileged, attending schools in one neighbourhood while those whose schools have been left behind by "white flight" become underfunded and under-resourced (Quirox & Lindsay, 2015; Yoon, 2016; Zhang, 2011). Yoon convincingly illustrates how Vancouver young people's dominant imaginaries of gendered or racialized school spaces as gang-ridden, filled with crime, or full of bad influences, often determine their school choices, and thus reproduce certain inequities in urban schools (2016). This idea of moral panic (Yoon, 2016) fits the dominant narrative of racialized children in schools: they are "treated as problems without a solution because they are the problem" (Leonardo, 2013, p. 608).

2.8   Conclusion

Multiculturalism policy in Canada was originally envisioned as a way to involve all Canadians – those from all cultures, backgrounds, and walks of life – in building the nation. It was designed to make connections between the "original" settlers (the British and the French) and those who had come more recently. While the Canadian Multiculturalism Act recognized the rights of Aboriginal peoples, multiculturalism policy in Canada has been criticized for obscuring the ongoing colonial violence perpetrated by the settler state against Indigenous peoples.

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Although multiculturalism as a policy has arguably resulted in a modicum of positive social change, it has been widely critiqued from all sides of the political spectrum for failing to enact mutual integration of all Canadians, entrenching racialization and cultural essentialism, and functioning as the management of diversity rather than truly dismantling social inequities. In British Columbia's school system and related formal curricular documents, multiculturalism is represented as synonymous with the valuing and celebrating of various cultures and the acceptance of many kinds of diversity. However, curriculum is not a just a passive document; it is a system of teaching and learning in schools that includes what students learn from their engagement with their peers at school. Systems of intersecting privileges and oppressions deeply impact students in their lived experiences of multiculturalism at school and contribute to the hidden curriculum. Students' embodied experiences of multiculturalism and racialization contextualize and sometimes diverge from, the multicultural curriculum they learn in the classroom.

It is this everyday engagement in the context of multicultural curriculum, this microcosm of the process of multicultural integration in Canada, which is the subject of my interviews with high school secondary students. In the next chapter, I will outline the way I structured these interviews, including my methodological thinking and positionality, in order to explore young peoples' experiences of everyday multiculturalism.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1   "City in the Country"

When driving west on Highway #1 from Vancouver towards Abbotsford, there is a moment when you realize you are no longer in "the city." I do not know where this moment is on a map, but there are two telltale signs that indicate you are entering "the Valley": the smell, and the sudden, stunning view of Mt. Baker in the distance. It is hard to miss either of them. The view fills the whole windshield as the highway crests easily over a hill somewhere between Langley and Abbotsford. The smell generally comes just as suddenly and at about the same time, comprised of chicken manure and a myriad of other odours indicating working farms in the vicinity.

While the smell may be disconcerting to those who do not live there, for most residents, it simply smells of home. However, Abbotsford is far from a plain or simple farming town. Here, berry farms, Sikh temples, the Bible Belt, diverse inhabitants, and small town appeal (despite the growing population) coalesce to form a vibrant place that lives up to the official sign you drive by shortly after the view and the smell hit you: *Abbotsford, City in the Country.*

3.1.1   A Profile of Abbotsford

Although Abbotsford's businesses and indeed, its residents continue to proclaim it as a small town, Abbotsford is a growing city. The Census of 2016 recorded it as a city of just over 141 400 (Statistics Canada, 2017). It is also well known for its diversity, both religiously and ethnoculturally, with both South Asian and European immigrants being some of the city's first

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settlers in the area (Destination B.C. Corp., 2017). Nation-wide, it continues to be a multicultural city with many newcomers: the census metropolitan area of Abbotsford-Mission had the fifth highest percentage of immigrants across all cities in Canada in 2011 at 23.5% (Morency, Malenfant, & MacIsaac, 2017, p. 31). This trend is expected to continue, with the projection that more than half of Abbotsford's population will be either "an immigrant or the child of an immigrant" by 2036 (Morency, et al., 2017, p. 7). Abbotsford-Mission is one of only four cities in Canada included in this projection.

In terms of demographics, Abbotsford's approximately 34 000 newcomers come mostly from Asia (22 000), Europe (8000), and the Americas (3000) (Statistics Canada, 2013). A small number are non-permanent residents, meaning they have either a work or study permit, or have either applied for refugee status or have recently attained it (Statistics Canada, 2013). Out of the 133 000 people in Abbotsford, those who identified as a visible minority on the 2011 census number almost 40 000, with 30 000 of those indicating South Asian ancestry, followed by less than 2000 people in each category identifying as Chinese, Korean, Black, and Southeast Asian (Statistics Canada, 2013). In terms of religious affiliation, 65 000 people in Abbotsford identify as Christian, and 26 000 as Sikh, with all other religions numbering fewer than 2000 people (Statistics Canada, 2013). I turn now to a general profile of the Abbotsford secondary school where I conducted my research.

3.1.2   A Profile of an Abbotsford Secondary School

While Abbotsford has a number of secondary schools, it is still a relatively small district compared to, for example, Vancouver and its 18 high schools. Describing student demographics

for my research site in detail might compromise its anonymity. Therefore, I will necessarily be using less specific descriptors of the school than I would have liked in order to maintain my participants' confidentiality to the greatest extent possible. From now on, I will refer to this school using the pseudonym Valley Secondary School.

Schools and school districts submit yearly reports to the Ministry of Education detailing student population and demographic numbers, graduation rates, and other information every year (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2017). These reports are available to the public and I have taken the following statistics from the 2016/2017 report for Valley Secondary School, where I conducted my research. I have, as stated above, generalized the statistics to protect the confidentiality of my participants. Valley Secondary has a student population between 1000-1500. Most students are permanent residents or citizens, with fewer than 100 being international students. More than 10% of students identify as Aboriginal. Schools and school districts do not collect information on ethnocultural or racial background, although they do have a demographic category entitled language spoken at home. The majority of students at this school speak English at home, with the next most spoken languages being Punjabi, Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish, in no particular order. This mirrors the most spoken languages besides English in Abbotsford households generally (Statistics Canada, 2013).

3.2   Risk, Access, Ethics, and Positionality

3.2.1   Risk and the Ability to Consent

The same dilemma continued to present itself to me throughout this project: the question of where and how to gain access to students who would talk to me about their experience with

multicultural curriculum in their schools and how it affected their interactions with each other. In speaking with other graduate students who had done research in schools, I was warned repeatedly to start early in chipping away at the many layers I would have to go through to be allowed to interview students. This included the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board, the school district, the school, the individual teacher, the parents, and finally, the students themselves.

It seems ironic that the students with whom I wished to speak, in order to privilege their accounts of their life experiences, were effectively silenced until every other adult around them had given consent for them to participate. Only after I navigated the many layers of access could the students give assent to be interviewed. Conversely, many scholars argue that young people, and even children, are very capable of giving full and informed consent for their participation in research, especially if it is not high risk (Schelbe et al., 2015, p. 509). They advocate viewing children as knowledgeable subjects regarding themselves and as most "capable of identifying, analyzing and resolving the problems they face" (Ruiz-Casares & Thompson, 2016, p. 36). Schelbe et al. similarly point to a conception of "children as active agents in constructing and communicating their own realities" (2015, p. 505). If we are to conceive of them as active, and not passive agents, certainly they should be able to give their own consent. However, it is also a reality of doing research with young people in school contexts that various adults and guardians must be consulted before young people themselves. Issues of safety and liability, given that adult researchers often carry the weight of large institutions behind them and the fact that there is a clear power imbalance, must be considered (Schelbe et al., 2015). I therefore adopted the stance throughout the consent and approval process that although legally and formally it was up to the

adults surrounding my participants to give the green or red light, in practice I would treat each interaction with a participant as the litmus test for their personal consent.

3.2.2   The Ethics Approval Process

I submitted my ethics proposal to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board eight months before beginning research. Once approved, I contacted the Abbotsford School District to begin their approval process. After speaking with a counselor at Valley Secondary, I was able to make contact with a Social Studies 11 teacher there who was interested in working with me.

As a certified Social Studies teacher myself, my position as an insider was an asset, and I framed my research to fellow educators at the school using the simple question that had so often preoccupied me during my previous years of teaching secondary school: In the context of multicultural integration in schools, what does the teacher not see or hear outside her classroom? After having been prepared for a "fight" to convince someone to work with me, I was pleasantly surprised when she agreed to the project about ten minutes after meeting me. Upon reflection involving a mental switch back into "teacher mode," I realized that I, and many of my colleagues, probably would have done the same thing.

Many teachers in the public system, and educators generally, are often excited to have "outsiders" work with their students given the limited capacity teachers have to plan lessons, mark, and gather resources while also teaching full time. Teaching is an incredibly high-pressure job, often with no break during the working day. There are many days when teachers feel that the weight of their students' learning is completely on their shoulders, and any opportunity to lighten the load with an outside learning experience represents a reprieve. This teacher was highly

supportive and pleased at the opportunity for her students, who by Grade 11 are already thinking about post-secondary options, to experience what it is like to be part of a research project at the university level.

3.2.3   A Unique Position

In opposition to emphasizing my insider status to gain access to my research site, I originally thought that students who I interviewed would be more likely to talk to an outsider about how multicultural curriculum impacts their peer-to-peer interactions. I did not plan on telling them I was also a teacher because students tend to see teachers as automatic authority figures and as much older than them, with a gulf of assumed life experience between them and their teachers. While these are not necessarily false impressions, I had thought that simply being a researcher would leave me more freedom to build rapport on a level that involved at least slightly less of a power imbalance. This plan was impeded before I met them, as their teacher informed them I had been a Social Studies teacher in the past, thinking it would make them feel more comfortable with me as a "knowable" subject. Perhaps her intent was achieved and perhaps it was not; I do know that while they may have known I was a teacher at the start of the project, our one-on-one interviews allowed me to, at the very least, complicate this limited identity fairly quickly.

While there may have been drawbacks to students' knowledge of my identity as a teacher, I have no doubt that my well-practiced skills of relating to young people and developing rapport, developed over years of working at summer day camps and then as a teacher, aided in my ability to quickly establish my presence as non-threatening, and as non-authoritative as

possible. Still, I acknowledged the possibility that many would still be intimidated by me, and I tried to compensate in a few ways. Superficially, I dressed even "younger" than I would have as a teacher, in bright colours and casual, more trendy clothes. Although I made sure not to supersede the professionalism of the setting, I felt freer to dress as I wanted than I would have if I had worked there.

On a deeper level, I tried to be cognizant of my position as a highly educated white female teacher who would be interviewing 15- and 16-year-olds, some of whom might have had unpleasant experiences with adults who looked and sounded like me (Van Ingen & Halas, 2006). I knew I carried the weight and power that white teachers backed by a historically and still often systemically racist and assimilationist system do, especially given that I would be conducting interviews in the school setting itself. At times I was afraid that this power imbalance would be impossible to critically navigate in any meaningful way. I tried to build a sense of empathy with students who had experienced racialized discrimination, not through a kind of false sympathy or momentary empathy, as Rollock warns against in cases of white researchers interviewing racialized participants, but through openly listening to their experiences and letting their emotions towards the experience guide the interview (2013). I was aware that I would quite possibly never know how much my position as a white researcher would affect what both white and racialized students felt comfortable telling me. Rollock writes thoughtfully about her experience as a black researcher interviewing black parents about their school-age children (2013). Many told her that if she had been a white researcher, they would have modified their political positions to appear more "neutral" about race (Rollock, 2013), and I cannot deny this may have been the case for some of my participants as well.

As much as possible, I tried to conduct a daily "critical interrogation of [my] role in replicating power dynamics" (Solomon et al., 2005, p. 158). I did this by reflecting frequently during my fieldwork and considering how I had framed questions, what lines of inquiry had emerged and what had not, and the kinds of non-verbal cues I was getting from most of my participants. I also continued to place verbal emphasis in interviews on the importance and prominence of the students' voices themselves and their expertise to guide my interviews. As much as I would like to believe that these steps freed my participants to speak their minds, this is not necessarily the case.

> White researchers, therefore, are not neutral enquirers in conversations about race. They sit within and are part of a wider system of race inequity characterised by performances of privilege, power and entitlement. (Rollock, 2013, p. 500)

As a researcher positioned squarely within the trifecta Rollock refers to, the way I conducted my chosen methodology of semi-structured interviews and established consent was of utmost importance, and I turn to this now.

3.3   Methods and Participants

My participants were 30 students enrolled in Social Studies 11, recruited from two separate classes taught by the same teacher in the fall of 2016 at Valley Secondary School. It is worth noting that I interviewed 30 students at one school in a specific spatio-temporal context. There are close to 4000 young people aged 15-16 in Abbotsford (Statistics Canada, 2013), so this study is by no means meant to be representative. Still, I argue it is significant as a close case study of the process of multicultural integration in one school that might serve to illuminate wider processes at play in other schools in the city of Abbotsford, if not other districts, too.

I conducted a short classroom visit in early September 2016 with each of the two classes I aimed to recruit from. I introduced myself to students and told them a little bit about my research, giving them examples of questions they might be asked in the interview if they chose to participate. It was obvious the teacher had prepared the students for my visit, giving them some background and talking to them about the opportunity. At the end of both five-minute sessions when I asked if anyone had questions, multiple hands flew into the air asking me things such as "Will we be famous?" and "Will we get to miss class?" and "Why do you want to talk to *us*?" I was happy to see so much interest, and the classroom teacher was immensely helpful in collecting consent and assent forms on my behalf. Without her facilitation, this project may have turned out very differently for any number of reasons. I may have had far fewer participants, and they may have had reduced or different things to say about the topics I was interested in.

At the beginning of my interviews with each participant, I asked them to fill out a brief confidential survey with self-identified demographic information. In order to allow for students to self-identify, the survey was constructed of fill-in-the-blank questions that asked for their gender, age, place of birth, and language(s) spoken at home. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the answers from the 30 students interviewed.

Table 3.1 Summary of participants' demographic data

Gender	
Female	14
Male	16
Age	
15-16 yrs	28
17 yrs	1
18 yrs	1

Place of Birth	
Canada	22
Asia	5
Europe	2
United States	1
Languages Spoken at Home	
English	22
Other Languages[6]	8

I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each student. The amount of time spent in each interview varied depending on how much students had to say, but on average, the first round of interviews was approximately 20-30 minutes per student, and the second round was anywhere from less than 10 minutes to the full 30 minutes in a few cases. My interviews were based on a set of predetermined questions (see Appendix A), but I allowed the interview to flow naturally and followed new lines of inquiry depending on what participants told me (Luker, 2008). Contrary to firm ideas about the strict boundaries between interviewer and interviewee (Weiss, 1994), I adopted Oakley's stance that the two cannot be justifiably separated by a barrier that only allows the one-way flow of emotions, ideas, recollections, and knowledge (1981). Rather, I drew on Cobern's description of constructivism in education (1993)[7] to conceptualize the process of interviewing as the mutual construction of knowledge and the exchange of ideas, led in this case by students. Here, I was not the teacher but the student, although in a few cases,

[6] These eight students described mono-, bi-, or multilingual households of origin, with Punjabi, Mandarin, French, Korean, Spanish, and Chinese mentioned as additional languages (this profile is reflective of the overall school demographics in terms of language spoken at home)

[7] Cobern argues in the constructivist tradition that students are not blank slates, but that they construct new knowledge that is "built on prior knowledge" and is "personally meaningful" (1993, p. 4, 7).

students stopped to clarify factual (often historical) information with me, and I would argue their knowledge of my teaching background was in this case an asset. They could fact-check and then quickly move on with their explanation.

Interview questions were centered on issues of belonging, identity negotiation, and perceptions of multiculturalism, specifically within the context of peer interactions outside the classroom. My ultimate goal during the interview process was to ask students about their conceptions of themselves in relation to Canada, their school communities, and the way their everyday interactions with their friends and peers played out at school in relation to culture and race. As much as possible, I tried to accomplish this in a conversational way that reduced pressure on the students and made it feel less like a one-way interview interrogation of sorts.

As I briefly discussed earlier, ongoing and informed consent from participants was a key part of this process. I started each interview by asking the student how his or her day was going as we walked down the hall to our interview space. Most interviews took place just before lunch or in the afternoon during the students' Social Studies 11 block, and students were happy to share the details of their morning with me. In two minute conversations, I learned about everything from one student's volunteer work at a local hospital, to another's physical education fieldtrip to the driving range, to another's love of the early English literature classic *Beowulf*, to another's self-described obsession with her pet walking stick bugs. I used these introductory conversations to begin developing rapport, gauge energy levels, talk about personal interests, and pick up on the relevant examples I could draw on during the interview that would make sense in students' life contexts. I also used these conversations to try and mitigate as much as possible that we were interviewing in non-neutral school spaces: the office (in one case), the counseling centre (in several cases), and usually, various side room storage spaces attached to the main

office. Anderson and Jones argue that the "where" of method is vital in improving access to the power structures, identities, interdependencies, and experiences of agency that intersect the lived realities of children and youth (2009, p. 292). Given that the "where" of my methodology in this case was traditionally an adult-dominated space in terms of who has final authority and say, the interviews themselves can be viewed as a format in which students could assert a sense of agency and final say. Still, the space has implications for the data I was able to gather. Had I interviewed participants outside of the school space, or outside of school hours, the content of our conversations may have been different. Everything from the contents of their thoughts, to the perspectives they spoke from may have been altered.

I let students know that they could ask me questions at any time, and that this was not a test or a search for the "right" answers (Schelbe et al, 2015, p. 510). I made it very clear to the students that I would not be discussing any of their answers with their teacher during the time they were in her class, and I kept this promise throughout the process. I briefly reviewed what we were going to talk about, and checked again for verbal consent that I could record the interview. Secondary school students lead busy lives, and between sports, homework, music, theatre, religious, social, and other activities, some students had forgotten why they were being interviewed. In these cases, I reviewed with them who I was, why I was doing this research, and what they might contribute to my project before asking if they had questions and if they still felt comfortable proceeding. As Schelbe et al. argue, and as teachers in classrooms do everyday, it was imperative to continue checking for understanding and being "sensitive to youths' subtle, non-verbal expressions of discomfort or need for clarification" (2015, p. 513). I often checked in with students, and sometimes skipped questions if I could tell they were uncomfortable or wanted to move on.

Gaining access to the most "accurate" information on children's lived realities is often contingent on securing engaged and voluntary trust (Ruiz-Casares & Thompson, 2016). In interviews on difficult subjects such as race and belonging at schools, young people should be positioned as experts best able to talk about their lives in a relaxed, open interview (Bhana & Pattman, 2010). As a teacher I was well suited to differentiate questions and modify the ongoing verbal consent process as needed for students of varying abilities and learning styles (Schelbe et al., 2015). In several interviews, students voluntarily told me they were not sure what multiculturalism meant, or that they had a learning support block at school.[8] I was able to quickly rephrase and reframe questions, sometimes giving examples or definitions related to the Social Studies 11 curriculum to increase contextual clues, without making participants feel stupid or inadequate. The fear of being unable to answer a question posed by an adult in a school setting is very real and triggers anxiety for many students, and I did not want to contribute to any more anxiety around this issue.

I thanked students at the end of each first round interview and in continuing with my commitment to engaged and ongoing consent, asked if they would be willing to speak with me again in a few weeks on similar topics. All 30 students agreed to participate in a second interview with me, and I was able to interview all 30 for a second time. It is impossible to know what each student's motivation for this was. Likely, some enjoyed missing part of their Social Studies block. Others mentioned in the first round of interviews that they had never really thought about the things I was asking before, and enjoyed the chance to reflect and speak their minds. The classroom teacher's enthusiasm for the project definitely helped, as well as the fact

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[8] A learning support block is a general term for a class during the school day where students with varied learning challenges receive extra support for their academic classes.

that I was there three days a week for six weeks; if a certain student was absent one day, I could go on to the next and come back to the missed interview later.

3.4   Theoretical Framework

In adopting my stance for beginning to understand what participants would tell me and how I would position myself as an interviewer at the school, I drew on the notion of situated knowledge in the feminist tradition. I would not be searching for an objective and concrete "Truth," but I would seek out the "truths" that participants held regarding their everyday lives. Harding's standpoint theory was instructive for me to remember, focusing on how institutions such as schools are fraught with hierarchies of intersecting knowledge and power and that I would need to attempt to disrupt these hierarchies to my greatest ability in order to build trust and establish students as the experts (2003). This research, therefore, would involve multiple modes of expertise. My participants' expertise came in the form of being the ones to narrate their daily experiences and feelings for me. My expertise would become apparent in the manner in which I chose to interpret participants' accounts of their experiences. This act of interpretation would not be without its perils and also comes with a certain power to speak for a population. In the chapters to come, I have done my best to use direct quotations where appropriate to capture students' stories as they were told to me.

Smith argues that in the relationship between the observer and the observed, the observer constructs the social reality, or organizes the social life of the observed using her own cultural assumptions (1987). I reflected on these ideas to consider how my process of making sense of the world might intersect with and obscure the ways young people experience belonging and

identity formation (Smith, 1987). While children and young people need to be characterized as actors with agency, reflexive researchers must also acknowledge the "messiness and fallibility" of work with young people (Horton, Kraftl, & Tucker, 2008, p. 341). In this sense, I had to acknowledge that as an adult, I could not fully know or capture the "otherness" of youth (Jones, 2008). I decided that in-depth, semi-structured interviews would be the best way to allow students' voices to shine while approaching a deeper level of understanding of participants' complex life experiences that would be my best chance of working within some of the limitations and considerations I have described.

3.5   Analysis of Interviews

In my wish to highlight students' life experiences as they articulated them, I did not begin the interview process with any preconceived codes. After both rounds of interviews were complete, I transcribed all sixty interviews and then read through them, making notes on key words or phrases that I eventually collated into a list of approximately ten codes. I manually colour-coded each interview for these themes and then grouped quotes on each theme or code from all interviews together in individual documents for easier reference. As I worked through this process, I was reminded by the apparent contradictions in many of the interviews that young people are at a very particular time in their identity formation, one in which they are processing their individual experiences and forming their own unique opinions. In several instances, I observed students saying one thing one day, and something opposite to that the next, or making a gesture that seemingly opposed their outward opinion.

Pugh explains that these apparent contradictions during in-depth interviews can be moments of significance for the researcher in "mining" for deeper-held convictions or beliefs that sit below the surface. They

> stem from what cognitive culturalists might consider different levels of consciousness fighting each other for dominance, where one notion seems to bubble forth despite the efforts of the reasonable, honorable self to suppress it. This kind of bubbling-forth moment happens all the time in in-depth interviews, and it is, I would argue, interpretive gold. (2013, p. 57)

Both the surface level, so-called "honourable" belief systems and the deeper level emotions that "bubble forth," if taken together, can illuminate much about the interviewee's worldview and particular life experiences (Pugh, 2013). I came across several of these moments in my interviews and interview transcripts, and have found they are especially helpful in discerning how students do the "boundary work" (Lamont & Swidler, 2014, p. 161) that is particularly instructive for understanding processes of difference-making among students in school spaces.

The notion of using "emplaced techniques" to interview young people takes the spaces they inhabit into account in terms of what kind of information or storytelling the interviewer will be party to; unsurprisingly, young people interviewed in classrooms are far less prone to talk about their inner thoughts (Anderson & Jones, 2009, p. 299). In the case of my research, I knew that staying within school spaces to interview students would doubtless affect what they would say. I acknowledge, even think it likely, that because my interviews were in school spaces and focused on school issues, the emphasis placed on how much schools, teachers, and peers affect students' uptake of multiculturalism is perhaps exaggerated. Although I have largely kept my analysis in the chapters that follow to the school experience, I acknowledge that students' outside

environments – their homes, families, media usage, and engagement with popular culture –
absolutely affect their uptake of multicultural integration at school.

3.6   A Chance to Reflect

Perhaps one of the most rewarding parts of the interview process came at the end of the
second round of interviews, once the "official" interview was over. I asked each participant if
they had any questions for me, and I was pleasantly surprised by the number of students who did.
Many wanted to know about my research process. One student asked how this was going for me
and whether I was finding it interesting, before going on to say she wanted to do something like
this eventually. A very funny interaction with another student centered on how many pages my
thesis would be, how long it would take to write, and exactly how many paragraphs would go on
each page before he exclaimed that he would never ever do something like this. Still others
asked, "Why are you doing this again?" and wanted to know if their noteworthy quotes would
appear in the final product. When I assured one student that any identifying information would
be changed, he seemed disappointed that his thoughtful responses would not be attributed to him
personally.

Others simply expressed that they liked talking about these issues and seemed flattered
when I told them how helpful they had been. One student, clearly concerned about his
contribution, asked if his answers were of any help at all. I reassured him that all responses were
helpful to my research, and that I enjoyed chatting with him because one can never be "wrong"
when it comes to talking about one's own life. As he was the first person I finished interviewing
during the second round, I adapted my response to him for each student because I thought it was

important, given their generosity in sharing with me, to make them all feel valued and validated in their own life experiences. Ultimately, these final questions from participants were a way for me to engage in ongoing reflection on my position as a researcher, and to continually adjust my questions or mannerisms if need be. In the next chapter, I delve into students' life experiences as they intersected with multiculturalism.

Chapter 4: "The Sticky Stuff of Canadian Identity"

4.1 Introduction

> If I did not have my parents I wouldn't know, like I wouldn't know how to live. Like they've set the guideline of what to do, and like how to do it and when to do it, right … So I'd say a lot of my identity is based on my parents.
>
> So like even like the smallest things I do are from my parents, like my dad, like he's a very good dancer, right, and I have the same type of rhythm and my mom, my mom did the drums, and I have a good rhythm and stuff, right. – Matthew

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which participants' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and their family histories of movement – students' roots as well as the ways they have come to be in this place – contextualize aspects of their identity formation. In Chapter 1, I identified three research questions that guided my interviews with participants and the themes that subsequently emerged from them (see p. 6). Now, I revisit the first question:

> How do students conceive of multiculturalism in Canada and multicultural curriculum? In what ways can these understandings contextualize their identity formation?

My aim in this chapter is not to draw causal links between multiculturalism and identity formation in young people, nor to examine the full range of factors, both internal and external, that make up one's identity formation process. To do so would constitute a different project. Instead, I argue that student conceptions of multiculturalism and certain aspects of their identity formation are mutually constitutive processes that contextualize each other. I start by examining participant's responses to my inquiries about multiculturalism on multiple scales, including the ways they connected Indigenous culture and history to multiculturalism, and then continue to their family histories. As I move through students' stories of both Indigenous and migrant family

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backgrounds, I consider how these stories are manifest in their personal identities, as well as how they circle back to their definitions of multiculturalism in this country.

Participants' basic understandings of multiculturalism seemed to change depending on scale. When asked about multiculturalism on the national level, they talked about it as a concept based most closely on the fundamental rights outlined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When asked to describe what multiculturalism looks like in their school, students outlined English Language Learner programs for newcomers, international student exchanges, and specific programs for First Nations students. However, when asked about their Social Studies classes, students described multiculturalism in terms of content – units based on groups, people, and historical events – that defined for them what multiculturalism meant in a more academic sense.

Although I will return to how students contested the formal multicultural curriculum in Chapter 5, the focus in this chapter is on how students' identities also seemed to be influenced by histories of family migration and integration that they bring into the multicultural learning space of the school. I take my understanding of identity in this context of multiculturalism and family histories from Lawrence, who takes a holistic view of identity to mean something that is always changing and that, crucially, is "relational, juxtaposed with others' identities" (2003, p. 4). Ultimately, I conclude that multiculturalism and many of my participants' identities are intertwined and continue to constitute "the sticky stuff of Canadian identity" (Wright, 2012, p. 111).

4.2 "Harmony" and "Equality": Students' General Conceptions of Multiculturalism

I began my interviews with students by asking them to define multiculturalism for me, in whatever way made sense to them. I was surprised by the similarity of responses, especially in considering that the Social Studies teachers I spoke with at Valley Secondary said they did not tend to use the word very much. Still, students' familiarity with the term likely is born of the ubiquity of its usage in the Canadian context, as well as the fact that, according to their teacher, they had just completed a unit on the federal government and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Every single student except one – an international student who had only been here a short time – was able to give a definition for the term. Although they varied in specific descriptors, in general, students described variations on the theme of all cultures being welcome to express what they believe, regardless of skin colour, ethnicity, religion, politics, sexuality, language, or gender. Many students also used certain words to describe the state of multiculturalism in Canada: "equality," "coexist," "live together," "accepting," "sharing culture," and "harmony." These definitions were generally located squarely within the politics of liberal multiculturalism in Canada (Naseem, 2011; Steinberg, 2012).

Still, some students gave answers that show a level of consideration beyond surface-level definitions or an allusion to the various perspectives on multiculturalism at work in Canadian communities, as I discussed in Chapter 2. For Matthew, multiculturalism hearkened to Nabavi's use of Massey's concept of "roots" and "routes" in that a person's origins, along with their physical and metaphorical journey to this place, are equally important (as cited in Nabavi, 2012,

p. 156). He said multiculturalism is "coming from different backgrounds, 'cause nobody just comes from one place, everybody is like from different parts of the world." In this case, the student's own point of view on his roots, along with his route to Canada, entered into the equation. In explaining his framework, he hinted at the idea that "nobody" is from only "one place"; this could be taken to mean that no two people, despite having the same roots, share the same route or life journey.

In another case, Olivia cited the declaration contained within the 1985 Canadian Multiculturalism Act of the right to preserve and uphold one's culture along with fully participating in Canadian culture: "you've all come together in one country and you're not, when you come to this country you're not changed, you're not influenced to be something different, you can be like part of a country, but you can still have the cultures of like, your own ideals." Heather clarified that multiculturalism goes beyond simply accepting all cultures and towards "embracing them, like not just accepting them but supporting them." She followed this with a conversation in which she was critical of why only certain Christian holidays are part of the school calendar instead of including Sikh ones as well.

In the case of Min-jun, who was still a newcomer of one and a half months, multiculturalism also had a global element. He stated that "it's more about getting to know each other more and kind of … like globalization … We can actually interact even though we have different colours of skins and eyes but we can communicate with body languages." For him, both the experience of growing up in another country and the experience of adapting to a new place produced a perspective of multiculturalism focused on overcoming barriers such as language and culture to communicate in different ways (Nabavi, 2012).

4.3 Participants' Perspectives on Multiculturalism in Social Studies 11

Although most students clearly defined and understood hegemonic liberal multiculturalism in Canada today at the conceptual level, when it came to their Social Studies classes, students most often mentioned content rather than conceptual frameworks. Despite the reconceptualization movement discussed in Chapter 2, in which curriculum came to be seen as a framework document rife with power and politics, and despite many educators' recent attempts to emphasize skill-building rather than content-loading, students continue to view curriculum as content, mostly concerning minority ethnic groups. Steinberg writes that this dominance of "other" ethnic groups in the curricula, and the invisible positioning of white ethnic groups as the norm within and outside of the curricula, reinforces the falsity of implying that "ethnicity does not influence the identities and lifestyles of whites" (Steinberg, 2012, p. 349-350). Many examples from the Social Studies 11 curriculum support this assertion, starting with its basic assumption about multiculturalism being the celebration and study of the cultures of racialized minorities.

Many participants mentioned a long list of things in response to how they saw multiculturalism as present in the Social Studies 11 curriculum (with some additions from Grades 9 & 10): a sampling of "other" cultures and religions in each unit; the politics of British Columbia and Canada; Asian immigrants and past racism, such as the Head Tax and exploitation of workers on the Canadian Pacific Railway; the Komagata Maru incident and racist immigration policies; historical figures such as Louis Riel and Emily Carr; the notion of Canada as being built by immigrants; the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and so on.

4.3.1 Indigeneity and Perceived Intersections with Multiculturalism

Above all, the most commonly mentioned response, discussed by fifty percent of interviewees, was that learning about Indigenous peoples constituted the majority of multiculturalism in the curriculum. I have therefore included Indigenous issues in this discussion of multiculturalism in Social Studies 11 because students themselves portrayed it as part of the multicultural curriculum. This, of course, is in tension with the often-fraught relations between official government adherence to celebratory multiculturalism and Indigenous groups' rightful arguments for numerous rights issues. Included in this is the notion that Indigenous people are not simply one homogenous group within the multiple cultures that make up multiculturalism (Mackey, 2002), but that they, as First Peoples, stand outside of relatively recent settler colonial attempts to manage diversity in the form of multicultural policy.

While students did seem to amalgamate Indigenous issues together with multiculturalism, they also appeared to have a strong grasp on current movements to, at the very least, spread awareness of the abuses of residential schools, and colonialism more generally. Most participants used the terms Aboriginal and not Indigenous, but they recognized and used proper terminology for things such as assimilationist and incredibly violent colonial policies that resulted in genocide and the residential school system, lost culture and attempts to regain it, and the fact that Indigenous people were "here first." One student pointedly remarked that most textbooks are still written from a settler point of view, with very little content featuring Indigenous perspectives.

More in-depth student comments show a wide range in understanding:

We respect the land that we're on, the native land that we're on. – Lucas

We give them the benefits they deserve for what we did to them when we first came to Canada. – Mark

We have "Orange Shirt Day to respect the First Nations being forced into residential schools." – Mark

Well like … how we mistreated them and stuff, and now we're sort of getting back on track and trying to fix things with them, same with all the other cultures that we've abused over the past years. – Antonio

We have wronged them and should try to correct that. – Connor

Although I might argue that the remarks above show a modicum of "progress" in how Indigenous issues are being understood and taken up by students, they also continue to frame the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples as one that can be rectified with commemorative days, increased respect, and benefits of all kinds. Chan illuminates this positioning of mending and rectifying past mistakes through government policies of official apology and redress (2012). In the implementation of these policies, "state narratives [become] little more than fetishes that attempt to shrink the site of memory to specific locales and events such as commemorative museums and foundations" (Chan, 2012, p. 137). The way that these federal policies of redress and apology filter down to schools and curricula is instructive for analyzing how students speak about attempts to atone for "past" injustices. Similar to the liberal Social Studies multicultural curriculum the students grew up with, their belief in the power of straightforward actions in the present to make things right is complicated by a more critical perspective. This critique rightly takes into account the ongoing colonial violence of the settler state and the non-viability of singular apologies alone in their ability to make any systemic change.

As seen in the previous comments, participants did show a commitment to speaking somewhat honestly about the atrocities committed by the colonial state, although this was

tempered by their temporal reduction of this violence to the past. Many who identified as coming from a European or white background used the general term "we" followed by a verb to show group ownership of the actions committed, and also showed commitment to the need to reconcile with Indigenous peoples for these atrocities, but not a single participant spoke about ongoing colonial violence. This is perhaps mirrored by the Truth and Reconciliation process in Canada: while awareness has been raised among the general populace, there seems to be a commonly held belief that it will allow for society as a whole to move on, while inequalities, systemic racism, and seemingly fundamental issues such as clean drinking water and access to healthcare are still unresolved for many Indigenous communities.

4.4   Stories of Indigeneity

After asking about conceptions of multiculturalism, I also inquired about participants' family stories to begin to understand how and where they located themselves within a multicultural Canada. In keeping with Razack (1998) and hooks' (1994) emphasis on storytelling to illuminate student voices, I asked students to share their family histories by positing these open-ended questions: Can you tell me a little bit about your family background? How did you come to be in this place? I decided on this specific wording because I did not want to assume anything about my participants, and wanted to leave their family narratives up to them to tell. Several students had stories of Indigenous ancestors, and all rooted these within "Canadian" culture or even celebrations of multiculturalism at school.

Interestingly enough, those who spoke of Indigenous ancestry often had less information about it than they wanted, but still constructed it as an important part of their identity. Steven's

statement about his ancestry shows this uncertainty: "I have a very small percent 'cause my grandpa's grandma is full Aboriginal and then as it went down it's kinda mixed… Unfortunately I have no way of proving it though." He went on to say that he was proud of the art and culture of his heritage, and felt validated that there had been a ceremony for the whole student body to raise a totem pole at his school several weeks before the interview. This is in line with Rahman's notion that students with Indigenous heritage tend to feel more strongly connected to school when cultural traditions are incorporated into school life (2013). Steven felt it had contributed to his own knowledge base and feeling of pride in this being included as an official part of the school-wide curricula. The teacher in the classroom added that the administration had started to carry out territorial acknowledgement at the beginning of assemblies, and that it was a change for many. However, based on the feeling I sensed from students, they seemed to readily accept it or at least were aware of the need to recognize it.

Several other students had similar stories of knowing they had Indigenous ancestry, but not knowing many details. Lawrence writes that this is the case for thousands of people who consider themselves Indigenous or have Indigenous ancestry in Canada (2003). As a result of colonial laws such as the Indian Act that regulated who could and could not be considered "Indian," often depending on arbitrary logics of blood quantum or gendered marriage rules concerning who was allowed to live on reserve after marriage, many living in Canada have lost the official proof of their ancestry (Lawrence, 2003).

In two cases, stories of Indigenous family members took on the character of what Dion calls "(Re)telling to Disrupt," in which concretized notions of Indigenous people being relics of the past or continuing to exist outside of modern society are disrupted (2004). These two participants asserted that it was, in fact, Indigenous cultural traditions and stories of first contact

that defined Canadian values in the first place. These responses surprised me, which Dion

predicts is often the positive result of these disruptions. These stories allow for new perspectives

to come forth, and reinforce the knowledge that there are no monolithic Indigenous beliefs held

by all Indigenous people. Elizabeth, who identified as part Ojibway, argued that Canadian values

were born when settlers first came to North America.

> Aboriginal people were here first, right, this was their land, and then when Europeans and explorers came in … the Aboriginal people, they were really accepting of them and they helped them build communities … so I just feel like they were the ones who set the standard I guess … they set the standard of like umm Canadian ideals, Canadian values of like being open.

Here, the colonial narrative of empty, "uncivilized" land to be conquered along with its

inhabitants is turned on its head, and so the civilization that already existed here welcomed the

newcomers in, just as Elizabeth perceived Canada does for newcomers today. For Brooke, who

had grown up with Aboriginal family members, it was not until she mentioned the phrase

"Canadian Lifestyle" that she included her own Indigenous family background in her story of

how she came to define herself. When asked how she saw this cultural background as fitting into

her identity as a Canadian, she said,

> I'd see it as part of Canada just because I mean like, they were here first and everything, and my grandma and like her mom and everything have always been like follow that kind of native tradition for certain things, like even if it's just food or something like that.

In this case, although cultural family traditions may sometimes simply consist of food, this is still

asserted as a central part of Canada, and an important tradition to maintain.

4.5   Stories of Migration

In students' stories of their family members migrating to Canada from elsewhere, I heard about how students located themselves in many "places" within the multicultural milieu that is Canada. In the wide-ranging and often lengthy answers they gave to my original question of how they came to be in this place, most students seemed incredibly excited and proud to talk about their family stories of migration. Many participants also made clear earlier in the interviews when I asked about multiculturalism that they had learned about it long before Social Studies 11; their offhanded, almost dismissive responses were simply that it was present in their families and they had grown up with it. Conceptions of multiculturalism and what it means to come from elsewhere often coincided and were represented in the way students' included themselves in these stories. Almost a third of participants themselves had experiences of migration (temporary or permanent), or continued to bring the experiences of their parents or grandparents to bear on the ways they conceptualized multiculturalism and diversity within their learning space and in relation to their own identity. Only two students knew nothing about their family histories of immigration, and others mentioned they knew more because they had done projects on their family stories of migration in previous Social Studies classes. Reasons for migration across generations included searching for a better life, escaping war, moving for economic reasons, dodging the draft, adoption, and most simply, for more freedom and education.

Participants represented a multitude of aspects of multiculturalism and migration in their stories, and the subtle ways these impacted on their own identity formation or the way they viewed themselves as a part of a multicultural Canada. Some participants spoke of the

integration process, and how challenging it is to move to a new country. Alicia detailed the way

her mom came first to Canada from Central America, her dad moved to the United States from

Central America, and her mom was finally able to sponsor her dad to come to Canada. Aman

detailed his grandparents' experience in coming from India.

> When they came from like India to Canada, they were, they didn't know a lot of English or anything so … the people that were here, in Canada I would say, the Canadians, they were polite and everything, they listened to their culture, and they kind of shared back and forth and a bond was created.

> … Plus they didn't have just all good experiences, there were bad experiences as well, so they didn't, they didn't want for me to give someone a bad experience.

In this case, Aman's grandparents' experiences of integration, which was positive but also

included negative experiences, impacts directly on how he treats others who are newcomers.

For some second-generation participants, their parents had largely had positive

experiences, and it had made an impact on their conception of Canada. Two students spoke of

how their parents were "accepted very well" (Liam) and that "people try to include you here in

Canada" (Maria). For others, there was perhaps more ambiguity surrounding personal Canadian

identity, or even a lack of this feeling. When asked to what extent she felt Canadian, Alicia

countered that even though she was born here, she felt more at home when she visited her

parents' birth countries in Central America than she did in Canada. When asked how strongly he

felt Canadian, Kunle replied,

> I think it's 50-50. 'Cause I still have some of that, like everywhere you go, like if you go to events, it's African based, like everyone's African, Nigerian and umm then when I'm at school and people ask me where I'm from I'm like Canada. 'Cause I like Canada.

In a subsequent exchange during our second interview a few weeks later, Kunle posed a question

about integration across different generations, describing how his father continued to maintain

the mindset of his place of birth. The integration process was ongoing in terms of this student's

personal identity, as seen in the quote above, as well as in terms of how he saw his family, as seen below.

> Do you think it's … if you're first immigrant or second? 'Cause like my dad … he is still African, but he moved to England, but he's basically 100% African, 'cause everything he does is based on Africa and we have to work hard to change him just a little bit, just give us a little bit of leeway.

For Devonte, his parents' experiences of racism in school when they were growing up had a profound influence on how he views school. He saw any issues he continues to face as minor compared to what his parents went through: "All of our problems was kids just kids being kids, so they like, my parents educated me on like what used to happen." Devonte's family narrative, of his grandparents' emigration from Jamaica to Canada in search of "a better life for their kids," had made him deeply grateful he did not have to face the same hardships.

Some participants linked leisure activities and religious events they attend with their families now to their family histories. Lucas's parents were from different cultures, and this was the reason that they had taken him to see many different religious ceremonies at different houses of worship over the years. In regards to what he called his multicultural family, he said "I don't really separate them anymore, it's just one big thing." Lucas linked his exposure to different cultural traditions in his own family with his feeling of ease in being around many different religious traditions. Joshua said much the same thing of his experience growing up with two cultures and religious traditions: "I like to be like sort of involved in both and both religions, both cultures." While Heather's ancestors had migrated to Canada many generations ago, she linked her family's sponsoring of a Syrian refugee family, as well as her volunteer experience at a refugee camp in Turkey the previous summer, to her great-grandparents. They had long ago assisted German refugees in coming to Canada. She said of this family tradition: "I guess there is

that feeling of, pride I guess, in a way, that we should be helping people in other countries that aren't as privileged as we are."

More recent newcomers spoke about how they enjoyed the increased freedom they felt in Canada. Two students spoke about how they felt they had more time to simply "be kids" in Canada, with less traditional cultural strictures. For one of the two, this meant living without the certain eventuality of doing the mandatory two years of army conscription after secondary school in his home country. They both seemed to tie these freedoms to the mosaic of different cultural beliefs found in Canada, and in my interpretation of their words, the notion that they were free to locate themselves in this mosaic wherever they felt they fit. Still, there was lingering ambivalence in terms of what it actually meant to move halfway across the world and wrestle with Bissoondath's dilemma of the hyphenated Canadian (1993). Lucy captured this sentiment when she spoke directly about feeling somewhat "muddled" in between two countries, although she went on later to say that while it takes some practice, it is not necessarily a bad thing:

> Umm like when you go out somewhere and then people ask you "where are you from" and say you've been living here for like a long time and you've settled in Canada, you wouldn't say you're Canadian … you wouldn't say you're Korean, you would say like Canadian, like Korean-Canadian or whatever. So you're not Canadian but you're not Korean either. But, well yeah so your identity sort of like muddles in between.

For some students, their family histories, or routes to Canada seemed to carry less salience to their everyday lives today. Michelle had ancestry from various European ethnic backgrounds, but noted without prompting: "I just say like Canadian, makes more sense." She went on to explain that "we don't really … celebrate different things that like come from [my mom's] side 'cause I just feel like it's more like so far back that it's just not, I don't know, relevant now." In invoking the privilege of whiteness without explicitly saying so by quietly proclaiming her authenticity as simply that of a Canadian, the privilege of being a white

Canadian allowed this participant to shed her family's history of migration. It is worth noting that although several of the other participants whose stories I have discussed here identified as having multicultural backgrounds, they still self-identified or appeared to come from a European or white background. Despite the fact that whiteness is by no means monolithic (Lund, 2006), to even invoke a multicultural or bicultural identity for oneself while presenting as white is also to invoke privilege. These students can choose this identity; the students of colour I interviewed cannot.

4.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that participants defined multiculturalism based both on a set of definitions closely resembling Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as placed it within certain historical and geographical conditions in the Social Studies 11 curriculum.[9] These answers were most often direct and rather brief, almost as though they were in answer to a question posed by a teacher. In terms of content, these answers reflected the somewhat conventional definitions often cited in regards to multiculturalism, concerning the acceptance of everyone into the multicultural mosaic and the freedom to uphold cultural and linguistic traditions along with religious beliefs.

However, when students began to speak about their own lives, it seemed that these typical definitions shifted to become personally meaningful in diverse ways. When it came to reflecting on where they had first learned about multiculturalism, the histories, mobilities, and

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[9] Refer back to my discussion of the Social Studies 11 curriculum on p. 19 of Chapter 2.

multiple cultures internal to students' families had an obvious place in their consciousness and their identity formation. In other words, their family stories had an impact in terms of how they conceived themselves as a part of those often multicultural family systems and communities. Some students had very positive feelings surrounding multiculturalism, tying it to family histories of migration and the search for a better life. Other students, often those who were newcomers or people of colour, held conflicting views of multiculturalism in terms of the integration process. On the one hand, they felt it afforded them freedom to express themselves and find their place, but on the other hand they seemed torn between the parts of their identity they ascribed to Canada versus those aspects that related to their home countries or their parents' home countries. Still other participants who identified as Indigenous or as having Indigenous ancestry tied multicultural Canadian values of openness and celebrating cultural traditions to those values modeled by their families.

Multiculturalism clearly constitutes a part of the internal logic of many students' family histories of how they came to be in this place. Many participants were deeply impacted by these narratives. To illustrate this, I return to Matthew's powerful homage to his parents from the beginning of this chapter:

> If I did not have my parents I wouldn't know, like I wouldn't know how to live. Like they've set the guideline of what to do, and like how to do it and when to do it, right … So I'd say a lot of my identity is based on my parents.

In this short statement, Matthew recognizes the influence of his parents on his life, and at the same time pays tribute to them for teaching him how to move through the world, both now and, in more comments during our interview, through their past story of migration, adaptation to multiple places, and ultimately within the context of a multicultural Canada. Sticky stuff, indeed (Wright, 2012).

All this is not to say that students ignored multiculturalism in the curriculum; in contrast, they spoke at length about it and the extent to which it permeates their everyday lives at school. In the next chapter, I discuss how students engage with and contest the multicultural curriculum as it is taken up in school, set within the context of differing experiences of belonging and processes of racialization.

Chapter 5: "In Social Studies We Don't Talk About Everyday Things"

5.1   Introduction

> *Do you have a sense of belonging in Canada?*
>
> Yeah, I definitely think it's easier considering that I'm basically of European descent and generally that's more accepted in Canada and thought of as Canadian. – Olivia
>
> I feel like my biggest sense of belonging is obviously 'cause I was born here so I just have it, right, 'cause I'm a Canadian. …If I wasn't born here I wouldn't really know how to have a, I would learn to have a different sense of belonging, but I'm not sure.
> – Devonte
>
> Not really. No. 'Cause I don't feel Canadian, my, both parents they're Hispanics and at home all I speak is Spanish I don't really speak English so, yeah, and I don't feel like I belong in Canada. Yeah. – Alicia

As I explored in the first half of Chapter 4, students often conceive of multiculturalism and multicultural content in the curriculum in fairly straightforward ways which are then combined with their own experiences of migration, family movement, or Indigenous self-identification to contextualize their own identities. However, when it comes to their interactions with peers in school, students often take up and contest the multicultural curriculum in different ways than they initially defined it. In this chapter, I use my second research question to frame my exploration of three key themes: students' engagement with and contestation of the current Social Studies 11 multicultural curriculum, the ways in which difference-based, racialized commentary permeates student interactions, and students' conceptions of their own sense of belonging in school. I ask:

> To what extent does students' engagement with multicultural education in schools impact intercultural relations among students of various ethnocultural backgrounds?

I argue that while multicultural curriculum, and thus schools' intentions are to be inclusive spaces, the way multicultural curriculum is currently taken up and animated by students in their everyday interactions exposes a learning space constructed on notions of difference and racialization that impacts upon students' sense of belonging in uneven and sometimes unexpected ways.

5.2   Engaging with and Contesting the Multicultural Curriculum

While participants often gave somewhat direct definitions of multiculturalism when first asked, their conceptions of it became more sophisticated when they brought their own and their families' lived experiences into the equation. In probing further and hearing about what they felt was missing from the formal curriculum, it was obvious that the way students contest and take up the multicultural curriculum is far from "multiculturalism light," and consists of much more than the foods and festivals approach (Gross Stein, 2007, p. 7). Instead, their arguments often engaged with the "hard questions" of racism, freedom of expression, activist movements, the limits of accommodation, and somewhat multiculturalism-adjacent debates of all types (Gross Stein, 2007, p. 7).

Current celebrations of diversity in classrooms are focused on accepting and celebrating everyone for their differences, often serving to reinscribe notions of fixed cultural attributes belonging to other cultures. These differences are measured against the norm of invisible whiteness (Knight, 2008). Katherine encapsulated this when she declared that in Social Studies "I mostly learn about like *other* cultures" and the whole point of Social Studies is for "learning about stuff that's not your own … 'cause like you live it everyday so like you kind of just know

it like without thinking about it." Devonte remarked more directly, and perhaps critically of white privilege, that white people are not included in multiculturalism "just because if you think of people you think of them, from like the start of time." Surveys of Canadian educators illuminate both of these standpoints, in that educators most often see diversity as the presence of non-white groups (Jacquet, 2008; Knight, 2008). Furthermore, an "emphasis on the ideology of individualism over subjectivity" makes whiteness disappear behind other cultures while at the same time being the measuring stick against which all others are studied (Knight, 2008, p. 84). Devonte's comment that people as a general term often implicitly means white people makes sense in this context. This is not to say that racism or discrimination are not discussed in classrooms; whether they are framed by a critical multicultural theoretical perspective, in which white supremacy and other forms of oppression are seen as systems of inequity that explain individual acts of racism along with far deeper forms of racialization, is another question.

I make the preceding argument in the context of the fullness of my participants' Social Studies class experiences over their many years in the school system. When students could not give examples of learning about multiculturalism from Grade 11, they drew on past experience, even reaching back to middle school and beyond. Although my participants all had the same Social Studies teacher in Grade 11, this did not preclude them from building on prior knowledge as emphasized by constructivist traditions of education (Cobern, 1991). The education of students is not dependent on any one teacher anymore than it is dependent on the ways the student takes up curricula being taught. Therefore, students' conceptions of multiculturalism in the Social Studies curriculum are a product of their perspectives, partial and situated as they are.

Talking about ongoing systemic racism in the classroom is a difficult topic; the acknowledgement of all kinds of social difference, especially the kind that cannot be easily dealt

with or resolved, is tricky to discuss with a group of students who have a wide diversity of

opinions regarding politics, race, religion, gender, and sexuality. Confining these topics to past

injustices and the passage of more just laws or official apologies perhaps makes the conversation

less "controversial" by allowing for a temporal fix in the past. Accordingly, students widely

reported that whenever the topic of race came up in their Social Studies classes, it was in the

context of a discussion of Canada's racist past.[10] When contained within seemingly singular

events, such as the refusal of landing rights for the Komagata Maru, or individual pieces of

legislation, such as the Asiatic Exclusion Act, systems of power and privilege that continue to be

woven through societal structures are made invisible, and government apologies or changes to

legislation make things "better now." A few mentioned discussing current events at the start of

some classes, but did not detail any protracted discussions they had about race. Of course, this

does not mean it was not discussed, but my focus here is on students' perceptions of their

classroom learning because if they do not engage with a topic, it is unlikely to have implications

for their lives.

In opposition to this encasement of systemic oppression within the past, students were

very specific about the processes of racialization and expressions of privilege they were

experiencing or observing in relation to the particular moment in time when I interviewed them,

and clearly discussing these issues at length with their peers. Having completed my interviews

just weeks before the United States election in November 2016, students spoke anxiously about

what worried them – Donald Trump's racist and xenophobic rhetoric, gun violence and police

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[10] Recall in Chapter 4 the detailed responses students gave when speaking about colonial violence and residential schools, and even the current day responses and attempts at reconciliation. Indigenous issues, especially in light of the new curricula's emphasis on them, seem to be an exception to discussions about race in the classroom, at least from students' point of view.

brutality in the United States, racial profiling, racism on Facebook, and in some cases, what inspired them – movements such as Black Lives Matter and personal stories of helping to sponsor Syrian refugees. In a particularly salient example of current events, one student wanted to discuss whether it was feminist to allow the wearing of the hijab and other head coverings. She had had a debate with her mother about it and wanted to hear more from perhaps a different perspective. I offered my thoughts and she left saying she could not wait to discuss the issue with her mother again.[11]

Students were adept at pointing out what they perceived as gaps in their learning, and there was a seemingly genuine yearning from almost every student to talk more in class about the "everyday things," as Heather said, that structure their lives at school outside the classroom – in the hallways, cafeteria, at lunch and after school – and how these experiences could be brought to bear on their understandings of multiculturalism as it plays out within the space of the school. They speak in class about how stereotypes are bad; what they seem to be missing is how these stereotypes translate to each person's lived experience of intersecting privileges and oppressions at school. Again and again, students drew my attention to their interactions with their peers in spaces outside the classroom as integral for their understanding of the learning space. When discussing multiculturalism at school, Katherine said nonchalantly, "I don't know you just see it, walking down the hallway."

Matthew remarked that "If you hang out with everybody you see different cultures, you see like how other people live." Still, he also summed up his frustration with the lack of

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[11] It is possible some of these issues came up in the classroom as well, but for the most part my questions focused on what students' perceived was going on in terms of the official curriculum. The examples I have given all come either from other parts of the interviews, when students described the content of peer interactions, or from their explicit pronouncements about what they had not discussed in class.

connection between these real-world experiences and what he saw as missing from the multicultural curriculum, noting: "I think race is a big issue that should be talked about in school. We don't talk about it as much 'cause it's kind of like a taboo subject." In this he echoed Dei and others who have argued for a more direct approach to teaching anti-racism in schools (1999).

5.3   Systems of Racialized Difference in School

Racialized difference and the (in)ability to blend in was an aspect of discussion that participants readily engaged in. They spoke directly about the lived meaning and implications of many kinds of social difference. This was despite their initial characterization of multiculturalism, as I detailed in Chapter 4, as the celebration of diversity and acceptance of everyone. This speaks to the complicated nature of what it means to blend in or be considered normal amongst intersecting modes of difference. Some explicitly understood that multiculturalism in the curriculum often simply meant the reinscription of racialized difference as the visible opposite to an invisible whiteness. Joshua confirmed this, remarking "Multiculturalism, isn't that sort of just like difference? Yeah so like it's just difference in skin colour and stuff like that." On many levels, students of colour who embodied this type of difference were remarkably visible. They stood out from their classmates either because of their skin colour or because they were behaviourally or culturally seen as "different." Students of colour were mentioned conspicuously often by other students in interviews, as well as speaking themselves about their visibility in school. One student of colour, Kunle, pushed back against this "othering" done by other students by casting visibility back onto white people. He remarked that some white students thought he and his black friends "think they're all that" and challenged

this assumption by calling on white students as "the other" to actually get to know his group before making those assumptions.

> Some people are like "oh these guys think they're all that" 'cause they think that, but that's just how we are, right, that's just what we act like, we don't act like we think we're all that, but that's how it comes across sometimes, 'cause if you don't really talk to the other or they don't talk to us, they might think that we think we're all that but we actually don't, we just don't talk to 'em.

Although there exists the tricky issue of how much either group attempts to interact with each other, this does not negate the fact that for Kunle, assumptions about him and his group of friends were based on a perceived and perhaps racialized bravado, or even the fact that according to him they were tall and dressed well, and had little to do with who they actually were.

Students who identified as having parents from two different racial backgrounds gave varying accounts of how difficult the social space of the school was to navigate, depending largely on whether they were racialized by their peers or not. Those who were spoke at length about being asked if they were adopted. Kunle, who identified as black, said his peers didn't understand that he was, in his words, "light-skinned" and that "everyone was wondering if I was adopted and stuff because my mom was white." Kayla spoke of how hard it was to identify with her peers because she felt caught between groups, remarking, "Sometimes it's kind of weird because like I don't quite fit in with like the white people and I don't quite fit in with the brown people either because I've been raised with more Caucasian bodies."

For others, this issue was never raised because no one knew they identified differently than they appeared to their peers. Liam's remark hints at the complexities of being aware of and defining one's own sense of difference, saying "I identify myself like to be, uh, a pretty solid Canadian, like I see myself more like white than dark Mexican." Simultaneously with this comment, he looked down and slowly rubbed his arm. This seemed to indicate to me that he was

deeply contemplating the way he perceived his skin colour and what it meant for his sense of belonging. Liam went on to say that although he had visited Mexico, he did not feel like he belonged there.

Multiple participants pointed to white people or whiteness as the dominant group and culture in Canada, some critically, and others uncritically.[12] Some students recognized that whiteness gave them privileges others might not receive, such as Olivia's thoughts at the start of the chapter on being thought of automatically as Canadian because of her European heritage. She went on to say that this is tied in to the history of Canada as a nation with the initial wave of immigration being from western Europe. Elizabeth remarked that

> I think we live in a society that being white is the norm and then any other any other race is kind of a describing factor of a person and it makes them … we compare them to someone who is white.

Here, Elizabeth recognized the normative power of whiteness, but did not give any more detail as to where her critical insight came from. Devonte critically interrogated why multiculturalism does not seem to include white people in the public consciousness.

> Alright, so from history books, and every time that we learn or when we watch TV we see a lot of, a lot of white people, so you just think of them as the dominant race. Like of society just to think of them, we think of them as the dominant race. So when you think of multiculturalism you don't really think of white people, you think of like the blacks, the Asians, the Indians, the Chinese and all those other things, because they're more, if you think of like even if you have a multicultural event, you have different types of foods from different type, different type of like countries and everything and you never see like *white*.

Heather spoke about volunteering in Turkey and watching performances of Turkish culture while at the same time feeling that "we didn't really have a whole lot to share from 'our

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[12] In this section, my analysis engages with those participants' perspectives who actually discussed processes of difference and racialization as related to the privileging of whiteness. Some participants did not, and associated multiculturalism only with racialized minorities. Refer back to Chapter 1 for my discussion of this choice.

culture.' Like food – maple syrup. Dance – we can do the wave. Like there wasn't much."

Rebecca seemed to equate whiteness with being Canadian, and although she said this with some

hesitance, she continued to place emphasis on what can be interpreted as the privilege of being

seen as simply Canadian if one comes from a European ethnocultural background:

> Yeah well I guess, like, we're like, we're white, I don't mean to be like racist or anything but like, but we're like white, and we're like, our background, most people are like white down the line until like they get like further down then they have like different country backgrounds.

Dominant systems of whiteness and white privilege are clearly woven throughout students'

engagement with the multicultural curriculum.

5.4   Sense of Belonging: Place, Peers, and Multiculturalism

Embodied experiences of racialization are deeply connected to emotion and feelings of

inclusion or exclusion (Bartos, 2013; Giralt, 2011; Thomas, 2009). Many students discussed

difference in conjunction with their sense of belonging, and I turn to this as a final theme for

analysis in this chapter. Most often, they tied their sense of belonging to another manifestation of

difference: place of birth. Those born in Canada usually affirmed some variation of Evan's easy

declaration: "I'm born here, raised here, lived here for my whole life so belong here." This was a

sentiment that also evoked statements emphasizing participants' status as just "average kids"

from Canada. Many others gave a similar one-sentence answer and the interview would tend to

clip along to the next subject of discussion. However, for those not born in Canada, it was clear

they had already thoughtfully considered the question of belonging, long before I asked it. Being

questioned multiple times by peers, "where are you from?"' or having lived in several places as a

child had made them deeply consider the space they inhabited at school. Several students who came from Korea as younger children either felt between places, with no clear sense of belonging anywhere, or a kind of guilt towards their old home for feeling at home in a new place. Darren in particular articulated how the process of integration is fraught with navigating certain spaces dominated by the privilege of whiteness, saying that other students of Korean origin who had been here longer might

> be hanging out with white people more easily, but when you're born in another world, another country and you're [part] of a whole group of other people acting really differently from these people than you'd get, it wouldn't be that easy to join with these people.

On the other hand, several racialized students felt a sense of belonging because of the multicultural curriculum, despite the fact that they alluded to its processes of "othering" and the way it reinscribes racialized difference. Matthew pointed out that it makes him feel less different in some ways because "You're not just like the one ethnic group in the room." Alicia similarly stated, "I guess that I'm not the only one different in here, in this school, like there's other different people, too." Accordingly, Taylor and Hoechsmann concur that "multicultural curriculum reform enhances minority students' sense of national belonging" (2012, p. 321).

Still others of many backgrounds bluntly stated that although multicultural curriculum might help them feel a slightly stronger sense of belonging, it didn't change the fact that they felt more comfortable with peers of their own self-identified racial or cultural group, and that they often shared the same life experiences, sports passions, and even music preferences – the "everyday things" students wished they could talk about more in class.

Some scholars suggest that racialized minority students at school will feel less sense of belonging than their white peers. Pervasive Eurocentrism as legitimated through both the formal

and hidden curriculum sets the "insider" at odds with the "perpetual 'outsider'" (Taylor & Hoechsmann, 2012, p. 318). This constructs a sense of the forever foreigner: the student who, as a racialized minority, can approach being Canadian but will never truly be Canadian in terms of fully belonging to the (white) nation. This notion is complicated by my findings above: although some students did discuss processes of racialization and difference-making among their peers or in terms of their own self-perception, many of these same students argued they had a strong sense of belonging to Canada because they were born here or felt truly a part of a diverse, multicultural Canada.

Other scholars' findings are more instructive for the participants who expressed a more ambivalent sense of belonging to Canada because they were born elsewhere. Courage found that a lack of belonging among racialized minorities new to Vancouver was imminent unless it was acknowledged through curriculum and school practices that "newcomers do not shed their cultures at the borders" (2012, p. 197). In an encouraging study at a Toronto high school where the life of experiences of the high proportion of newcomer students were taken into account in shaping the curriculum, the immigrant students were able to thrive (He, Phillion, Chan, & Xu, 2008). The authors argue that one of the huge differences at this school was that the students were seen as "individuals with personal histories and family and community connections rather than as stereotypical representatives of categories and labels found in the literature and policy documents" (He et al., 2008, p. 230). Again, this returns us to the "everyday things" that bubble forth when students talk about multiculturalism in the context of the things they experience on a daily basis and the way they contest the formal curriculum.

5.5   Rife with Contradictions

In the midst of these everyday things lie inconsistencies in terms of how participants perceived their worlds and interactions with others. Returning to the concept of contradictions in interviews that I referred to in Chapter 3, Pugh argues that "rather than throw up our hands at the 'problem' of cultural incoherence … interpretive interviewers take both testimonies seriously" (2013, p. 57). I was faced with numerous contradictions in the narratives students told me, and in keeping with Pugh, assert that it is possible to take what students said as their versions of real life, even if those thoughts sometimes seemed opposing in nature. For example, Alicia said wistfully that she did not feel a sense of belonging in Canada at all because she struggled with English and spoke mostly Spanish at home. In the same interview, Alicia affirmed that multiculturalism in the curriculum helped her feel like she was not the only one who was different in school. Matthew felt that he had the same opportunities at this point in his life as everyone else, but also spoke about how he is viewed by peers first and foremost in terms of his skin colour and experiences being called racial slurs in the hallway. Liam talked freely about his parents being from two different ethnocultural backgrounds, but rubbed his arm uncomfortably when stressing that he felt more "white than dark," in his words. Devonte talked at length about how white people are the dominant race, but also emphasized that there was no racism or inequality in society anymore. These illustrate the concept of intersectional privileges and oppressions in the sense that it is possible for one to be both privileged in some aspects of life and experience oppression or discrimination in regards to other facets of identity. Furthermore, these participants may still be in the midst of forming their opinions on issues such as these at a

formative time in their lives, or they may have already established that their feelings in regards to different situations vary.

Many participants maintained that there is less racism in Canada now than in the past, contradicting some of their own individual experiences within the spaces of the school. This was emphasized by fifty percent of students with a common refrain that "there is always going to be that one racist person who won't change" but that they are largely relegated to a corner of society. Curiously, some of the same participants who said this also later related either their own experiences of racism (in a few cases) or instances of everyday racism they had observed (in most cases).

These contradictions may represent the nature of ever-shifting personal belief systems or the more general notion that real everyday life is rife with contradictions for all of us. It may be that asserting that racism exists "out there," for example in the United States, is often easier than speaking about one's own experiences of racism. Cui writes that young people are often "reluctant to talk about their experiences of racial discrimination" because "talking about them is often thought to connote a negative self-image" (Cui, 2011-2012, p. 132). This might explain why some students mentioned racial discrimination or a lack of belonging based on race but did not go so far as to say these examples of racialized social difference radically changed their innermost feelings of worth.

In taking these contradictions seriously, I believe, as I have previously discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, that we must look to the everyday messiness of human lives. Identity is always in the process of becoming and never static, and it is possible for one to feel the weight of intersectional oppression while at the same time argue that one has access to whatever opportunities he or she may desire. It is also important to note that contradictions in belief and

perspective make sense in the context of growing up and beginning to separate oneself from the opinions of parents and teachers for perhaps the first time.

5.6   Conclusion

Students' embodied experiences of multicultural learning in school spaces and the ways they engage with it and contest it intersect with racialized assumptions and difference-making, and questions of who belongs and why. While participants spoke on the one hand about the egalitarian diversity they learned about in Social Studies, they also confirmed that their learning as they saw it consisted of studying "other" cultures. This conflicted with the processes of racialization many students experienced and the ways that difference manifested in their experiences interacting with peers at school as well as their observations of privilege and oppression in the world around them. In other words, classroom definitions of multiculturalism were too narrow for students' lived realities and the ways multiculturalism was taken up in their interactions. Ultimately, these intersections produced wide-ranging and diverse feelings of belonging or not, to both Canada and to the school community. These feelings were often expressed as seemingly contradictory beliefs from students, and I have argued that the everyday realities students experience are themselves messy and contradictory.

In answer to my original research question for this chapter, regarding the extent to which students' engagement with multicultural education in schools impacts intercultural relations among students, it seems that it is the way students take up the curriculum they learn through their lived experiences that impacts interactions among students. Both the curriculum and the experiences students bring to it create a narrative in schools that produces spatialized and

embodied learning experiences that deal directly with race, belonging, and inclusion within an ongoing process of multicultural integration.

In the next chapter, I dive more deeply into an examination of school spaces outside the classroom and the juxtaposition of how participants generally seem to take multiculturalism seriously, given all that I have written about in the last two chapters, with how there are multiple jokes and assumptions based on race that go on in the school. This spatialized learning that occurs outside the classroom is integral to my understanding of how multiculturalism continues to work itself out on the micro scale of the school.

Chapter 6: Racialized Commentary in the "In Between" Spaces of Learning

6.1 Introduction

> In our school, like I don't really find, even if people say anything racist, it's just as a joke right? – Kunle

> It's the first thing, one of the first things you notice about someone. And no matter who you are there's always certain connotations that you have with a certain race or. Like even if you can put them aside it's always something that someone sees and depending on the person they treat them differently. – Olivia

In the last chapter, I argued that students engage with the multicultural curriculum in diverse ways. Many drew critical intersections between the things they see as missing from their classroom learning (such as race and the implications of social difference) and the injustice they see in terms of systemic racism in their lives, communities, or on the global scale. Processes of racialization and the complexities of belonging paint a complicated picture of multicultural integration, one that is straightforward for some students and problematic for others. In this chapter, I aim to expand my analysis of these processes to venture outside of the classroom and ask:

> How do students negotiate multicultural integration in school spaces outside the classroom?

From racialized "jokes" to "positive" stereotyping, students' original notions of multiculturalism are being taken up differently in practice, and this contributes to the hidden curriculum that legitimizes these comments. While many students seem on the one hand to understand the reinscription of racism present in these interactions, there is a disconnect between how they spoke about multiculturalism being the inclusion and acceptance of everyone and the way racist remarks are, according to them, casually thrown around. In the last chapter, I highlighted

students' thoughts on critical issues of race and power that they felt were missing from the Social Studies 11 curriculum. There seems to be a kind of detachment between these issues and the very common racist "jokes" made in school. This, along with the way these "jokes" are often voiced in spatially uneven ways, is my focus in this chapter. I start with an exploration of social spaces outside the classroom and group dynamics, move on to what is said, analyze how students explain these statements and experience them in their daily lives, and finally, discuss how this commentary is localized throughout the school.

6.2   Social Groups in School

Many of my questions during interviews with participants focused on their interactions with their peers, but none of my original questions directly dealt with the composition of social groups in school. Despite this, social groups came up in 17 interviews, and I asked students each time what contributed to the makeup of these groups, or "bubbles," as one student called them. Over half of the students said that race or culture was the contributing factor, while the minority mentioned a variety of other "clique" factors that contribute to determining social status, including popularity, personality, individual interests, participation on sports teams, age, trendy clothing, and academic prowess. Several of these factors overlapped with racially- or culturally-based groups. In this section I focus on students' descriptions of how race or culture primarily affects groups in school, because it presents an intersection with the way racialized "jokes" are made about certain students or groups of students in school.

One of the reasons cited for groups to be drawn along racial lines was stronger feelings of belonging or security among those of the same group. In this case, newcomers[13] were mentioned, with cultural adjustment and language being major factors in why they tended to be drawn to towards each other. Min-jun was a newcomer from South Korea who did not like this type of grouping. He said,

> what I see here, Asian people stay with Asian people … so that was a bit interesting to me, because it's Canada, you have to get to know Canadian friends … Why can't I actually be friends with Canadians? Right now I'm really trying to get to know more Canadian friends.

Of note in this passage is how Min-jun seems to equate being "Canadian" with his non-Asian peers. This could be interpreted in a number of ways. A more critical reading might conclude that Canada, from the outside, is still seen largely as a "white" country, while it is also possible his remark simply reflects the drive to "fit in" and make friends outside his linguistic group.

For other students, race- or culture-based groups were in confluence with interests, as I discussed briefly in Chapter 5. For example, Maria spoke authoritatively about how and why she saw the breakdown in social groups occur.

> I mean sometimes it's like I know 'cause like I mean I'm an Asian, like I know Asians …their interests are like, they like to play games and stuff because like most of the time they would be studying so much that they don't get time to play games.

> Yeah at lunchtime if you go to the library you'll see a lot of like Asians hanging out with the Asians and like the white people will go outside and like go to that strip mall thing.

In another case, Kunle mentioned a wide variety of interests and descriptors that united his self-identified racial group. His takeaway from all of this was to say, "I still respect the next person, but I only sort of gel with like yeah Africans and like black people." Later in the interview, he

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[13] Here, in keeping with the students' examples, I use the word "newcomers" to refer to international students or others who had arrived within the last two years.

continued on to speak at length about the reasons he perceived for groups being drawn along

racial lines.

> We don't not like each other but like, we just don't mix that well. Like they like different things like the type of music they listen to, everything. How they dress, just different things.

> Every, every black person I talk to, 'cause we're all spread out in different schools, we all say we wish there was more black people in this school.

> Like it's hard to explain like it's either they play hockey or play baseball, they just talk about baseball, they and they're, it's hard to explain. Well I guess if you look at our groups we're sort of the same all black guys are the same, we all like, listen to rap. Haha yeah. I don't really know how to explain it really. It's just, if you're, if you're me, right, it's different 'cause I can be myself around black people. Like I can like, they'll laugh at my jokes, they'll get all my jokes, everything I make but if I tell like the jokes that we would make, they like, uh the people at my school, this school, wouldn't understand.

There are clearly complex processes going on in these two examples from Maria and

Kunle. Although both speak about specific interests or reasons other than race that these groups

align the way they do, both also continue to insist on using racial descriptors for these groups.

Curiously, both students seem to reinforce oft-stated "stereotypes" about their own racialized

groups. In Kunle's case especially, being a racialized minority with only a small number of black

students at the school seemed to be a particular reason for the makeup of his friendship network,

especially given other students' perceptions of him and his friends, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Others spoke about the racialized separation of groups in terms of just plain racism; two

white students talked about how it was apparent when groups interacted with individuals from

outside of the group. In Steven's words,

> I have seen like some people won't accept each other … just because of their race … if you just walk up to a group of kids and like "Hey man what's up" they just won't say anything or just completely shut you out. I definitely have seen that in the hallways for sure.

I think it's more like body language … like if an Asian guy walks up to a white guy and he, the white guy's with all his friends, he just thinks it's a little awkward to be seen with him.

While one-third of interview participants attributed race or culture to be the primary reason for the structure of social groups, not all students agreed, and argued group dynamics were based mostly on other social identifiers. Although students were not in agreement on the reasons for the structuring of social groups, when I asked about students' social commentary to do with race in school, the majority of participants spoke in resoundingly similar terms.

6.3   Racialized "Jokes" and "Positive" Attributes

After discussing group dynamics, I asked participants whether race affected how students viewed each other in school. In the conversations that followed, two-thirds of students outlined an abundance of racialized "jokes" and stereotypes that were deemed to be "positive" that are circulated around school. Not a single student mentioned or could think of any comments made about white people. In contrast, the most common answer to my question was along the lines of Asian students being very smart. Overwhelmingly, my inquiries were met with the caveat that these comments were just jokes. In one students' words, "it's not in a harmful or discluding way. More in a playful or like joking way." It was also called "innocent" and simply "bantering" but was apparently never meant "in a serious way." Although some students admitted these were stereotypes, most qualified this by saying that if it's a positive attribute, it's not racist.

For context, below is a shortlist of some of the most common "jokes" or racialized comments that students reported:

People will do really good on a test and it'll be like "You're an Asian now." Even I've been called half-Asian. – Tyler

Hindu kids or Indian kids being good at soccer. – Robert

"Asian Invasion" [and] I'll hear people talking about how like dirty East Indian or like Punjabi people are, or just like all the, there's a lot of like black jokes. – Brooke

People say that kid's got an Asian brain or whatever. – Heather

Well it'd be like if you have a question instead of asking the teacher you can just go ask the Korean that sits beside you, just stuff like that. – Liam

Not being racist but usually the Africans are faster just because in Africa they just run a lot 'cause that's just how their culture is. – Liam

6.3.1   Student Commentary on Racialized "Jokes"

It is crucial to understand not just what is said, but how these things circulate through the school, the way students interpret them when asked to reflect, and the ways they take hold in students' lives. Two students pointed out that racialized comments may have something to do with power and group dynamics, especially if one group is viewed in a certain way by other students. Matthew, who reported being called derogatory names related to the history of slavery in America in the hallways, offered his interpretation:

> There's always one person in the group that would like command everybody else, like it's never just everyone saying it at once, so once the person says it, another person would latch onto it, and keep on saying that to make themselves like, yeah, feel better, and feel like they're higher up right.

Creese et al.'s study of young African teens who were newcomers in Metro Vancouver detailed the theme of participants declaring that "you have to stand up for yourself" in the face of discrimination and racism (2011, p. 21). Matthew spoke about taking academic classes and studying hard, as well as his career aspirations. His account of the racialized comments directed

at him in the context of the way he portrayed himself is thrown into sharp relief in the context of

another student's commentary regarding a scenario he witnessed in class. Liam talked about how

black students are often characterized in a racially charged way, saying "people see them as like

the troublemakers." He described the following incident for me.

> If like the principal walks in the room I've heard one person say "Oh, he's," it was
> something like "Oh, I guess Matthew's in detention" because he's like black and he's the
> most like likely to be going to detention, 'cause that's just, that's how people view them I
> guess, that's not how I view them but …

This juxtaposition in commentary, while coming from two different students, points to the same

processes of racialization and commentary in regards to students of colour, specifically black

students. In both cases, this racialized student was cast as subordinate to his peers in ways that

echo historical and ongoing embodied violence, and is literally "called out" individually in front

of his peers. Given these instances of racialization, it is not hard to understand why being a

racialized minority in school contributes to some students of colour sticking closely together.

Participants were direct and casual in speaking about "jokes" and comments that

reinscribe deeply harmful systemic racism. With more probing, they became more reflective

about the racialized assumptions being made than they were perhaps upon first mention. The

reflections provided more insight into how these comments affect peer interactions and students'

internal lives as well. Kunle, despite his quote at the opening of this chapter that anything racist

said at school is simply meant as a joke, was resolute in discussing the way he wished his peers

would educate themselves about Africa because they viewed it as an insular, homogenized place.

> Just more knowledge, people would be less ignorant and stuff, 'cause some people, some
> people still think that Africans just wear slippers and stuff. Some people still think
> Africa's poor. People think Africa's poor. People don't really know much right, like all
> they know is Abbotsford really. Some people haven't even been out of Abbotsford.

Of course, "knowing much" in general is a matter of opinion, and it could be that Kunle's classmates are widely knowledgeable about other places in the world, but the point remains that this seems to be yet another way students of colour like him are the target of racialized "jokes" and comments.

Matthew also offered a more critical assessment of how Asian students are seen as smart and black students are picked first on teams in gym class because of the assumptions made about each racialized group. Olivia's similar statement from the start of the chapter takes the idea perhaps a step further in acknowledging that "no matter who you are there's always certain connotations that you have with a certain race." She argued that while some people are aware of these connotations and try to put them aside, colour-blindness is impossible. Many others demonstrated an ambivalence in opinion about racialized "jokes" and struggled to take a definitive position. Multiple students said that because the intent was not to be racist, ultimately the comments were excusable. According to Kayla, "it's still bad, but I don't think they intend to be." Mark said age might have something to do with it, and that even in the last few years, he had noticed a change in the quantity of racialized "jokes": "I haven't really heard people calling people by those names as much anymore, and I don't know if that's 'cause we've grown out of it or partly 'cause of school too." Here, the role that a variety of factors, including age, school rules, or unknown social and environmental influences are perhaps part of the process of eliminating these comments. However, Mark was the only participant to say the racialized "jokes" had actually lessened in quantity as students got older.

In terms of the effect these "jokes" have on those they are directed towards, multiple students said that those who are the target of racialized "jokes" did not really care and laughed them off. This was especially true of "Asian jokes" because being smart, although often

acknowledged as a stereotype, was seen as a positive one. In their discourse analysis of the *Maclean's* article entitled "Too Asian?" Cui and Kelly note that students' hard work and dedication to their studies being diminished to a racialized stereotype is often disheartening and plays into a damaging narrative of the model minority (2012).

In the case of gym class, the "jokes" about Asian students consisted of two contrasting components: being smart while at the same time being apparently bad at sports. Evan, a white student, explained how racialized "jokes" about Asian students get made in gym.

> Uh actually yeah it usually happens in like gym class, 'cause like the guys they make fun of the Asians for being really smart or being, some of them make fun of them for being bad at sports and stuff, that's usually where I hear it.

> … like I have a buddy of mine that's Asian, and he told me that one time I heard that one time some guy went up to him and told him that, like and he said that he did not care he's like oh…doesn't I don't need to be good at sports. I'm smart so I probably got a better future than you do. I just looked at him, and he roasted that kid!

Liam corroborated this normative point of view, saying, "I don't really think they care like it's not a bad thing to be like smart that's just how it is." Millington et al. found in a study of Vancouver physical education classes that exactly this type of racist harassment of Chinese-Canadian boys was rampant (2008). Notions of normative masculinity embodied and constructed by white students became the hidden curriculum in terms of how the bodies of Chinese-Canadian boys were constructed as opposite and inferior to white bodies (2008).

Min-jun, a self-identified newcomer of one and a half months originally from South Korea, provided a compelling counterpoint to the arguments made by native-born students above that Asian students do not care about these racialized comments. Min-jun confirmed that the things said about Asian students were common knowledge, and that he was fine with classmates asking questions, but did not always understand the motivation behind these inquiries. In the

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following passage, "they" refers to Canadians, which Min-jun elsewhere implied meant non-Asian people.

> One thing I know is they think Asians are smart. And they only ask when they don't know certain questions. Yeah but in terms of being really like, getting really close to each other they're most likely more friendlier to their home country's friends than us.
>
> I don't, I don't feel bad or good, but it's just questions I can't help them with, and I think they really want because they're having a hard time, so I don't really feel bad, but some of them might feel bad because they're only finding us when they need but then when we need … they're not actually coming for us.

Firstly, Min-jun was undoubtedly very conscious of the separation between groups. Native-born students only approached him when they had certain questions, and were not available to help him with his questions. He demonstrated the intention to integrate, but it was not reciprocal. Cui and Kelly argue segregation in the education system is blamed largely on ethnic enclaves, when integration should be a shared endeavour (2012). Secondly, however, Min-jun's feelings around this dynamic remained somewhat obscured, and it is possible that like I have previously indicated, he wished to understate incidents of racism or discrimination in order to maintain what is perceived to be a positive impression (Cui, 2011-2012).

Darren's experience, having come from South Korea near the end of elementary school, perhaps provided a more in-depth example of the complexity of processes of racialization and the ways they affect the social landscape as well as students' internal realities. He told me the story of how when he first arrived, he did not feel like he fit in. "Gangnam Style," a song and music video by a popular South Korean singer named Psy, had just come out, and he seemed somewhat conflicted about how this played out in regards to his presence on the school landscape.

> That was when Psy came in, and all the Gangnam stuff came in, it was kind of easy to blend in with them, just doing some Psy dances and things like that, everyone mentioning that I look like Psy a bit.
>
> When I first heard it I thought it was a bit of a mocking thing but seeing them that they were laughing with honesty and dancing, following, trying to follow the dance, [I] saw that they're being honest about how they see me as a Psy and I took it as a compliment later on.

Darren said he found in the popularity of "Gangnam Style" an entryway to being more social with his classmates. However, it is unclear whether the other students' response, of branding him as a Psy look-alike, was closer to teasing and stereotyping, or flattery. In any case, Darren chose to take this racialized "joke" as a compliment, and in so doing, perhaps felt more empowered.

6.4 The "In Between" Spaces of Learning

The spaces in the school outside the classroom where racialized "jokes" are made are perhaps indicative of the way they circulate through the social terrain by way of various groups. Approximately ten students made a point about the difference between formal classroom spaces and informal spaces outside the classroom that suggest a possible explanation for why so many comments get made outside of the classroom instead of in it. They all said that the classroom was more of a professional setting, whereas the hallways are not. In these cases, students were referring to academic classrooms, where they are under the strictures of seating plans and an increased workload in Grade 11, not to mention a fairly small space. The classroom is not a static space, but it is under the purview and gaze of the teacher, and thus carries with it certain expectations of how students conduct themselves. Lucas said that outside the classroom you "could talk just normally" while on the contrary, "you have to kind of talk differently in a

classroom." He went on to say that during class time, people "try to be a little more formal than they would usually be and then outside the classroom they're their unfiltered self."

When I asked participants where in school these comments are made, almost fifteen students mentioned either the hallways or lunch areas, indicating that social spaces outside the classroom are where the majority of these remarks are made. Four mentioned that gym class was also a place for these "jokes" to be made, one said less formal classes such as mechanics or woodshop, and one actually said more academic classes, like math or physics. Other single mentions included the washrooms and in text messages instead of in public. In the hallways, cafeteria, washrooms, and outdoors areas, students' embodied engagement with notions of difference are brought to bear on their social interactions with each other. The learning space of the school is constructed by those who use it, and Bauer's point that the "in between" spaces of schools must be seriously considered when analyzing students' learning, as well as the formal spaces, is imperative here (2015).

Classroom spaces such as gym class that were perceived as less formal by students were also spaces for racialized "jokes" because, in Lucy's words, "you get some more free time so you like talk more and you like pass jokes around." According to Evan, "there's more space" in gym class to talk, while at the same time, "it's like more compact." I interpret this to mean that because in gym students are either in a large gymnasium space or outside on the field, they actually tend to group together in small, compressed groups instead of being spread out and visible in rows of desks or around tables. This allows for more freedom to act informally and resonates with Millington et al.'s argument that the space of the physical education "classroom" creates the opportunity for a hidden curriculum built on racialized difference (2008). The way

these racialized assumptions take hold in student interactions contributes towards the hidden curriculum that is taught alongside, or indeed, as a part of, the formal curriculum.

6.5   Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how participants' perceptions of groups and cliques in school, and racialized "jokes" and "positive" stereotypes, are located in specific school spaces. While only one third of participants said groups were drawn along racial or cultural lines, fully two thirds of participants said that blatantly stereotypical or racist comments are made as "jokes" all the time, often in school spaces where there is not a teacher within direct earshot. Some students recognized the assumptions made in these cases, while others did not or were ambivalent about whether it was really racist to say something positive about someone's skills or attributes, even if it meant generalizing that attribute to an entire racialized group of people. Missing from the list of racialized "jokes" were remarks and homogenizing attributes concerning white students, reinforcing the invisibility of whiteness when it comes to students' sense of race and culture.

When participants discussed these issues of racialization and racialized "jokes" with me, another concept was conspicuously absent from our interactions: multiculturalism. While it appeared to me that students were relaying their own embodied experiences of working through multicultural integration in their school, their use of racialized language was divorced from their earlier definitions of the Canadian multicultural mosaic. Participants' own part in establishing the hidden curriculum informs and reinscribes power relations in school, often along racial lines.

While there will always be a hidden curriculum that students play a lively role in as part of a dynamic and ever-changing school space, it is vital to consider how more of these everyday

realities outside of school spaces might be brought to bear on the formal curriculum students are meant to learn in Social Studies.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1   Looking Back

In this thesis, I have argued that students' everyday lives run perpendicular to the multicultural curriculum they learn about in Social Studies. These intersecting lines meet at certain points but are also divergent, creating contrasting definitions and experiences of multiculturalism. Students are not empty vessels, and in the constructivist style of education, this is a study of how they incorporate their own lived realities into the formal curriculum they learn at school. Although they gave fairly standard definitions of multiculturalism initially, these were complicated by the ways it intersected with their families' experiences and subsequently, the ways it manifested in their own lives and interactions with peers. They contested and engaged with multiculturalism in complex ways, leading to divergent feelings of belonging and experiences of racialization. Students are working out their own living definitions of integration and multiculturalism while simultaneously co-constructing the hidden curriculum that contributes to how these processes materialize in their lives.

Several aspects of my conversations with students surprised me, which I will take a moment here to reflect on. Students emphasized how multiculturalism was not only part of the curriculum, but part of the fabric of their lives, and that in some cases, it even made them feel a greater sense of belonging. Upon initial consideration, this is in contrast to my expectations as outlined in my discussion of how multiculturalism as the management of diversity contributes to processes of "othering" and racialization that continue to subordinate students of colour. The reasons for this discourse from students I interviewed could be many. This part of the discussion was at the beginning of our first interviews, and perhaps participants did not yet feel they could

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trust me with less palatable truths or they wanted to maintain a positive overall tone. I also

cannot discount the feeling that multiculturalism means different things to different people at

different times and in relation to different aspects of identity, perspective, spoken words, and

interactions. Words spoken at this point in the interview were at times contradicted later, or

expanded upon to provide a far more detailed picture that complicated these original notions.

Furthermore, participants seemed to separate discussions of multiculturalism from discussions of

racism and racialization. While students may not see these as connected, my review of the

literature in Chapter 2, and my analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 points to the need for discussions of

multiculturalism to be integrated with discussions of systemic racism and hierarchies of power in

schools and society.

Perhaps this all circles back to how and why participants with such "correct" definitions

of multiculturalism also then seemed to participate in processes of racialization that perpetuated

the "legitimacy" of blatantly racist "jokes" about certain individuals or groups. It hints at the fact

that while multiculturalism "from above" may be making its way to the forefront of individuals'

consciousness, multiculturalism is concurrently being figured out "from below," through

interactions with peers, educators, learning materials, and any number of extra-school people and

spaces. Everyday reality is messy and hard to segment into strict definitions that then causally

affect interactions.

The messiness of everyday life means that there is much more work to be done in this

area of research. Although I have taken a small step towards understanding one aspect of young

people's geographies of education as they relate to multiculturalism, more research needs to be

done to understand the spatiality of learning in this context (Bauer, 2015; Holloway et al., 2010).

The complexities of everyday life signify that preconceived conceptual approaches only extend

so far. Qualitative research of the type conducted here can provide far richer detail that contributes to an ever-evolving understanding of young peoples' realities as they relate to race and multiculturalism.

Moreover, my research was based on conversations with 30 students from two classrooms at the same school who volunteered to speak with me. Another 20 students in these classrooms did not participate. While it was outside the scope of this project, similar research conducted in other schools and classrooms across British Columbia would add valuable context to the results presented here. This would allow for a more in-depth exploration of how other factors, such as rural versus urban settings, school demographic composition, family life, and sense of place impact upon how students engage with multiculturalism.

7.2   Implications

The changes that are set to be introduced in the new Social Studies curricula in British Columbia present a modulation in how Social Studies is presented to students, moving from a liberal multicultural perspective to a more critically-focused and social justice-oriented one that takes issues of power, normativity, and oppression into account. Of course, this will continue to involve implementation challenges as curriculum always has, including the need to give teachers the resources and support they need, as well as a change in framing for both educators and students. Student interactions are the result of many factors, and a new curriculum does not mean an automatic change in these behaviours, but schools must continue to work on acknowledging and allowing students' spatialized constructions of difference to be an integrative part of the curriculum in order to deconstruct processes of racialization and oppression.

Taylor and Hoechsmann remind us that "schools are the primary contributors to multicultural literacy" in Canada, but that they do not have uncontested power in this process (2012, p. 324). In what seems like a contradiction in terms, they argue that "we should demand more and expect less of schools in the struggle to eradicate racism and contest Eurocentrism" (2012, p. 329). This brings up questions of how much we can expect there to be continuity between federal policies, which trickle down all the way to our schools, and individual students' perspectives and interactions with each other. For example, it does appear that teachers' implementation of the Social Studies curriculum has changed in the last ten years. Students' breadth of knowledge and understanding regarding colonial violence and residential schools was significant and unexpected. However, continuing systemic racism in school, in the form of racialized "jokes," are just one example of how changing curricula and ways of implementing it do not solve all problems of social injustice.

7.2.1   Possibilities in the New Curricula

The body of work I have presented here comes at a time of great change in terms of the curricular landscape in this province. The British Columbia Ministry of Education has undertaken a revamping of all curricula for every grade and subject in the province. Preliminary drafts of the Social Studies curriculum show an increased focus on social justice, Indigenous ways of knowing, and perhaps more critical forms of thinking about diversity and multiculturalism. Of course, the delivery of a new curriculum document does not mean everything will suddenly change in the learning environment. Conversely, the arrival of this new curriculum does not mean educators were not already teaching in ways that encouraged a critical

approach to thinking about multiculturalism in Canada. Still, the processes and experiences described in this study validate the need for these changes and make it clear that they will be welcomed by many students.

While these are all promising changes, the students I interviewed will experience few, if any, of these curricular changes, as all will have left school before the new curriculum officially takes effect. Therefore, a similar study conducted in five or ten years may look very different, and would be an excellent area of future research to learn more about to what extent students take up the Social Studies curriculum in their everyday lives, and how it affects their experiences of difference, racialization, and belonging.

From what has been released thus far, the new curricula appears to provide openings for teachers and students to challenge Eurocentric ways of knowing such as rationalism, a belief in linear progress, and the notion of neutrality. There are wider spaces in the curriculum for teachers and students to pursue the analysis of power dynamics and privilege if they care to do so than there have been in the past. This is work that we must all be prepared to do if this new curriculum is to truly be taken up in a critical multicultural way. Flynn quotes a teacher she observed who used simple guidelines to keep students motivated to do this hard work: "Stay engaged. Experience discomfort. Speak your truth. Expect and accept non-closure" (2010, p. 171). If teachers and students can both start and continue to work to enact these guiding principles as a way to move forward through this new curriculum, there is the possibility that the curriculum can become a vehicle for further social change in schools.

7.3 Everyday Lived Multiculturalism

It is clear from my interviews with students that they were able to talk about multiculturalism with ease. In various ways, it was a part of their classroom experience, their family histories, their personal identities, and their interactions with each other. In this sense, Wright proclaims, "multicultural education remain[s] relatively safe – still dominant, still official, still the common sense everyday approach, still the sticky stuff of Canadian identity" (2012, p. 111). Naseem substantiates this in the following statement:

> A measure of the veracity of Canadian multicultural policy is that it has provided the language and the space within which societal debates and contestations over multicultural coexistence and rights can take place at almost all levels of the Canadian society. (2011, p. 12)

However all-encompassing multiculturalism may appear to be, I believe it is another of Naseem's claims that must be taken very seriously if we are to engage with young people on topics that affect their everyday realities so deeply. He writes, from a critical multicultural standpoint,

> It is important to note that critical multiculturalism is skeptical of liberal multiculturalism's attempt to create societal dialogues without really creating conditions in which parties could enter the dialogue on an equal footing. (Naseem, 2011, p. 11)

This brings me back to Freire's (1970) concept of dialogue as a part of transformative learning that I spoke about in Chapter 1. Although Wright makes the excellent point that multiculturalism continues to be the "common sense everyday approach" in schools, students must have access to the concept of dialogue Freire champions for them to truly be involved in enacting positive social change. Kunz and Sykes argue that "intercultural dialogue" is exactly what is needed to address the "current lack of interaction and understanding between newcomers, Aboriginal

Peoples, and Canadians in general" (2007, p. 12). What better place than our schools to encourage this dialogue?

And so while current secondary students' have a penchant for relaying the liberal multicultural norms they have grown up with when asked for a simple definition of multiculturalism, the meanings they have inscribed into their lived realities are much more complex. They are enthusiastic about "other" cultures, and genuinely want to learn about identities, places, and spaces outside of themselves. At the same time, they participate in a culture of racialization in their everyday interactions. Whether school curricula can be a transformative part of bringing critical multicultural education to bear in classrooms and schools in order to accomplish this in a way that addresses structural power, privilege, and oppression remains to be seen. Jeffrey argues that young people are political actors with the agency to make change on small and large scales (2011), and I saw this deeply held conviction among so many of the students I interviewed. If we are to take young people seriously as I have endeavoured to do in this work, we cannot simply reduce this to the naïveté or idealism of youth, but to a deep-seated belief in the ability to effect change, one interaction at a time.

In the preceding pages, I have presented a study of the geography of learning as it relates to the complexities of lived multiculturalism. This is powerful precisely because it illuminates the opportunity to enact a critical multicultural approach that takes full stock of how transformative a curriculum integrated with everyday life could be. Curriculum is not delivered in a spaceless void, and incorporating the ways in which spaces of learning are constructed by students outside their classrooms may help students think critically about these pivotal moments of identity formation and peer interaction. The opportunity to bring a critical multicultural curriculum into contact with students' everyday lives brings us back to Devonte's astute

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observations: "We all get the same information in school; it's just that what you take [from] that information and how you view it" that affects your perspective.

Students' lived realities ensure that while they may receive the same information, the way it is processed and acted upon is unique to each individual; people really are "different, everywhere you go." Bringing curriculum and everyday life together will encourage exploration of students' own constructs of multiculturalism in their daily lives, making it possible to enact a more critical multiculturalism in classrooms that gives students not only the vocabulary, but the skills and mindsets to challenge the racialized assumptions they both experience and perpetuate on a daily basis.

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Appendices

Appendix A : Student Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me what you think multiculturalism means? Do you have a definition? What does multiculturalism look like in your school? What does multiculturalism look like in Canada?

2. Where would you say this definition comes from? Where did you learn it, or who has helped you understand it the most?

3. Can you tell me about your experience of how multiculturalism is taught in your Social Studies class? What kinds of events or people or concepts do you learn about that are related to multiculturalism?

4. Is multiculturalism about the past, the present, or a combination of both? Can you explain your answer using some examples?

5. Do you have a sense of your family's history in Canada? For example, how long have they lived in Canada? Where did they originally come from? Do you know how many generations ago this was?

6. Do you feel that you have a sense of belonging in Canada? Why or why not? Do you feel that you have a sense of belonging in your community? Your school? What feelings go along with a sense of belonging? Does multicultural learning in your classes help you feel a sense of belonging or not?

7. What are the attributes that most define your identity from your perspective? What do you feel has shaped your identity the most? Can you give some examples? Why are these things important to who you are?

8. What do you think are the attributes that most define your identity from your classmates' perspectives? If these are different, why do you think they're different?

9. How does the identity given to you by others affect your interactions inside the classroom? Does it change things or change how you act towards your peers or your teacher? Have you ever felt marginalized or like you didn't belong because of how others view you? If you feel comfortable, it would help me to have an example of these experiences.

10. How does the identity placed on you by others affect your interactions outside the classroom? Does the situation change? Do certain things get said or done that wouldn't happen in the classroom? Can you give me an example? Why do you think this happens?

11. Do your interactions with your peers change outside the classroom? Can you give me an example?

12. Does race or ethnicity affect how students view each other in school? Why or why not? Can you give me some examples? Do these perceptions of other people get spoken about out loud?

13. Have you ever heard or seen or experienced interactions in school that had something to do with race or ethnicity? Are there certain places where these things happen most often, or are more likely to happen? Why do you think this is?

14. What do you feel is the main goal of multicultural education, as it is taught to you in Social Studies (or other classes)? Do you think this goal has been reached? Why or why not? What specific things (indicators) tell you it is/is not working?

15. How do you think your interactions with your peers have changed after learning about multiculturalism? Can you describe the effect this learning has on students' interactions with each other? These can be interactions you have been part of or interactions you have personally observed.

16. Do you feel that your sense of belonging to Canada, your community, or your school changes or is dependent on your interactions with your peers? Why or why not?