

Reproducing Canada's Colonial Legacy

A Critical Analysis of Aboriginal Issues in Ontario High School Curriculum

by

Jordan Austia Watters

A thesis submitted to the Department of Sociology
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Arts

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

August, 2007

Copyright © Jordan Austia Watters, 2007

Abstract

Canadian education has historical roots in blatantly assimilationist policies bent on the social, economic, linguistic and spiritual subjugation of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures. Today, Canadian education has moved away from overtly colonialist discourses and publicly embraced the principles of multiculturalism. This research explores how and if this ideological shift has translated into the practice of contemporary Canadian education as it is experienced by students. My research focuses on the ways Canada's colonial history and contemporary Aboriginal issues are addressed in mandatory Ontario high school social studies curriculum. This analysis is based on interviews with twenty-five recent high school graduates about what they remember learning about Aboriginal issues and how that knowledge has influenced their understanding of colonialism and Aboriginal peoples today. My interpretive analysis of students' responses relies on the insights provided by critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory. By drawing on Gramsci, Freire and Apple I challenge the hegemonic practices in education that continue to marginalize Aboriginal peoples and their struggles. This research contributes to scholarship in the sociology of education and postcolonial studies by providing a unique picture of the ways in which young people come to understand Canada's colonial legacy through their formal education, as well as providing insight into new directions for curriculum development, teacher training and more effective integration of anti-racist pedagogy in Ontario's high schools.

Acknowledgments

When I entered the graduate program at Queen's University, I came with a suitcase packed with questions I had been collecting since High School. I am greatly indebted to Cynthia Levine-Rasky for helping me unpack my questions, and imagine ways to address them. Without Cynthia's sharp mind and pragmatic advice, I could have wound up lost in the quagmire of epistemological debate. While Cynthia kept me focused, she also trusted my vision for this project and allowed me to pursue it freely. Her friendship and warm support have been invaluable to me. I am also grateful to Catherine Krull, my secondary supervisor, who read my work closely and provided tremendous insight. Thanks also to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2005/06), the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (2006/07), and the Blakely Fund for their financial support.

The thesis process can be lonely; luckily I was blessed with a solid support network. A thousand thanks go to Becky Curran, whose friendship has carried me through this entire process. I am grateful for the camaraderie of "the cohort." Whether in the classroom, at a pub, or around my kitchen table, our time together has been integral to the success of this project. Special thanks to Michelle Ellis for answering all of my questions. I am indebted to B.G. Coulter, M.E. Donnan, and C. Gosselin, my mentors at Bishop's University. Their faith in my abilities has been a source of strength through many moments of uncertainty. Finally, it would be impossible to adequately express my gratitude for the love and support of my family. My dad has taught me to shoot for the stars, and my mom has taught me to ground myself in the everyday realities that make a better world worth fighting for. With that combination, anything is possible.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: The Colonial Legacy in Canadian Education	6
I Confronting Canada’s Colonial Legacy.....	7
II Canadian Education: Failing to Confront our Colonial Legacy.....	16
III Contextualizing Neoliberal Hegemony in Education.....	19
Chapter Three: Theorizing Postcolonial Power Relations in Education	28
I Critical Pedagogy.....	29
II Engaging the Structural versus Cultural Debates in Critical Pedagogy...31	
III Postcolonial Theory.....	34
IV Postcolonial Approaches to the Structure versus Culture Debate.....37	
V Neo-Marxist and Anti-Colonial Approaches to Education.....	40
Chapter Four: Concerning Methodology and Procedure	44
I Interpretive Interactionism.....	45
II Ontario Curriculum.....	48
III Interview Protocol.....	51
IV Interview Participants.....	52
V Interview Technique and Interpretive Processes.....	55
VI Ethical Considerations.....	57

VII	Concerning Interpretation and Memory.....	57
VIII	Situating Myself as a Researcher.....	58
Chapter Five: Exploring Theory and Practice in Ontario Curriculum.....		62
I	Geography of Canada, Grade 9.....	63
II	Civics, Grade 10.....	67
III	Canadian History in the Twentieth Century, Grade 10.....	72
IV	Beyond Geography, Civics, and History.....	79
V	Reflections.....	82
Chapter Six: Student Perspectives on Curriculum and Aboriginal Issues.....		84
I	Students' Reflect on the Curriculum.....	85
II	Aboriginal People and Equal Opportunity in Canada.....	93
III	Reflections.....	103
Chapter Seven: Insights and Implications.....		105
I	Summary of Key Findings.....	106
II	Recommendations for Change.....	110
III	Directions for Further Research.....	114
IV	Final Thoughts.....	117
Works Cited.....		119
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....		125
Appendix B: Interview Participants.....		127
Appendix C: Curriculum Exemplar: Civics, Grade 10.....		128

Introduction

Canadian education has historical roots in blatantly assimilationist policies bent on the social, economic, linguistic and spiritual subjugation of Aboriginal¹ peoples and their cultures. European colonizers saw themselves as altruistic instruments of progress, and believed Western education would “civilize” the indigenous population who were presumably “too backward” to know what was best for their communities. Today, Canadian education has moved away from overtly colonialist discourses and has publicly embraced the principles of multiculturalism. It is important to investigate how and if this ideological shift has translated into the practice of contemporary Canadian education. My research is intended to excavate the colonial legacy in Canadian education by addressing four overlapping questions: 1) How does Ontario secondary school social studies curriculum address Canada’s colonial history and contemporary Aboriginal issues? 2) What do students actually report learning about these topics? 3) How does this impact students’ perspectives on Aboriginal peoples’ position within Canadian society? 4) What do the answers to the previous questions tell us about the relationship between the theory and the practice of Ontario curricula? Provincial curriculum documents provide an important site of analysis, because they represent a concise expression of dominant values, identities and knowledges (Goodson, 1992; Dei, 1999).

¹ Following the *Constitution Act* of 1982, I will use Aboriginal as an umbrella term to refer to all status-Indian, non-status-Indian, Metis, and Inuit peoples. It is important to note, however, that each of these groups represents a diversity of cultures and language groups each with their own traditions and histories. When I have used alternative terminology, it is simply to reflect the terminology used in the literature being discussed.

It is important to note that while race is undeniably a social category through which social relations of power are organized, my ontological foundation conceptualizes race not as a matter of biology, but rather, as Ng formulates it, as a “purely imaginary social fabrication whereby people’s physical and phenotypical differences are made into absolute differences” (2003: 210). This ontological position will enable me to identify how and if the practice of Ontario’s curriculum is embedded with a priori assumptions about racial difference; assumptions that are inextricable from the West’s colonial legacy of the economic exploitation and violent subjugation of non-White peoples (Castagna and Dei, 2000: 22). This understanding is crucial because, as Dei argues, education systems produce, police and standardize knowledge about subordinate social groups (1999: 403). This function of education is especially problematic when one considers that people in dominant social positions are the ones who develop curricula. Therefore, in analyzing the practice of Ontario’s curriculum, I will strive to “uncover the hidden agendas in the discourses of neutrality that claim political innocence, and the discourses of evasion that deny race as a social fact and social problem of life” (Dei, 1999: 401).

This project is rooted in Neo-Marxist approaches to critical pedagogy and post-colonial theory. I have conceptualized public education as an inherently political hegemonic institution, and committed myself to challenging the hegemonic processes at work in the practices of the classroom. My work is guided by a critical emancipatory agenda that emphasizes the potential for education to transform inequitable social relations by engaging contemporary and historical issues of social justice relating to Aboriginal peoples and communities. Specifically, I am interested in contributing to a reconciliatory process between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples in Canada, by

investigating how the education system contributes to the maintenance of asymmetrical power relations, and exploring possibilities for change.

The current literature on the sociology of education in Canada is primarily theoretical in nature, with a marked absence of research addressing the practical content of current educational curricula (Goodson, 1992). Through my research, I hope to contribute to the process of filling this gap by focusing on the relationship between student interpretations of the curriculum and the documents that dictate what students should be taught regarding Canada's colonial history and Aboriginal issues. At the heart of this analysis are twenty-five interviews with recent Ontario high school graduates. The interviews were designed using curriculum expectations relating to colonial history and Aboriginal issues in the compulsory courses *Geography of Canada* (Grade 9), *Civics* (Grade 10) and *Canadian History in the Twentieth Century* (Grade 10). The results of this study will contribute to scholarship in the sociology of education and postcolonial studies by providing a unique picture of the ways in which young people come to understand Canada's colonial legacy through their formal education, as well as providing insight into new directions for curriculum development, teacher training and more effective integration of anti-racist pedagogy in Ontario's high schools.

Apple argues that in order to understand "the economic and cultural 'functions' of our educational institutions"; one must possess "that peculiarly Marxist sensitivity to history to see the historical roots and conflicts which caused these institutions to be what they are today" (1979:16). In the following chapter, I have attempted to cultivate this sensitivity by providing a history of Aboriginal relations and education in Canada. This should serve to contextualize my project within Canada's colonial legacy of oppression.

In addition, I will provide a critical analysis of neoliberal hegemony and its consequences for democracy, citizenship and multiculturalism in Canadian education. In Chapter Three, I continue this discussion by making my epistemological commitments clear. This is accomplished by providing an overview of critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory. I highlight the tensions between structural and cultural approaches to critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory. By elucidating the debates within these fields of inquiry, I support my position that an anti-colonial Neo-Marxist approach provides the sturdiest theoretical framework for this project.

Chapter Four provides a methodological overview of my research design. Here, I explore the interpretive tradition in order to adequately elucidate my methodological orientation. This is followed by a discussion of the curriculum documents under analysis, and the interview protocol that stems from them. I provide a comprehensive description of my research participants, and the interview process undertaken with them. This chapter also contains a summation of ethical considerations including a self-reflexive investigation of my motivations as a white researcher concerned with issues of equity. Ultimately, this chapter addresses issues of both method and methodology, meaning that it is concerned with both the procedure and theory of the project.

In Chapter Five, I outline the tensions between the theory and practice of Ontario's high school curriculum expectations relating to colonial history and Aboriginal issues in Geography, Civics and History. Through this interpretive process, I explore how students make meaning of the knowledge they acquired in high school. This analysis continues in Chapter Six where I explore the implications of my findings by investigating student perspectives on the curriculum. This section allows students to weigh in on

whether they felt they learned enough about Aboriginal issues in high school. This chapter concludes with a discussion of students' attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples and their place in Canadian society. The information drawn from student responses is enlightening and affirms the need for meaningful reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians which propels this study.

Finally, Chapter Seven offers a discussion of the research presented in the previous chapters. Central to my project, this chapter considers both the substantive and theoretical implications of my findings, and offers suggestions for improving both the construction and delivery of curriculum material relating to Aboriginal issues. Moreover, this final chapter brings home the need for the Canadian education system to assume its responsibility to Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike by engaging a difficult discussion about injustice and privilege. Such a discussion would go a long way towards mending the fractured relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canada.

Chapter Two

The Colonial Legacy in Canadian Education

Non-Aboriginal Canadians need to be informed about Canada's colonial past and ongoing Aboriginal issues in order to adequately fulfill their responsibilities as citizens. Hence, what follows is a history of Aboriginal relations in Canada. My approach to this history has been to emphasize Aboriginal peoples' active resistance to government policies in order to side-step the trap that non-Aboriginal academics often fall into when discussing the destitution of Aboriginal communities: inaccurately depicting Aboriginal peoples as passive victims in need of help. This history is followed by an overview of recent research demonstrating how Aboriginal issues are narrowly represented in Canadian public school curriculum. Finally, I will provide a critical review of democracy, citizenship, neoliberalism and hegemony as they relate to Canadian education. This will serve to contextualize the project within dominant discourses on education, as well as to situate the project within the relevant literature in the sociology of education. That is, education within a neoliberal democracy carries with it certain prescriptions for citizenship that are at odds with the mandate of this project, which is to explore the necessity of, and possibilities for, engaging the historical and contemporary subjugation of Aboriginal peoples within Canadian education in ways that work towards meaningful reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. In sum, this chapter serves to contextualize the issues at hand and justify the necessity for engaging Canada's colonial legacy in education.

I Confronting Canada's Colonial Legacy

In practice, colonialism is the extension of a nation's sovereignty over territory and people outside its own borders in order to secure economic domination over their resources with the intention of enriching the colonizer. In the Canadian context, French and British colonizers were able to extract enormous amounts of valuable natural resources like fur, fish and timber, which were shipped to Europe and sold for tremendous profits. The exploitation of natural resources was facilitated by the militaristic, bureaucratic and ideological conquest of Canada's indigenous population. For Aboriginals, colonialism has meant the destruction of their traditional ways of life, and the imposition of a foreign system of oppressive control. The success of the colonial project required the entrenchment of a value system intended to legitimize and promote colonial rule on the basis that the beliefs and social structures of the colonizer are superior to those of the colonized. Thus, education was a natural and effective tool for carrying out the colonial mission.

In 1845, the legislative assembly of Upper Canada decreed that boarding schools would be established to educate Indian children through a program of aggressive assimilation. Longstanding partnerships between the Canadian government and the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England and Presbyterian Church permitted the establishment of a network of over a hundred residential schools (Chansonneuve, 2005). According to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, "The purpose of residential schooling was to assimilate Aboriginal children into Mainstream Canadian society by *disconnecting* them from their families and communities and severing all ties with languages, customs and beliefs" (as cited in Chansonneuve, 2005:5 italics in original). Consequently,

hundreds of Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their homes as attendance at residential schools was mandatory.

Aboriginal students spent ten months a year at residential schools, thus limiting their experiences of family life. Additionally, siblings were often separated within the schools as gender segregation was the rule (Chansonneuve, 2005:5). Students were forbidden to use their own language, or maintain their cultural traditions, and they were subjected to heavy labour, harsh discipline and, all too often, physical and sexual abuse (Cassidy et al., 2001; Chansonneuve, 2005). Fournier and Crey suggest that residential schools represented an effort to “kill the Indian in the child” (1997:47). It is not surprising then that the effects of residential schooling were, and continue to be, devastating. Monture-Angus is direct in her assessment: “Removing a child from their community weakens the entire community. Removing children from their culture and placing them in a foreign culture is an act of genocide” (1995:193). Chansonneuve concurs that residential schools were equipped with all the tools of cultural genocide (2005:5). This is important as it unequivocally demonstrates how education can be a powerful political tool capable of serving specific ends like the destructive subjugation of Aboriginal peoples.

Despite the commonly held belief that Aboriginal people constitute a dwindling population segregated on reserves, they are actually the fastest growing and the youngest population group in Canada. According to the 2001 census, the median age of the North American Indian, Métis and Inuit population is 23.5, compared to the median age of 37.7 for the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada). Nearly 70 percent of Aboriginal people live off reserve and nearly a third of these live in large cities (Statistics Canada,

2001). Ontario is home to 20 percent (127,785) of Canada's North American Indian population, and less than half of these people live on a reserve (Statistics Canada, 2001). Overall, Aboriginal people make up 3.3 percent of the total Canadian population (976,305), of which 62 percent are North American Indian, 33 percent are Métis, and 5 percent are Inuit (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Over the past fifty years, as Aboriginal people attempt to recover from the demographic devastation of colonization, their voices demanding social justice have grown louder (Cardinal, 1999/1969: vii-xxi). These demands have too often fallen on deaf ears. In his seminal text *The Unjust Society*, Cree leader Harold Cardinal asserts: "We want the white man to shut up and listen to us, really listen for a change" (Cardinal, 1999/1969:10). Since Cardinal first published his indictment of the Canadian government and the dominant population it represents, many other Aboriginal leaders have echoed his demand to be heard (Assembly of First Nations (AFN), 2006; Dyck, 1991; Erasmus, 1989; Maracle, 1977). As Aboriginals have begun to organize politically, the deafness of Canadian hegemony has become increasingly harder to sustain.

Until amendments were made to the Indian Act in 1951 and 1960 respectively, Aboriginal people were forbidden from forming political organizations to advocate for their interests, and denied the right to vote in Canadian general elections. The Aboriginal rights movement only began to gain speed after these changes were made. In 1966, the release of *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies* (The Hawthorn Report) provided Aboriginal leaders with ammunition and momentum as it definitively located Aboriginal peoples at the bottom of Canada's social and economic hierarchy, and denounced government policies as

destructive and discriminatory. In response to this report, the Trudeau government introduced the White Paper in 1969. The White Paper was intended to override historical agreements between Aboriginals and European settlers and eventually eliminate Aboriginals as a social group in Canadian society (Cardinal, 1999/1969). This proposed legislation recommended the repeal of the Indian Act; the termination of treaties and disbandment of reserves; the transfer of power to the provinces and the elimination of the Ministry of Indian Affairs; and, finally, the removal of Aboriginals from the Canadian Constitution. These proposals were based on the assumption that Aboriginal peoples needed only to become more like the white majority in order to attain equality (Cardinal, 1999/1969). Aboriginal opposition to the White paper's assimilationist agenda was instant and insistent; many charged that the White Paper equated to "cultural annihilation" (Cardinal, 1969/1999:2). Outrage over the White Paper led to the establishment of the National Indian Brotherhood, a precursor to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). Due to the overwhelming backlash, the White Paper was eventually withdrawn. Still, the fight for Aboriginal rights continued.

In the 1980's, fears that the Constitution Act would fail to recognize Aboriginal peoples as one of Canada's founding groups resulted in three-hundred Aboriginal leaders traveling to London, England to register their opposition (Linklater et al., 1982:4). This was followed by the formation of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), a national organization that represents 630 First Nations communities. As a result of sustained efforts, Aboriginal rights were enshrined in the 1982 *Constitution Act*. Yet, Aboriginals were denied access to the constitutional process until the 1983-87 First Ministers Conference on Aboriginal Rights where the AFN, the Métis National Council, Inuit

Tapiriit Kanatami and the Native Council of Canada met with the premiers and the prime minister. While some progress was made during these conferences, the government refused to acknowledge what Native leaders wanted most: their right to self-government. In 1990, the Mulroney government sought the support of Aboriginal leaders to shore up the floundering Meech Lake Accord, which was under fire for its proposed enshrinement of special rights for Quebec. The Meech Lake Accord failed in June 1990. A month later, the Oka Crisis brought Canada face-to-face with the strength of Aboriginal determination to defend their rights.

The conflict at Oka, Quebec was a result of a land claim dispute wherein the Mohawk community at Kanesatake refused to accept the plans of the Oka Golf Club, supported by the Municipality of Oka, to expand onto traditional burial grounds. In protest, Mohawk warriors set up a blockade. Four months later, as negotiations dissolved, over a hundred Quebec police officers were ordered to enforce an injunction by the Quebec superior court to have the blockade torn down. In the ensuing chaos, shots were fired on both sides and police Corporal Marcel Lemay was killed. The police surrounded Kanesatake, and a tense standoff developed between the people of Kanesatake and the Quebec Police. In a show of solidarity, Aboriginal communities across Canada held demonstrations of protest and erected blockades. Notably, the people of nearby Kahnawake erected a blockade on the Mercier Bridge effectively halting traffic on a major thoroughfare in and out of Montreal. Public indignation ensued and Premier Bourassa invoked the Emergencies Act and called in the Canadian Army. Around 2,500 regular and reserve troops were put on notice and 33 troops from the Quebec-based Royal 22e Regiment (the 'Van Doos') advanced on the Mohawk encampment. The first three

barricades were captured quickly, leading the army to a face-to-face standoff with the Mohawk warriors at the final barricade leading to the disputed territory.

The conflict at Kahnawake was unprecedented and well documented; Canadians watched the escalation of what appeared to be a nation-to-nation conflict as the army faced off against the Mohawk warriors. Eventually the blockades were taken down and many Aboriginals were arrested (Koenig and Obomsawin, 1993). In all, the standoff lasted seventy-eight days, caused international embarrassment, and forced Aboriginal land claim issues to the forefront of Canadian politics (Koenig and Obomsawin, 1993). The urgency and potential volatility of the Aboriginal situation in Canada had never been more apparent.

In the wake of the Oka Crisis, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was established in 1991 with the mandate to examine the major problems facing Aboriginal people, particularly in terms of their relationship with the Canadian government and their position in Canadian society (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), 1996a:1). Specifically, the Commission's mandate was to "propose specific solutions, rooted in domestic and international experience, to the problems which have plagued those relationships and which confront Aboriginal peoples today" (DIAND, 1996b:1). RCAP constitutes the most extensive study of Aboriginal peoples ever undertaken in Canada. The commission visited 96 communities, held 178 days of hearings, heard the testimony of 2,067 people, and commissioned over 350 research projects (DIAND, 1996b). In 1996, RCAP's findings were released in a five volume report that contained hundreds of recommendations, and a detailed twenty-year

agenda for change. While a comprehensive overview of RCAP's recommendations is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to highlight the following statements:

Until the story of life in Canada, as Aboriginal people know it, finds a place in all Canadians knowledge of their past, the wounds from historical violence and neglect will continue to fester — denied by Canadians at large and, perversely, generating shame in Aboriginal people because they cannot shake off the sense of powerlessness that made them vulnerable to injury in the first place. Violations of solemn promises in the treaties, inhumane conditions in residential schools, the uprooting of whole communities, the denial of rights and respect to patriotic Aboriginal veterans of two world wars, and the great injustices and small indignities inflicted by administration of the *Indian Act* — all take on mythic power to symbolize present experiences of unrelenting injustice...

We believe firmly that the time has come to resolve a fundamental contradiction at the heart of Canada: that while we assume the role of defender of human rights in the international community, we retain, in our conception of Canada's origins and make-up, the remnants of colonial attitudes of cultural superiority that do violence to the Aboriginal peoples to whom they are directed. Restoring Aboriginal nations to a place of honour in our shared history, and recognizing their continuing presence as collectives participating in Canadian life, are therefore fundamental to the changes we propose (RCAP, 1996: Vol.1).

The strategy for change proposed by RCAP was based on the presupposition that raising the economic, social, political, cultural, and health status of Aboriginal peoples is dependent upon the restoration of mutual respect between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.

Like The Hawthorn Report thirty years before, RCAP generated little concrete action from the Canadian government (Assembly of First Nations (AFN), 2006). In fact, none of RCAP's recommendations for restructuring the government's relationship with Aboriginal peoples have been implemented (AFN, 2006). As predicted by RCAP, without this restructuring there have been no great advances in the social, economic, or physical well-being of Aboriginal peoples. A report card released by the AFN to mark the tenth anniversary of RCAP, gave the government a failing grade stating, "The reality for

First Nations communities today is *ongoing poverty*, and an increasing gap in living conditions with other Canadians, which were reported during the RCAP hearings” (AFN, 2006:1 italics in original). Specific targets set out by RCAP included closing the economic gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples by 50 percent.

Unfortunately, poverty continues to be legion among Canada’s Aboriginal population. This is reflected in the fact that the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people is three times higher than the national average (Chansonneuve, 2005:32), and in some Aboriginal communities has increased to over 50 percent (AFN, 2006:3). Poverty and unemployment are reinforced by low levels of educational attainment: 26 percent of Aboriginal adults have less than a grade 9 education, and only 3 percent have university degrees, compared to 12 percent of other Canadians (Chansonneuve, 2005:32). Contrary to RCAP’s vision for progress, Aboriginal children today do not have any more opportunities for advancement than they did in the past. For example, 25 percent of Aboriginal children live in poverty, compared to 16 percent of other Canadian children; Aboriginal children have twice the national rate of disability; and, over 10 percent of status Indian children are in child welfare compared to 0.67 percent of non-Aboriginal children (AFN, 2006:1). Disturbingly, there has been a 70 percent increase of on reserve children in child welfare since 1995 (AFN, 2006:1). The removal of Aboriginal children from their homes has a long history in Canada, and today it is a reflection of the deplorable living conditions that continue to plague Aboriginal communities.

The material conditions of existence for Aboriginals in Canada garner comparison to the third world (AFN, 2006:3). In 2006, 12 percent of Aboriginal communities were under boil water advisories and 6 percent (5,000 homes) were without sewage services

(AFN, 2006:3). Many Aboriginal communities face overcrowding with housing density twice the national average (National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO), 2004). Government funding for on reserve housing has remained unchanged for twenty years, and almost half of First Nations² homes off reserve are below standard (NAHO, 2004). These poor living conditions translate to poor health. The life expectancy for First Nations women is 5.2 years less than other Canadian women, and the gap is 7.4 years for First Nations men (AFN, 2006:3). Infant mortality in Aboriginal communities is double the national rate (Chansonneuve, 2005:32). Diabetes occurs among Aboriginal people at 3 times the national rate, and tuberculosis is around 9 times more likely to strike Aboriginal people than other Canadians (AFN, 2006:3). A shortfall in government funding is compounding the health crisis among Aboriginal peoples leaving many people in desperate situations (AFN, 2006:3). Evidently, the vision laid out by RCAP has not been realized for Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Aboriginal communities in Canada clearly continue to live under the shadow of colonialism and capitalist exploitation. The oppression of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is fundamentally both material/economic and spiritual/cultural. Ideological and institutional racism combined with structural poverty and dependency is a deadly combination. A sad manifestation of this oppression is the astronomically high rate of suicide among Aboriginal people: suicide rates are 5 times higher among Aboriginals than non-Aboriginals in Canada (Ponting, 1997: 83). As Ponting points out, “this speaks volumes about First Nation individuals’ perceptions of the structure of opportunity available to them” (1997:83). RCAP addressed this grave issue stating:

² The National Aboriginal Health Organization uses First Nations to refer to all Status and non-Status Indians.

We have concluded that suicide is one of a group of symptoms ranging from truancy and law breaking to alcohol and drug abuse and family violence that are in large part interchangeable as expressions of the burden of loss, grief and anger experienced by Aboriginal people in Canadian society (1996).

As noted, suicide is just one violent manifestation of colonization. In regards to family violence, the statistics are astounding. For example, an Alberta study found that 91 percent of Aboriginal women had experienced some form of family violence, and in the Northwest Territories, a study found that 80 percent of girls, and 50 percent under 8 years old had been sexually abused (Stout, 1998:275-276). While suicide and family violence in Aboriginal communities can be viewed as the result of internalized oppression and naturalized dominant patriarchal ideologies, they also need to be understood in conjunction with ideological and institutional racism in Canadian society.

II Canadian Education: Failing to Confront our Colonial Legacy

Despite the findings of RCAP and a myriad of other studies, Cardinal's words in 1969 remain true today: "Most politicians and, as far as that goes, most Canadians, tend to plead ignorance as a defence for the inexcusable treatment of the native people of this country" (Cardinal, 1999:6). Indeed, evidence of the disregard for colonial histories and their effects on Aboriginal issues in Canadian education today is supported by several studies (Anderson and Pohl, 2002; Dion, 2006; Clark, 2005). For instance, a 2001 survey of 1500 Canadians revealed that 67 percent believed they "knew too little about the issues and challenges that First Nations face" (Anderson and Pohl, 2002:para.9). More specifically, this study found that 80 percent of Canadians "felt that what they had learned in elementary and secondary school about Aboriginal Peoples was inadequate and had not prepared them for their adult civic responsibilities" (Anderson and Pohl,

2002:para.10). This is supported by the fact that two-thirds of respondents did not remember discussing Aboriginal peoples in public school classrooms at all (Anderson and Pohl, 2002:para.10). In failing to engage Canada's colonial history and contemporary Aboriginal issues, Canada's education system is functioning to reproduce Western ideals that devalue Aboriginal peoples and their struggles by pushing them to the periphery of curricula.

There is a marked absence of research investigating how Canadian education addresses Aboriginal issues and colonial history. However, this project does not stand in isolation; for example, Clark (2006) and Dion (2005) investigate and challenge the dominant representations of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian classrooms. These authors both identify narratives of inevitable progress in education that conceptualize Aboriginal peoples as obstacles, beneficiaries, and/or victims of Western development. This can mean Aboriginals are portrayed as "romantic mythical others" (Dion, 2005:35) who are "uniquely spiritual" (Clark, 2006:47), or as "culturally deficient" (Dion 2005:40) "savage warriors" (Clark, 2006:47). Dion concludes that Aboriginal peoples are generally represented within a discourse of subordination that evokes pity in non-Aboriginal students (2005:40). These limited depictions are facilitated by extensive curricular focus on the periods of pre-contact through to Riel's execution in 1885, with limited or no connection to contemporary Aboriginal issues (Dion, 2005; Clark, 2006).

According to Clark, the absence of Aboriginal people in the Canadian curriculum is a result of their position "outside the real action of textbooks... outside the narrative of progress that is Canadian History" (2006:49). Clark argues further that this approach "allows us to distance ourselves and our students from the residual injustices and

inequities of colonialism” (2006:47). Additionally, Dion’s research found that while the majority of students acknowledge that oppression is wrong, students became resistant when asked to reflect on their privilege: “The story of Aboriginal people constitutes a threat to the moral structure of their current position of privilege” (2005:46-47). Indeed, the students interviewed by Dion demonstrated a keen desire to maintain a worldview that emphasizes Canada’s position as an international beacon of multicultural democracy characterized by meritocracy (2005:46). Reflecting on her experience as a teacher of Native studies, Gardner similarly noted students’ resistance to narratives that disrupted their understanding of the world: “For Euramericans to remain comfortable with themselves, Indian people must be viewed in certain ways only” (1995:373). The historical amnesia and abdication of responsibility apparent in the education systems’ orientation to Aboriginal issues function to relieve non-Aboriginal Canadians of the need to reflect on their own relationship to the ongoing cultural, political and economic oppression of Aboriginal peoples. In this way, the education system fails to challenge, and indeed reinforces, a social hierarchy that entrenches Aboriginal peoples at its base.

If non-Aboriginal Canadians are not educated about Canada’s colonial history and current Aboriginal struggles, they will remain sorely unprepared to meet with increasing demands for social justice. As their collective history demonstrates, Canadian Aboriginals are committed to raising themselves above the destitution that has been foisted upon them, and they are increasingly prepared to demand that the federal government live up to its historical agreements. Conflicts at Oka, Ipperwash and Caledonia demonstrate the urgency and precariousness of the contemporary situation. Again and again, Aboriginal peoples determined to assert their title to land have had to

resort to the creation of barricades, and in response various levels of government have reacted with police actions, and in the case of Oka, military force. Conversely, the successful settlement of the high profile Nisga'a and Nunavut land claims indicate the possibility of more honourable resolutions. Both of these settlements required tremendous and sustained effort on the part of Aboriginal peoples, and were only arrived at after decades, even centuries, of struggle. It is likely that Canadian courts will be dealing with land claims, treaties, and Aboriginal rights well into the next century. When the official channels of courts and governments do not adequately address claims to Aboriginal title and conflicts escalate in number and intensity, the Canadian population will no doubt find it increasingly difficult to remain ignorant of the issues involved.

III Contextualizing Neoliberal Hegemony in Education

Ideally democracy refers to a system of governance whereby citizens share in directing the activities of the state, as opposed to being governed by a single class, group, or autocrat. In practice, the character of a democracy is determined by who counts as a citizen, and how the rights and responsibilities of citizenship are defined. In Canada, the establishment of European democracy excluded Aboriginal peoples as citizens, thus denying them basic rights and facilitating the appropriation of their lands. Today, Aboriginals continue to struggle for their right to self-governance as evidenced by the hundreds of land claims that continue their slow journey through Canadian courts. Therefore, democracy in Canada is based on a fundamental imposition of values: Aboriginals are forced to work within the confines of Western legal-rationality to assert their right to land that was taken from them on the basis of that same rationality. Clearly,

within the context of colonial and neocolonial power relations, democracy in Canada must be interrogated as a capricious, contradictory and elitist construction. This is especially the case when one considers the central role that democratic ideals play in Canadian education.

The relationship between democracy and education has been well established (Kelly, 1995; Osborne, 2001; Portelli and Solomon, 2001; Sears and Hughes, 1996). Indeed, as the definition of who counts as ‘people’ has expanded, from white European men, to men and women of all races and religions, so did ‘peoples’ access to education expand. This expansion of citizenship rights was particularly slow for Aboriginals who, as noted above, were unable to vote until 1960, and were denied access to Canadian post-secondary institutions until 1951, unless they consented to enfranchisement which meant renouncing their Indian status and the rights it accorded them (Aboriginal Institutes’ Consortium, 2005:6). Ironically, there was a general consensus at the time that in a democracy “educated citizens [function] as the best check on abuses of political power” (Kelly, 1995:14). The education system plays a crucial and contested role in the political life of a democracy as education has the power to both undermine and promote critical engagement in political relations. As Kelly notes, “The social and political tensions that surround education form the locus of public knowledge in the context of democracy” (1995:4). Investigating these tensions reveal democracy and citizenship as sites of struggle between dominant and minority visions of Canadian society.

A contested objective of public education in a democracy is citizenship training (Osborne, 2001; Sears and Hughes, 1996). Sears and Hughes suggest, “Those who speak of educating for citizenship are concerned not so much with the narrow legal definition of

citizenship as with some normative sense of good citizenship” (1996:125). In an immigrant society like Canada’s, where citizens vary in terms of ethnicity, race and religion, there is both a pre-occupation with and a precariousness about national identity (Sears, 1996:53-54). As education is a provincial responsibility, citizenship curriculum varies across Canada. Still, the nature of citizenship education is that it is constructed to reflect the state’s priorities (Osborne, 2001:39; Sears and Hughes, 1996). This often means that education is used “as an instrument of ideological indoctrination and cultural imposition” (Osborne, 2001:39). However, the government’s publicly stated priorities are democratic, and most provincial curriculum documents cloak citizenship within the innocuous framework of democratic rights and responsibilities that excludes critical questions about the contradictions inherent in Canadian citizenship. Behind these discourses of neutrality lie an educational agenda designed to serve the needs of neoliberal capitalism (Apple, 1979; Giroux, 2004; Griffith, 2001; Osborne, 2001).

Neoliberalism refers to the political philosophy that has taken hold of the West from the 1970’s onward and is the “defining ideology of the current historical moment” (Giroux, 2004:44). Essentially, it is an economic ideology founded upon the notion that Welfare states should be dismantled in favour of laissez-faire approaches that champion open markets, free-trade, minimal regulation and minimal government spending (Giroux, 2004). Therefore, neoliberalism is fundamentally connected to capitalism and to the belief that minimal government intervention in the economy will promote social and economic progress, including social justice. However, critics disagree with this supposition. For example, Giroux writes:

[Neoliberalism] accentuates a structural relationship between the state and the economy that produces hierarchies, concentrates power in relatively few hands,

unleashes the most brutal elements of a rabid individualism, destroys the welfare state, incarcerates large numbers of its disposable populations, economically disenfranchises large segments of the lower and middle classes, and reduces entire countries to pauperization (2004:45).

While often presented as inevitable and innocuous, neoliberal ideals have far reaching implications for social and political relations of power.

Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony is helpful for understanding the intersection of neoliberal capitalism with democratic education. Building on Marxist theory, Gramsci developed a theory of hegemony in order to explain how dominant groups maintain control by means more insidious than military force or economic coercion: their power is realized through the normalization of their values to the extent that subordinate groups accept them as their own (1971). Gramsci describes hegemony as the process whereby "spontaneous consent [is] given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (1971:12). According to Gramsci the consent of the masses is ensured for two reasons. First, the prestige enjoyed by the dominant group as a result of their relation to the means of production inspires faith in their ideals. Second, the coercive power of the state "enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively" (1971:12). Accordingly, the use of coercive power is such that it is legitimated as necessary and in the best interest of all. Nonetheless, hegemony includes the likelihood that not all citizens will unquestioningly consent to the state's imposition of dominant values, and in the context of education hegemonic processes can involve resistance, manipulation, and appropriation on the part of the student (Osborne, 2001:39). This insight is central to the present project because it provides an analysis of power that allows for emancipatory potentials and thus points to productive directions for change.

Despite the potential for resistance within hegemony, the power of state coercion is such that many people do not even recognize its effects as they have internalized dominant norms and values. The force of hegemony in education leads many to believe, for example, that the education system has no choice but to adapt to global capitalism. As a result, much of the population is undisturbed by the fact that “policy-makers in education now think in terms of producing workers, not citizens, of retooling Canadian schools so as to produce the kind of work-force that will guarantee success in the new global economy” (Osborne, 2001:40). Neoliberalism has covertly redefined citizenship education in such a way that good citizens are narrowly defined as economically productive.

In Ontario, neoliberal hegemony in education was fortified in 1995 when Mike Harris’s Progressive Conservatives were elected to power on a platform of overtly neoliberal reforms. The Progressive Conservatives educational reforms, aggressively implemented through *Bill-160: The Education Improvement Act*, constitute “an example of the massive grasp for centralized power by the state as it concentrates its authority over public education in the hands of a few cabinet ministers and government advisors” (Dei and Karumanchery, 2001:195). The neoliberal paradigm shift ushered in by Bill-160 is termed the “marketization of education” (Dei and Karumanchery, 2001:194). Dei and Karumanchery maintain that this phenomenon stems from the Tories faith in meritocracy, and their denial of deep social stratification (2001:189). Likewise, Sears and Hughes suggest that neoliberal educational reform is predicated on the notion that “good citizens pay their own way, contribute to the nation’s well-being, and ensure success in the international marketplace” (1996:123). Thus, the education system is treated as a

business venture that can be run most efficiently as a bureaucracy (Griffith, 2001:83). Despite major resistance from critical pedagogues and frontline education workers, the Tories' restructuring has entailed the standardization of curriculum, report cards and testing; the amalgamation of school boards; and the withdrawal of millions of dollars in funding.

Canada is not unique in its most recent approach to education: other Western countries are also experiencing the marketization of education. For example, Marshall notes that New Zealand's education policy stems from what is believed to be "not merely an economic need to reshape the structures of education, [but] to reshape them towards economic 'needs'" (1999:145). Hence, education is transformed from an end in itself to a means to an end, and the perceived end is the production of workers. In Britain, parallels appear in a curriculum bound to "the dominant political and economic ideology" (Jackson, 1999:138). This is played out in an education system that, according to Jackson, teaches children to accept their place in the economic order (1999:135). Jackson's analysis of the British Conservative government's 1991 National History Curriculum concludes that it serves "what the designers feel are national needs" (1999:137). Of course, 'national needs' are synonymous with the state's needs, and the state's needs are constructed through neoliberal capitalist ideology. Undoubtedly, this puts education at odds with the needs of a nation's minority populations, as it creates "a schooling context that universalizes the dominant group's frame of reference and world views" (Dei and Karumanchery, 2001:197-198). While neoliberal approaches to education have similar implications for minority groups throughout the Western world, in

Canada they must be considered within the context of official commitments to multiculturalism.

In 1971, Canada proudly became the first country in the world to establish multiculturalism as an official policy. Through constitutional and legislative measures, the Canadian government has publicly declared a commitment to the principles of equality and inclusion. Fleras and Elliott suggest that multiculturalism can be understood as demographic fact, humanist ideology, political policy and a set of practices that emphasize “that people can live together with differences at personal, institutional, and national levels” (2007: 279-287). The Canadian government boasts that “[t]he Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence” (Canada, 2007). More critical assessments of multiculturalism dispute this rosy outlook, and suggest that multiculturalism reflects a depoliticized approach that creates “consensus, conformity and control in securing the status quo behind the smokescreen of national interests”, and “is little more than an exercise in conflict management whose primary goal is to ‘cool out’ those troublesome constituents who are problems or create problems” (Fleras and Elliot, 2007:281). While a comprehensive overview of multiculturalism and its detractors is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to note that multicultural visions of Canada represent liberal-humanist ideals that often fail to capture the everyday experiences of dominant and subordinate groups (Levine-Rasky, 2006). The tensions between multiculturalism and more critical discourses are revealed in the debates surrounding the role of education in a multicultural society.

Carrington and Bonnett's analysis of Ontario's approach to race equity education unequivocally identifies 1995 as the beginning of a general decline in pro-active policy (1997:415). Pro-active policy can be traced to 1979 when the Toronto Board of Education became the first Canadian school board to implement official anti-racist policy (Rezai-Rashti, 1995:7). It is important to note, however, that Toronto's race and ethnic relations policy was not initiated by the Ministry of Education, or even the school board; rather, "it was introduced as a result of pressure from parents and community groups" (Rezai-Rashti, 1995:11). While this policy was officially referred to as anti-racist, Rezai-Rashti argues that it is best understood as multicultural (1995).

There are important qualitative differences between multicultural and anti-racism approaches to education. Rezai-Rashti explains that "[w]hile the supporters of multiculturalism look at culture as if it were a static institution, anti-racist educators see it as a dynamic institution influenced by elements of social class and gender" (1995:7). Within the multicultural model, racism is understood as the result of ignorance and individual prejudice, and the solution is as simple as promoting tolerance and familiarity with diverse cultural customs (Rezai-Rashti, 1995:7). The liberal thrust of multicultural education is that culture is identified as the most important variable for resolving racial inequity (McCarthy, 1995: 24-25) Conversely, anti-racism education is inherently oppositional, and is premised upon the notion that racism can only be challenged through open interrogation of existing social, economic and political structures (Rezai-Rashti, 1995:7). Thus, critical pedagogy contends:

...multiculturalism needs to break out of its silence regarding the role it plays in masking how white domination colonizes definitions of normal. Hence, critical educators need to move their analyses and pedagogical practices away from an exotic or allegedly objective encounter with marginal groups and raise more

questions with respect to how their own subjectivities and practices are present in the construction of the margins (Giroux, 1992:15).

Clearly there exists a critical need for educational theorists and practitioners to root out and resist hegemonic discourses in education. It is my intention to contribute to this process by challenging hegemonic discourses about Canada's colonial history and Aboriginal issues as they are embedded in Ontario educational and curricular practices. In the following chapter I will elucidate the theoretical framework I have used to support and direct my research.

Chapter Three

Theorizing Postcolonial Power Relations in Education

This research fits comfortably under the wide canopy of critical theory, and is intended as a contribution to what Michael Apple terms “critical educational studies” (2001: vii). In order to explore how contemporary postcolonial power relations between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals in Canada are produced and reproduced by Ontario’s Social Studies Curriculum, I draw on critical pedagogy, postcolonial theory and neo-Marxist approaches to social inquiry. Fundamentally, this thesis assumes emancipatory potential in education, and simultaneously challenges the neoliberal assumption that contemporary education is a politically neutral democratic process designed to facilitate social and economic advancement through meritocracy.

In this chapter I build on the themes developed in the previous chapter, and provide a cartography of the theoretical perspectives employed in the analysis to come. Most importantly, I have found it necessary to delve into the debates surrounding cultural versus structural approaches in critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory. I believe that the practices and outcomes of education are fundamentally both structural and cultural. However, I have theorized the oppression of Aboriginal peoples in Canada as primarily structural. Although the subordination of Aboriginal peoples is undoubtedly maintained through cultural processes, the structural legacy of domination must be given primacy in order to capture its embeddedness in Canadian institutions like education. Thus, following Gramsci, Freire and Apple, I embrace a neo-Marxist approach, and thus situate my analysis within a tradition that privileges material relations of power over cultural

analyses. Still, like Gramsci, Freire and Apple, I have found some insights offered by the cultural tradition too valuable to ignore. As such, I have tried to incorporate these insights in such a way that my structural approach is best able to capture the complexities of the issues under analysis. In the following pages, I justify my position through a critique of both cultural and structural approaches to critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory.

I Critical Pedagogy

Simply put, critical pedagogy emerged when “critical theory encountered education” (Kincheloe and Steinberg as cited in Grande, 2004: 20). Narrowly defined, critical theory refers to theorists of the Frankfurt School who have built on Marxism in an effort to not only interpret the world, but to change it. The practical emancipatory aim of critical theory distinguishes it from more traditional approaches, as critical theorists have sought to use social inquiry “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (Horkheimer, 1982: 244). Critical approaches to education have proven well suited to engaging the relationships “between education and economic structure... [and] the linkages between knowledge and power” (Apple, 1979:1). Generally, critical pedagogy is helpfully understood as an umbrella term for the transdisciplinary engagement of education by neo-Marxist, postmodern, post-structuralist, feminist and postcolonial theories determined to strive for social justice and equity. The plethora of voices within critical pedagogy inevitably leads to a diversity of often conflicting perspectives. Still, there seems to be a general consensus that “critical pedagogy aims to understand, reveal, and disrupt the mechanisms of oppression imposed by the established order, suturing the processes and aims of education to emancipatory goals” (Grande, 2004:21).

Critical pedagogy's various roots can be traced back to Paulo Freire's emancipatory pedagogy of the oppressed which conceptualizes education as inherently political and potentially revolutionary (2006/1970). Giroux suggests that labeling one's work as Freirian is antithetical as one must "use his work as theory rather than method", which means that one has to be "a producer of theory rather than one who implements other's theories" (as cited in Scheurich, 1999). Freire does, however, offer useful theoretical insights for conceptualizing education as an emancipatory political project. For example, Freire is instructive in his discussion of oppressor-oppressed relations suggesting that emancipatory pedagogy can only come from "the oppressed themselves and from those who are truly solidary with them" (2006/1970:45). Freire suggests that relentless reflexivity is a radical requirement for members of the oppressor class who desire to work towards social justice (2006/1970:60). As such, I have attempted to reflexively address my privilege in the following chapter on methods and methodology. Furthermore, I have made a concerted effort to take up Freire's challenge and bring my research in line with his prescription for true solidarity:

The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he (sic) stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor – when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. (2006/1970:48)

Freire conceptualizes emancipatory pedagogy as a humanistic dialectic between theory and practice founded within the most radical of all concepts: love and hope.

Freire asserts, "People do not fight because of beautiful ideas that they have in their heads, they fight in order to get a better way of being, of existing" (as cited in Regnier, 1995:74). With this in mind, it is unsurprising that much of the debate within

critical pedagogy today centers around “beautiful ideas” taking precedence over finding practical ways of improving the often miserable conditions of existence experienced by minority populations. The disjuncture between theory and practice in critical pedagogy has been addressed from a variety of perspectives. For example, both Ellsworth (1992) and Rezai-Rashti (1995) have called attention to the ways in which critical pedagogues’ abstract language can make theoretical insights inaccessible to frontline educational workers. The lack of dialogue between theorists and practitioners has important practical implications for effecting meaningful change within schools. Moreover, the field of critical pedagogy is often charged with a lack of vision. For example, Ellsworth argues:

Critical pedagogues consistently answer the question of ‘empowerment for what?’ in ahistorical and depoliticized abstractions... As a result, student empowerment has been defined in the broadest possible humanistic terms, and becomes a ‘capacity to act effectively’ in a way that fails to challenge any identifiable social or political position, institution, or group (1992:99).

Thus, the liberal humanist foundation of critical pedagogy can obscure its position as a Eurocentric patriarchal discourse (Ellsworth, 1992; Grande, 2004). With these critiques in mind, it is important to my purposes that the analysis at the heart of this thesis is presented in an accessible way that challenges Western hegemony and attends to Ellsworth’s question: “empowerment for what?”

II Engaging the Structural versus Cultural debates in Critical Pedagogy

Grande argues that “one of the central fissures in the field... whether the struggle for educational equity is primarily cultural or economic” (2004:22). At the risk of simplifying the terrain of this debate, generally postmodern theorists (including poststructuralists, liberal feminists and postmodern feminists) give primacy to micro

approaches favouring cultural analyses, whereas neo-Marxist and other radical pedagogues focus on structural analyses of political economy. While engaging these debates entails a risk of getting lost in them, I have found this engagement necessary in order to support my position that a structural approach best serves my project.

The postmodern project involves rejecting modernity's legacy of truth, certainty and universalism (Lyotard, 1984). In place of macro-theoretical frameworks and "grand narratives of legitimation," postmodernists posit micro-level theory and politics dealing with difference (Grande, 2004:22). Moreover, postmodern discourses are interested in moving beyond the binary divisions that characterize modern Eurocentric interpretations of the world. This means exploding the assumption that self/other, West/East, White/non-White, man/woman, mind/body, public/private, and politics/theory represent discreet and oppositional categories where one is believed to be superior and thus dominates over the other. Because postmodern theories constitute a reaction against an ordered view of the world, as well as a desire to incorporate a plurality of discourses and subjectivities, it would be problematic for postmodernists to posit a cohesive political goal for educational praxis. Hence, Grande argues, "Insofar as they theorize against 'certainty,' postmodernists tend to advocate a negative pedagogy, one more identifiable by what it stands against than what it stands for" (2004:22).

In their drive to explore the open-ended possibilities of education, postmodern theorists have come to represent a kaleidoscope of theoretical positions all committed to theorizing power and difference. This perspective is undeniably valuable for its ability to generate critique, deconstruct untenable binary divisions, and force a reevaluation of values. However, without an attending focus on material relations of power, postmodern

approaches to critical pedagogy are unsuited to the politically motivated emancipatory agenda I believe is necessary for social justice to be properly served in schools and in wider Canadian society. Indeed, Grande concludes that “postmodernism has been used to substitute the project of radical, social transformation with a politics of representation” (2004:24). Apple is also direct in his assessment that “more aggressive forms of postmodernism have forgotten that this is capitalism and that this fact makes a major difference” (2001:vi). Moreover, Apple warns that critical pedagogues cannot forget that “structures do exist” (2001:vi). Neo-Marxist scholars have advanced this critique, lamenting what they interpret as “the abandonment of emancipatory agendas, in general, and of the struggle against capitalist exploitation, in particular” (Grande, 2004:23). It is my contention that neo-Marxist approaches to critical pedagogy provide a much needed bridge between theory and praxis. This does not mean abandoning the insights of cultural approaches, but rather incorporating them within a structural analysis that keep neoliberal capitalist forms of domination at the fore.

Neo-Marxist approaches to critical pedagogy work towards an understanding of social relations that moves beyond the politically impotent identity politics of postmodern approaches and the economic determinism of traditional Marxism. This creates space for theorizing material conditions of existence as they are impacted by global capitalism, neoliberal values and colonial legacies. Neo-Marxist perspectives warn that privileging culture over economics “reduces class to just another form of difference,” which ignores that class is embedded in all other axes of oppression (Grande, 2004:24). In terms of how this can play out in education, Tejeda, Espinoza and Gutierrez argue that calls for educational reform often “ignore the racial and cultural dimensions of the social injustice

we inherit from our colonial and capitalist past” (2003: 11). Indeed, any theoretical approach that does not attend to the material relations of power, leaves capitalism and colonialism’s influence in education undertheorized. The Neo-Marxist approach employed in this thesis will be discussed at length below, but first postcolonial theories must be entered into the debate.

III Postcolonial Theory

Over the last twenty-five years postcolonialism has emerged as a distinct discipline and body of theories intended to grapple with the implications of European colonial conquest in Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas. This brings a vast array of theories and substantive issues under the postcolonial umbrella. As a result, defining the parameters of postcolonial theory comprehensively is impractical. There are, however, common themes woven throughout all postcolonial theories:

Out of all the noise emanating from the contesting positions of postcolonial theory there repeatedly emerges an insistence on the ways in which some narrations obscure, subvert, misrepresent, or silence others – a politics of silence and alterity, the problematic of the phantom of the subaltern’s voice. (Pandit and McGuire, 1995:3)

At a fundamental level, postcolonialism is interested in recovering the voices of peoples marginalized by colonialism. This position is underlined by Dirlik’s somewhat facetious answer to the question, when did postcoloniality begin?: “When Third World intellectuals arrived in First World academe” (as cited in Mongia, 1995:2). Indeed, the question of if, when, and what parts of the world have entered a postcolonial era is central to postcolonial debates. Much of the contention surrounds the use of ‘post’ as a prefix.

The 'post' in postcolonialism is open to two specific interpretations. On the one hand, post signals a historical moment: after colonialism. On the other hand, post indicates a theoretical shift: a movement beyond the confines of Western thought. So, while the first meaning entails a periodization of colonialism, the second meaning evokes a philosophical condition as post is used to align postcolonialism with other posts: postmodernism, poststructuralism, post-feminism, and post-Marxism. More specifically, Radhakrishnan suggests that postcoloniality "implies both going beyond anti-colonial nationalist theory as well as a movement beyond a specific point in history, that of colonialism and Third World struggles" (1993:323). Clearly, "the unarticulated tension" between historical and philosophical modes of approaching postcolonialism contributes to the general ambiguity surrounding the term (Shohat, 1995:323). This ambiguity has far reaching implications. According to Radhakrishnan,

The theoretical metaphors of the "post" conflates politics with epistemology, history with theory, and operates as the master code of *transcendence as such*... the term 'postcolonial' suggests a benign acquiescence as against the political activism and oppositionality available to the term 'third world.' (1993:751)

Thus, there is concern that postcoloniality has replaced the 'third world' as a foundational concept for theoretical frameworks that explore the cultural and political legacies of colonialist power as they are reconstituted within contemporary global power relations. This concern stems from the ways in which postcolonial as a term can occlude and depoliticize ongoing colonial power relations (Radhakrishnan, 1993; Shohat, 1995). Postcolonial discourses also provoke suspicion from colonized peoples who are acutely aware of the implications inherent in ivory-tower attempts to theorize their cultures, communities, knowledges and identities.

The general thrust of Canadian Aboriginal critiques of postcolonialism is that understanding Aboriginal issues through a postcolonial lens obscures the fact that Aboriginal cultures and traditions have carried on, not because of – but in spite of colonialism (Gardner, 1995:361). Cherokee novelist Thomas King argues “[I] cannot let postcolonial stand – particularly as a term– for, at its heart, it is an act of imagination and an act of imperialism that demands that I imagine myself as something I did not choose to be, as something I would not choose to become” (as cited in Gardner, 1995:361).

Mukherjee is also highly critical of the usefulness of postcolonial theory for understanding Aboriginal peoples as it “insists that the subjectivity of postcolonial cultures is inextricably tied to their erstwhile occupiers” (1990:5). So, while postcolonial theory conceptualizes power as a non-linear force, there remains a tendency to conceptualize Aboriginal peoples and their experiences exclusively through their relations with colonizers and colonization. Postcolonialism’s susceptibility to these critiques may be a result of its foundation in the psychological and existential focus of Frantz Fanon’s work.

In “Black Skin, White Masks” (1952), a seminal postcolonial text, Fanon challenges the identity imposed upon him through the gaze of the colonizer. Born in the French colony of Martinique and educated in France, Fanon’s theoretical work and psychiatric practice both involved an attempt to reconnect colonized identities that had been split and depersonalized by racism. Fanon’s position is based on a conviction that the psyches of colonized peoples suffer from a dual bisection as a result of being required to live in two worlds: both within and outside themselves. Homi K. Bhabha’s interrogation of Fanon’s vision of the “colonial alienation of the person” reveals the

complexity of colonial identity (1994:41). Bhabha suggests that post-Enlightenment man is “tethered to, *not* confronted by, his dark reflection, the shadow of colonized man” (1994:44). Likewise, Freire asserts that the dehumanization inherent in colonial relations of oppression “marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it” (2006[1970]: 44). These perspectives suggest that “the other” is incorporated into the identity of the colonizer as well as into the identity of the colonized. According to Bhabha’s contextual framework, the other is the specter of colonized people as they are identified through the simplistic and deterministic dualism of racist colonialism. This other may be formed from the fiction of colonialism, but it is incorporated into the postcolonial self so completely that it “disturbs and divides the very time of being” (Bhabha, 1994:44). So, counter to King and Mukherjee cited above, Fanon, Bhabha and Freire insist that colonized subjectivities necessarily include a relationship to the colonizers. The point, however, is to move beyond internalized oppressions and heal the fractured colonized self.

IV Postcolonial Approaches to the Structure versus Culture Debate

Before returning to the critical theoretical framework employed in this thesis, it is important to briefly consider the fault lines within postcolonial theory. The tensions evident within postcolonial theory mirror the divisions in critical pedagogy. As is the case with critical pedagogy, postcolonial theory has come under fire for its use of excessively abstract language that creates troubling distances between the theory and practice of emancipatory modes of inquiry. Moreover, divisions within postcolonial theory echo the divisions within critical pedagogy in that there are two distinct modes of inquiry:

The first, and by far most prevalent, mode engages postcoloniality as a regime of power/knowledge relations and foregrounds the problems of representation; it is, therefore, part of the project exploring discursive politics of truth. In contrast, the second mode does not take postcoloniality to be simply a problem of cultural politics, as Foucauldian genealogy proposes, but instead understands it as basically an economic issue that has to be explored in the context of the international division of labor and poses the problem of the economics of untruth in the relations of metropolitan and periphery. (Ebert, 1995:205)

At its base, the division within postcolonial theory is also premised on the question of whether cultural or structural approaches should take precedence as the guiding focus of postcolonial inquiry.

In exploring the literature of both postcolonialism and critical pedagogy, I was overwhelmed with the ways in which these theoretical positions seem to be continuously pitted against each other. In reviewing the literature, the reader seems required to choose a side. I remain unconvinced that it needs to be an either/or situation. In fact, I am suspicious that the division between cultural and structural approaches simply represents another untenable Western binary that is unable to account for the complexities inherent to the current historical moment.³ Ironically, almost all postcolonial theory points to the inadequacy of binary modes of thought, and works to reveal the ways in which apparently oppositional categories are actually bound up in each other. Critical theories like postcolonialism should be particularly suited to the task of exploring how culture is structural; how structures are cultural; and how culture and structure constitute both the causes and effects of exploitative power relations.

Indeed, valuable insight is garnered through postcolonial debates surrounding the use of class as a foundational, and potentially emancipatory, collective social identity for

³ While I hope to work towards integrating structural and cultural forms of inquiry in the future, I have found it necessary to take a position here in order to present a coherent theoretical framework. It seems the divide between structural and cultural approaches is too wide to close within the limited framework of a Master's thesis.

colonized peoples. While class is an invaluable concept for understanding economic power relations and how worker solidarity can be a source of empowerment, it must always be considered in conjunction with other axes of oppression. From a feminist perspective the notion of class is deeply flawed because of its exclusive focus on people's connection to the means of production. This focus excludes unpaid work, which is overwhelmingly women's domain, and privileges class as a cohesive force over those connections based on kinship, race, gender, culture, and interdependence. Moreover, a class model does little to elucidate the experience of colonized people.

Betty Bastien's exploration of indigenous epistemologies makes it clear that for her people, the Siksikatsitapi (Blackfoot), agency is located in their connections with each other, the cosmos, the natural world, their history and their present struggle to bring their people back into alignment with Siksikatsitapi ways of being (2004). None of this involves a connection to the mode of production. Suggesting class as the most important source of empowerment for colonized people is a way of colonizing these peoples' resistance to colonization. Put another way, assuming that class is the proper site of agency for colonized peoples is essentially imposing western ontology on to peoples who are trying to reclaim their own ways of being in the world. Moreover, the notion of the working class tethers people to capitalism as if it is the only option. Abandoning class as a primary theoretical construct does not, however, mean abandoning capitalism as an important site of critique. Quite the contrary, it opens up room for confronting capitalist systems and ideologies on terms not defined by the prevailing neoliberal hegemony.

V Neo-Marxist and Anti-Colonial Approaches to Education

The parallel tensions in critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory provide important insights and potentialities for theorizing the colonial legacy in Canadian education. However, I contend that the dualistic nature of the debates within critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory serve to undermine efforts to create a truly emancipatory pedagogy. If critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory are to effectively engage the current situation in Canadian schools, then their theoretical frameworks must be thoroughly divested of Western biases that continue to be characterized by binary modes of thought that support a culture/structure divide. What is at stake in education is whether cultural oppression and material exploitation of Aboriginal peoples and other minorities will continue unchallenged. It is my intention to use neo-Marxist approaches to critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory to critique Ontario's current curriculum and imagine new ways of pursuing a truly emancipatory educational agenda capable and advancing social justice on all fronts.

Apple helpfully addresses the division between cultural and economic approaches to analyzing hegemony by proposing that there exists "a dialectical relationship between culture and economics" (1979:4), and suggesting that these theoretical constructs are best understood through relational analyses (Apple, 1979:10). Moreover, Apple argues that understanding the relational function of culture and economics⁴ in education is central to effectively analyzing the force of hegemony in education:

The relations themselves are the defining characteristics. Thus, to understand, say, the notions of science and the individual, as we employ them in education especially, we need to see them as primarily ideological and economic categories that are essential to both the production of agents to fulfill existing economic roles

⁴ My use of Apple's culture/economics dichotomy can be seen as synonymous with the more common culture/structure division.

and the reproduction of dispositions and meaning in these agents that will ‘cause’ them to accept these alienating roles without too much questioning (1979:10).

By conceptualizing educational institutions as both cultural and economic agents of hegemony, Apple’s critical approach offers a bridge between what are often polarized perspectives in critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory (1979:6). Most importantly, Apple’s relational analysis makes clear the ways in which cultural and economic power relations form and inform each other in education and society at large.

In addition to the insights Apple provides regarding the often dichotomized representation of culture and economics in social theory, he also offers a helpful assessment of the role played by neoliberal ideology in maintaining hegemony in education. Challenging the neoliberal presumption that education is a politically neutral enterprise is central to Apple’s work and to the task at hand. Apple argues that claims of neutrality in education are untenable in two fundamental ways. First, rather than functioning as a democratic means of social advancement, the economic outcome of schooling for students reproduce social stratification (Apple, 1979:8). Second, claims of neutrality ignore “the fact that the knowledge that gets into schools is already a choice from a much larger universe of possible social knowledge and principles. It is a form of cultural capital that comes from somewhere, that often reflects the perspectives and beliefs of powerful segments of our social collectivity” (Apple, 1979:8-9). By challenging the neoliberal belief that education is an equal-opportunity proposition wherein students gain objective knowledge about their world, the education system should come into focus as a key player in the reproduction of the false consensus necessary to maintain hegemonic power relations.

Instrumental rationality is another helpful concept through which Apple interrogates neoliberal ideology in education. Apple suggests that the dominance of instrumental rationality results in debates over social justice in education being replaced by discussions about efficiency, technical skills, standardization and management systems (1979:8). This shift in education results in the depoliticization of the intent, if not the outcome, of the education system. In the process, instrumental rationality creates abstractions of individuals and gives primacy to efficiency in achieving cost-effective ends without requiring reflection on the value of those ends (Apple, 1979:8-9). Recognizing the rationality behind neoliberal formulations of education is helpful in explaining how the marketization of education has been accepted as inevitable.

While Apple's approach offers a variety of analytic tools well suited to the execution of this thesis, his work does not specifically address the specter of colonialism. As such, I have found it useful to draw on George Dei's work to fortify my theoretical framework. Dei argues that an anti-colonial orientation is required to critique and disrupt Western hegemony in educational institutions and practices (1999:399). According to Dei, "The anti-colonial framework is a theorization of issues emerging from colonial relations, an interrogation of the configurations of power, embedded in ideas, cultures and histories of knowledge production" (1999:399). As such, an anti-colonial approach to education assumes that public education systems function to produce and reproduce social inequalities based on ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, religion and class (Dei, 1999:399). Moreover, Dei's conceptualization of this theoretical framework emphasizes that schools are a part "of the institutional structures sanctioned by society and the state to serve the material, political and ideological interests of the state and economic/social

formation” (1999:399). Finally and particularly suited to the present project, Dei argues that an anti-colonial interrogation of education must seek out and problematize “the marginalization of certain voices and ideas in the school system, as well as the delegitimation of the knowledge and experience of subordinate groups in the pedagogic and communicative practices of schools” (1999:399).

By employing an anti-colonial, neo-Marxist framework that challenges neoliberal hegemony and its accompanying forms of rationality in education, I hope to contribute to a literature that calls for the decolonization of Canadian schools. While my approach advances a structural analysis, it should be clear by this point that I have conceptualized cultural factors as key forces in maintaining structural inequalities. Overall my intention with this thesis is not to stake out theoretical territory through an adversarial approach to epistemological debates, but rather to situate myself within the debates in a way that best serves my research goals. Consequently, it is my intention to show that, under the guise of neutrality, current curricular practices position Aboriginal peoples, histories, identities, knowledges and values at the periphery in order to maintain Western neoliberal hegemony.

Chapter Four

Concerning Methodology and Procedure

This research is rooted in the conviction that the Canadian education system must provide students with a basic understanding of Canada's colonial history and ongoing Aboriginal relations in order for a process of meaningful reconciliation to begin between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. The education system is in a unique position to help young Canadians explore historical inequalities and their contemporary corollaries, and encourage them to become engaged citizens committed to social justice. As discussed in previous chapters, education in Canada has historically functioned to maintain asymmetrical power relations in which white colonizers were constructed as superior to the Natives. Today, Canada's official multiculturalism has spurred a shift in purported values, and there is an expectation that public education reflects this move towards multicultural principles of equity and inclusion. In Ontario, the public education system has officially adopted an anti-racist orientation exemplified by documents like the Ministry of Education's *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (1993). While this is commendable, it is important to investigate if and how this theoretical shift plays out in the practice of the classroom.

I have designed this research to answer a series of overlapping questions: 1) How does Ontario secondary school social studies curriculum address Canada's colonial history and contemporary Aboriginal issues? 2) What do students actually report learning? 3) How does this impact student perspectives on Aboriginal peoples' position

within Canadian society? 4) What do the answers to the previous questions tell us about the relationship between the theory and the practice of Ontario curricula? I have addressed my research questions through twenty-five semi-structured telephone interviews with students who recently attended high school in Ontario. In this chapter, I will discuss the Interactionist traditions that inform my research, as well as the methodological procedures I have employed. I will also situate myself as a white researcher and discuss the ethical implications of doing research on equity from a position of privilege.

Janesick wisely warns against “methodolatry” which is defined as “a preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the actual substance of the story being told” (as cited in Price, 1999:21). Given the volumes of literature dedicated to methods and methodology, and the heated debates that spur them to multiply ad infinitum, methodolatry appears to be a highly infectious condition. It is my intention here, however, to avoid this fate by referring to epistemological and ontological debates only when it is necessary to clarify my methodological orientation or to explain the decisions I have made in designing my research. That being said, it is important to recognize how “methods impose certain perspectives on reality” (Berg, 2004:4).

I Interpretive Interactionism

This study represents an attempt to do research from an Interpretive Interactionist perspective. Interpretive Interactionism (Denzin, [1989] 2001) has its roots in Symbolic Interactionism. According to Blumer’s formulation:

Symbolic Interactionism... does not regard meaning as emanating from the intrinsic makeup of the thing, nor does it see meaning as arising through

psychological elements between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person; thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as social products formed through activities of people interacting (1969:5).

Thus, human interaction is constructed as the primary site of analysis for social science because reality is constructed through it (Berg, 2004:9). This epistemological position is central to the way I have approached this research, because education is a subjective experience, and curriculum is interpreted and mediated through human interaction. I am guided by an underlying assumption that knowledge is never value-free. Education is fundamentally an exercise in making meaning, and I agree with the Symbolic Interactionist perspective that “[m]eanings allow people to produce various realities that constitute the sensory world (the so-called real world), but because these realities are related to how people create meanings, reality becomes an interpretation of various definitional options” (Berg, 2004:9). It is my position that mass education systems provide hegemonic definitional options through which young people are encouraged to make meaning of the world around them.

Denzin developed Interpretive Interactionism as an attempt to bridge the epistemological principles of Symbolic Interactionism with a variety of critical approaches to theory and research; for example, postmodern and literary ethnography; feminist, queer and critical race theory; cultural studies; participatory action research; narrative, semiotic, interpretive, and Foucauldian discourse analysis (2001:xi). With reference to Mills’ sociological imagination, Denzin sets forth a methodology for actively engaging the relationship between personal troubles and public issues (2001:2). The appeal of Interpretive Interactionism lies in its commitment to “showing how the

practices of critical, interpretive qualitative research can help change the world in positive ways” (Denzin, 2001:2). This activist orientation is well suited to the aims of this project.

Following Denzin’s prescription, I want to make my value judgments clear: this research is guided by the notion that Canadians should be informed about historical and contemporary colonial relations of power. Moreover, in previous chapters, I have tried to demonstrate the ways in which improvements in the practice of curriculum addressing these issues “would and could produce social betterment” (Denzin, 2001:6). In striving to make meaningful recommendations for improvement, I will attempt to establish “new standards and new tools of evaluation” (Denzin, 2001:6). By accepting that “symbolic orders and systems of meaning are always embedded in systems of domination and power” (Denzin, 2001:50), Interpretive Interactionism is intended to show how dominant interpretations can function to disadvantage and disempower specific groups of people (Denzin, 2001:6). As such, this perspective lends itself to “concrete research and policy-making situations” (Denzin, 2001:41).

Denzin argues that there are two types of Interpretive Interactionist research: pure interpretation and interpretive evaluation (2001:42). Pure interpretation is described as an exercise in social moral philosophy grounded in human interaction, with the purpose of developing a meaningful interpretation of phenomena (Denzin, 2001:42). Pure interpretation can become interpretive evaluation if it moves from description to prescription, while interpretive evaluation addresses social problems with the goal of influencing policy (Denzin, 2001:42). I endeavor to engage both levels of interpretation to the greatest extent possible given the parameters of this study. Thus, the goal is to

develop an authentic understanding of the ways curriculum are interpreted by students, and to build on this understanding to evaluate the gaps between the theory and practice of the curriculum in order to suggest concrete ways of improving non-Aboriginal students' conception of colonial history and contemporary Aboriginal relations.

II Ontario Curriculum

Critical curriculum studies are an accepted field of research within the sociology of education, however as Goodson notes, “sociological knowledge... of the school curriculum remains severely undertheorized” (1992: 66). The lack of academic focus on curriculum content, especially as it is experienced by students, constitutes an unfortunate gap in the literature. By exploring how Ontario curriculum addresses Canada's colonial history and Aboriginal issues, I hope to contribute to filling this substantive gap. For the purposes of this study, I have approached the curriculum as if it represents a particular discourse. Following Hardy and Phillips, I have attempted to connect the discourses embedded in the curriculum to the social realities that form and are formed by them (Hardy and Phillips, 2003: 3). Accordingly, an analysis of the ways in which curricula, as discourse, are connected to power and the production of official knowledge is central to my approach. Indeed, in a similar vein, Dei argues that “academic knowledge, discourse and political practice must be seen as interdependent” (1999: 403). The present study is interested in the ways colonialism and post-colonial power relations are constructed through curriculum. Thus, there is an implicit assumption that curriculum is political in both its formation by government and its outcomes for students.

The Ontario Ministry of Education defines curriculum broadly as “the plan for student learning which is implemented in schools” (Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), 2006). Within the context of this study, curriculum is used to refer more specifically to the curriculum documents produced by the Ministry of Education. These documents are designed to ensure that curriculum components are consistent across the province. To this end, curriculum documents “contain clear definitions of the skills, knowledge and attitudes students will develop in particular subjects” (OME: 2006). Thus, subject content is clearly outlined in curriculum documents in order to “assure depth and consistency, while still giving teachers the opportunity to use resources and methods that suit the students they teach” (OME: 2006). While it is the Ministry that ultimately determines the curriculum, “parents, students, teachers, college and university educators, private sector representatives, and members of community groups are invited to collaborate in the curriculum development process” (OME: 2006). As a result, it is a safe assumption that curriculum content reflects the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are valued by the dominant stakeholders in public education.

I have focused my research on Ontario’s high school curriculum because of the ease of access to both curriculum documents and students. In addition, Ontario has the highest levels of diversity and the largest population of students, a total of 686,763 in 2003-2004, in Canada (OME: 2006). The curriculum document selected for analysis is *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10 Canadian and World Studies* (1999). This document covers the following compulsory courses: Geography of Canada, Grade 9 (Applied and Academic); Canadian History in the Twentieth Century, Grade 10 (Applied and Academic); and Civics, Grade 10 (Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), 1999).

Also important to note is the fact that in analyzing only one part of the curriculum, I am in danger of omitting the engagement of colonial history and Aboriginal relations in other compulsory and elective high school classes. Indeed, Ontario's English curriculum, for example, may also provide important clues as to which knowledges, identities and values are privileged. I have attempted to account for this by gathering information from interview subjects about all of the classes in which they remember learning about Canada's colonial history and contemporary Aboriginal issues.

The overall goals and strategies expressed by the curriculum are laudable, and the question is not whether they are adequate but whether they are achieved through the practice of the curriculum. At this point it should be noted that the goals of the curriculum are generally left open to interpretation through a lack of specificity. For example, the overall goal of the curriculum is to ensure students are responsible and informed participants in democracy, however what this means is never explicitly defined. While this allows a wide berth for teachers to deliver the curriculum in ways they find personally and contextually meaningful, it also makes it difficult to assess whether or not curriculum expectations are met in the classroom. As a result, this project sometimes necessitates an unavoidable process of interpretation hinging on my reading of the curriculum. Therefore, it is my intention to present the curriculum requirements as they are presented in the curriculum documents. This will allow for transparency in my interpretive analytic process by allowing the reader to easily assess the validity of my conclusions.

III Interview Protocol

My interview questions were founded upon curriculum content in an attempt to explore the relationship between what the government dictates students learn and what students actually report having learned. Through close reading of the curriculum documents, all references to historical and contemporary Aboriginal issues were drawn out, and then used to develop an interview protocol⁵ capable of assessing the practice of the curriculum as experienced by students. Because the curriculum documents contained very few direct references to Aboriginal issues, I was able to design interview questions that dealt with each relevant curriculum expectation. The resulting interview schedule was semi-structured. The majority of questions were open-ended and designed to encourage the respondent to provide as much information as possible. For example I asked participants, “What information do you remember learning about Aboriginal peoples in Canada today?” In addition, there was a series of yes or no questions asking students whether or not they remembered learning about specific concepts that were required or implied by curriculum content: the Indian Act, Indian agents, Indian status, the reserve system, treaties, land claims, residential schools, the Assembly of First Nations, The Union of Ontario Indians, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, and Aboriginal self-government. When students answered affirmatively, I asked probing questions so as to explore the basis for student’s claims to knowledge.

In addition to inquiring about curriculum content, my interview schedule also required participants to express their opinions about the curriculum material by asking them: “What do you think about what you learned?” and “If you could change anything about the curriculum relating to these issues, would you – and if so how?” In order to delve further into the implications of the curriculum, I included questions designed to

⁵ Please see Appendix A for the full text of the interview schedule.

determine the respondent's perception of Aboriginal peoples' position within Canadian society. Specifically I asked, "Do you believe that Aboriginal people have equal opportunity in Canadian society?" Regardless of a positive or negative response to this question, participants were then asked to explain the reasons they perceived for continued inequality. The structure of the interview schedule was designed to allow students to reflect on what they learned in a meaningful way by first asking them to work from memory, then providing curriculum content for them to consider, and finally by eliciting their opinions about the curriculum specifically, and then about Aboriginal issues in general. All aspects of my interview schedule are elaborated in the following chapters.

IV Interview Participants

Following in the ancient tradition of graduate students, I conveniently recruited my group of interview participants from a University course. By attending Introduction to Sociology: SOCY 122A tutorials in the winter semester of 2006, I contacted a group of first-year Queen's University students who attended grades 9 and 10 in Ontario between 2000 and 2003. My efforts to recruit as many participants as possible led me to attend nine different tutorial classes, and ultimately resulted in a contact list of over a hundred potential participants. This master list (List A) was purposively sorted into a secondary list (List B) of forty students. Sorting was done according to region and school type, which students were asked to specify, in order to ensure that there was some variety with regards to these factors. The participants on List B were contacted via email with a copy of my combined letter of information and consent form. Willing participants were asked

to contact me by email. Those participants who did not respond received a follow-up phone call.

Ultimately, twenty-five in depth interviews were completed.⁶ I chose to stop after completing twenty-five interviews because I had exhausted my contact list, and felt that I had gathered enough information for meaningful analysis. The final group of interview participants represented students from all over Southern Ontario with a majority, ten students (40 percent), coming from the Greater Toronto Area. In addition, five students (20 percent) attended high school in Kingston and environs, three students (12 percent) in the Ottawa area, and one student each in Bancroft, Brighton, Burlington, Forest, Iroquois, Oshawa and Picton.⁷ The majority of interviewees, sixteen students (64 percent), attended public schools, while five students (20 percent) attended Catholic schools and four students (16 percent) attended private schools (2 were non-denominational and 2 were Anglican private schools).

All of the interview participants had European ancestry, although the way this was expressed varied greatly. In response to the question “How do you define your ethnicity,” fifteen responded “white.” Of these respondents, three added that they were Canadian, and one described himself as “honky white.” In addition, four participants identified themselves as “Caucasian.” There was one respondent each who described themselves as Portuguese, Jewish, French Canadian, Canadian-Dutch, European and of British heritage. Interestingly, two students who identified themselves as Caucasian and French Canadian later revealed that they had Native ancestry; however, both students expressed a disconnection with this part of their familial history. Overall, the racial

⁶ Please see the table in Appendix B for a graphic representation of my research participants

⁷ Because one participant attended grade 9 and 10 in different towns, the total is 26.

homogeneity of the participants need not be seen as a limitation as it provides an opportunity to explore what could emerge as patterns in what white students remember learning about inequality in Canadian society. The interview participants were also homogenous in terms of age with twenty-one students (84 percent) born in 1987, three students (12 percent) born in 1986, and one student (4 percent) born in 1985. Likewise, there is homogeneity in terms of gender as an overwhelming twenty-two participants (88 percent) were female.

In planning my research, I elected to privilege the quality of interviews over the number of interviews conducted. By spending more time talking to each student, I was able to amass richer information for analysis. Still it should be clear that my interview participants do not constitute a diverse group. For example, the fact that twenty-two participants (88 percent) were female may result in a particularly gendered encounter with the curriculum. Unfortunately, the time allowed and resources available to me as a graduate student made searching out a more diverse group of participants impossible.

V Interview Technique and Interpretive Processes

Interviews were conducted during July and August 2006, and each interview lasted between twenty and forty minutes. Time constraints and the geographic distribution of the participants made telephone interviews the most viable option for this project. The most notable drawback to this method of interviewing is the lack of visual cues: the facial expressions and bodily postures of the participants were not available to help guide the progression of the interviews. As a result, I made a great effort to listen to the

participants' tone and follow up on as many of their verbal cues and hesitations as possible. Sometimes this meant asking for clarification, other times it meant asking very specific probing questions or attempting to put the participant at ease by urging them to take their time responding. The interviews were audio-taped, with the permission of the participant, to ensure that all verbal nuances were captured and could be returned to for repeated listening.

I transcribed each interview directly after it was completed in order to preserve the greatest level of nuance in the text created from the interviews. In addition, I remained mindful that "transcription is itself an interpretive process" (Kvale, 1996:160). Accordingly, the transcription process requires the researcher to make many different judgments and decisions regarding how to render speech into text. When one considers how transcripts are ultimately treated as "*the* solid empirical data in the interview project" (emphasis in original Kvale, 1996:163), the importance of how an interview is transcribed cannot be overemphasized. Because my research is relatively unconcerned with linguistic issues, I took the liberty of transforming the recorded interviews into prose rather than taking a verbatim approach. Spoken language is very different in its construction from the written word, and sometimes it can be unclear where a sentence begins and ends. Thus, in transcribing the interviews I followed my gut instinct in regards to punctuation. On the other hand, I did my best to include all hesitations and filler words in order to capture the greatest possible level of detail. I am confident that I have achieved a degree of compromise that maintains the integrity of the interviews, while at the same time rendering them into a literary style that better "facilitates communication of the meaning of the subject's stories to readers" (Kvale, 1996:166).

The interpretive process continued as I began to organize the information contained within the transcripts. Through close reading of the interview transcripts, I was able to draw out common themes and group them together for easy analysis. For example, some common themes I found in the interview transcripts include students reporting an absence of curriculum addressing contemporary Aboriginal issues, students expressing a desire to learn more about Aboriginal issues, and students' reliance on various stereotypical views of Aboriginal peoples. As themes emerged through close reading, I coded them using key words and wrote these beside the relevant comments in order to easily retrieve them later. This process was necessarily rooted in constant comparison, in that each interview was compared to the next with the intention of drawing out affinities and contradictions. This required me to return to the interview tapes for repeated listening.

Throughout this organizational process I also created memos, which are essentially notes made in a parallel system to the thematic coding. I used memos to capture any questions, connections, conclusions or theoretical reflections that had arisen through close reading of the interview texts, and the development of themes therein. I also found that, as suggested by Orona (2005), memos were a helpful way of “unblocking” during the analysis as they allowed me to informally record my internal dialogue thus freeing up ideas that may have otherwise remained below the surface. Memos and thematic categories were constantly sorted to reflect their relationship to each other. Because memos were made on individual note-cards, the process of sorting occurred literally with me spatially arranging my notes in such a way that the links between categories were revealed.

VI Ethical Considerations

Queen's General Research Ethics Board (GREB) approved this research after a full review of my study design. The ethical issues raised by my research have been easily managed. Because the interviews focused on high school curriculum practices, the level of risk to participants was low. That is, the questions asked were not personal, and did not require participants to take emotional, psychological, economic or social risks.

Participation in my research was voluntary. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and they were told that any information they had given up until that point would also be withdrawn. While all participants received a combined letter of information and consent via email before they were contacted by telephone, I ensured that the terms of participation were clear by reading aloud to them the key parts of the initial letter. Participants were given an opportunity to ask any questions that they may have had, and then their verbal consent was obtained and recorded. As noted above, the interviews were transcribed, and during this process I assigned each participant a pseudonym to ensure their identities were protected. The audiocassettes are stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. Once my thesis has been successfully completed, the audiocassettes will be destroyed.

VII Concerning Interpretation and Memory

It would be foolhardy, in any situation, to suggest that there is a one to one relationship between what is taught and what is learnt. Fundamentally, teaching and learning are interpretive processes. With regards to this research, there are several layers of interpretation at work: teachers interpret the curriculum, students interpret what is taught,

and I interpret what students report learning. This stratum of meaning-making is further complicated by the matter of memory, as this study asks participants to report on what they learned in classes they took three to seven years earlier. The memory work required of interview respondents means that the information they provide is filtered through even more layers of interpretation. Memory is fallible, and notoriously selective. Therefore, I do not assume that students remember everything they were taught, or that what they do remember learning reflects precisely what they were taught. Rather, it is my contention that what students remember learning, and the meaning they make of what they remember, is equally important as what they were taught in the first place. So, instead of constructing the processes of interpretation and memory as fatal flaws in my research design, I see these as necessary limitations with inherent value. Students do not make meaning in a vacuum, rather students' interpretations of curriculum practice reveal much about the cultural context in which they are made. Moreover, students' interpretations of their experience of curriculum reflect the extent to which Aboriginal issues were perceived as relevant to students' own subjective realities. From this, important implications can be drawn about how Aboriginal issues were framed by curriculum documents, curricular materials, and teachers' practices.

VIII Situating Myself as a Researcher

As a white woman interested in equity issues, I am concerned with the necessity of self-reflexivity in negotiating my privilege. Locating myself within the matrix of interlocking oppressions has required me to come face-to-face with my whiteness. In confronting my position of power and investigating ways to make anti-racism an everyday practice, I

have been captivated by questions about the invisibility of whiteness, the nature of hegemonic complicity, and the stubborn reluctance of most white people to address racism as a white problem. Thus, the inspiration for this research stems from my own ethical dilemmas both in and outside of academia. Akin to Dabulkis-Hunter statement in her work on outsider research:

[A]s a member of a privileged group myself, I benefit from the oppression of Native people in numerous and often un-named ways, from educational and employment opportunities open to me as a Euro-Canadian to which marginalized groups including First Nations people are denied access, to not being continually confronted by racism and white supremacy every day. To put it bluntly, I am where I am within this racist capitalist society because most Native Canadians are where they are (2002:54).

Failure to recognize my own relationship to asymmetrical power relations would defeat the purpose of the present research. Indeed, the impetus for this research stems from my own biographical experiences as a member of the dominant racialized group.

Following Mills (1959), Denzin argues that interpretive analyses should “involve researchers in drawing upon their own biographical experiences” (2001:54). As such, I would like to situate my research within my own biographical experiences. Essentially, my focus on the representations of colonial history and Aboriginal issues in Canadian high school curricula stems from my own experiences in the education system. When I attended high school on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, my teachers only taught about traditional West Coast Aboriginal culture: longhouses, oolichan grease and potlatches were the extent of the curriculum. The absence of material dealing with the contemporary political, social and economic struggles and triumphs of Aboriginal peoples was in stark contrast to the reality that surrounded our school on the Saanich Peninsula.

While the high school I attended, Parkland Secondary⁸, is located in the predominantly white town of Sidney, there are four Indian Reserves in close proximity: Tsartlip with approximately 750 members; Pauquachin with approximately 220 members; Tseycum with approximately 150 members; and Tsawout with approximately 630 members ([Saanich](#) Indian School Board, 2007). Many Aboriginal students from these Reserves and surrounding communities attend schools run by the Saanich Indian School Board. However there are a minority of Aboriginal students who attend Parkland Secondary. Regardless of this lack integration in education, Aboriginal peoples and communities are involved in almost all other areas of life on the Peninsula. As a child growing up there, I perceived a lot of contradictions in terms of the obvious poverty of the area Reserves in contrast with the richness of their artistic and political traditions. In addition, it was difficult to sort out the common perception of Aboriginals as potential threats to the livelihood of white adults. So, while it seemed that within the classroom “the Natives” were frozen in time, outside of the classroom conflicts over land and fishing rights spilled onto the schoolyard. Every bloodied-nose that resulted from a racist conflict impressed upon me the dangers of the school’s silence. If the education system fails to encourage dialogue about the ways in which Canada’s shameful colonial legacy is being played out in contemporary power relations, then how will white people ever learn to put down their defensive fists and listen to Aboriginal peoples’ demands for substantive equality and social justice?

As I continued on to Universities in Quebec and Ontario, I became even more alarmed by the gaps in students’ knowledge about colonial history and Aboriginal relations. While many of my professors put these issues at the fore, this often seemed to

⁸ I attended from 1993-1997.

anger my fellow students who expressed frustration that, in their opinions, Aboriginals need to let go of the past. I have heard denigrating stereotypes evoked in many classrooms where students blamed Aboriginal culture for Aboriginal issues, or discussed Aboriginals as undeserving beneficiaries of government largesse. These experiences have led me to investigate what non-Aboriginal students *are* learning, and ultimately to do the research presented here. My approach to this study is formed through my own experiences and the resulting conviction that the education system is failing to give young Canadians the information they need to actively engage in responsible citizenship and uphold Canada's purported multicultural ideals.

Chapter Five

Exploring Theory and Practice in Ontario Curriculum

The stated goal of *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies* is “to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and values they need to become responsible citizens and informed participants in Canadian democracy in the twenty-first century” (Ontario, 1999:2). By improving students’ “understanding of Canada’s heritage and its physical, social, cultural, governmental, legal, and economic structures and relationships” (Ontario, 1999:2), the curriculum attempts to serve the public good through creating an educated citizenry capable of engaging in the political life of the country. As noted in the previous chapter, the overall goals of the *Canadian and World Studies* curriculum are laudable, and it is my intention to determine whether these goals are represented by the specific expectations of the curriculum addressing Aboriginal issues. Of particular interest is whether the goals of the curriculum are translated into practice according to students’ interpretations of their classroom experiences.

The curriculum for Geography, History and Civics are each organized into five “strands” or broad areas of inquiry (OME, 1999: 5). Each strand of the curriculum is delineated first through “Overall Expectations” which are a few (two to seven) clearly stated goals regarding skills, knowledge and attitudes, and secondly through “Specific Expectations” which are organized into several sub-categories, each with multiple points.⁹ Many of the specific expectations are accompanied by examples in parentheses, which are “intended as a guide for teachers rather than as an exhaustive or mandatory

⁹ Please see Appendix C for a reproduction of the curriculum structure.

list” (OME, 1999:5). In order to provide a comprehensive representation of the curriculum expectations that address Aboriginal issues, I have included overall expectations, specific expectations as well as non-mandatory content. It will be clearly stated when non-mandatory examples from the curriculum are used to analyse the relationship between the theory and practice of the curriculum. Overall, I intend to provide enough information that the reader can easily assess the validity of the insights and implications I have drawn from both the curriculum content and the responses of interview participants.

I Geography of Canada, Grade 9

In Ontario, *Geography of Canada, Grade 9* is a mandatory year-long¹⁰ course premised upon the notion that “people need to be geographically literate and able to make informed judgments about environmental and social issues”, and that “[h]istoric and economic perspectives help students understand the relationship between people and their environments, as well as interactions that occur among groups of people” (OME, 1999:6). Human geography is clearly emphasized by the *Geography of Canada* curriculum, while the knowledge and skills of physical geography are a secondary focus. This course is organized into five strands which reflect this orientation: “Geographic Foundations: Space and Systems,” “Human-Environment Interactions,” “Global Connections,” “Understanding and Managing Change,” and “Methods of Geographic Inquiry” (OME, 1999: 6-7). There are more specific references to Aboriginal issues in the Geography curriculum than in either grade 10 Civics or grade 10 History. However, when students were asked which courses they took that covered Aboriginal issues, only

¹⁰ Worth one credit towards graduation.

three respondents (12 percent) mentioned Geography. Nevertheless, more direct curriculum related interview questions served to jog memories and led three more respondents (for a total of 24 percent) to recall specific instances in which their mandatory Geography class covered material relating to Aboriginal issues.

There are three specific expectations in the Geography curriculum that relate explicitly to Aboriginal peoples. Two of these are found within the strand “Geographic Foundations: Space and Systems” under the subsection “Developing and Practising Skills” (OME, 1999: 9). In the first case, students are expected to “analyse the location pattern of recent Native land claims in Canada” (OME, 1999:9). When asked if they remembered learning about Aboriginal land claims, four interview participants (16 percent) answered affirmatively. However, when I asked probing questions, none of the respondents could remember completing a specific assignment which would reflect the active nature of the “analysis” indicated by the curriculum expectation. Rather, the four respondents reported learning about Aboriginal land claims from their textbooks.

The second specific curriculum expectation found in this section is that students are to “make recommendations for appropriate forms of human systems (e.g., transportation, social services, political structures, resource management) for the territory of Nunavut” (OME, 1999:10). While 2 participants (8 percent) reported learning about Nunavut, both of them remembered this taking place in classes other than Geography, as the curriculum indicates. When questioned further about the nature of the information they learned about Nunavut, one respondent commented, “when Nunavut became a territory we talked about the Aboriginals then.... actually it was more political than pertaining to Aboriginals.” This statement is interesting in the way it reflects an

understanding of Aboriginal peoples as unconnected to politics within the context of Nunavut. Regardless, the main point here is that according to interview participants, this specific Geography curriculum expectation of making recommendations for the territory of Nunavut was not met.

The last instance where Aboriginals are explicitly referred to in the Geography curriculum is under the strand “Human-Environment Interactions” (OME, 1999: 11). Here the curriculum states that students must “demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which the traditional ecological knowledge of Aboriginal peoples influences how they interact with their environments, including their concepts of place, wilderness and boundaries” (OME, 1999:11). While I did not design an interview question that addressed all aspects of this specific curriculum expectation, many respondents ultimately mentioned that traditional Aboriginal ecological knowledge was a common theme guiding the way Aboriginal issues were addressed in the classroom. Interview participants reported that they learned about Aboriginal ecological knowledge in ways that diverge from the intent of the specific curriculum component mentioned above. First, within a historical context, five students (20 percent) reported learning how Aboriginals were able to help the first colonists establish the fur trade as a result of their superior knowledge of the Canadian landscape. For example, one 19-year-old student¹¹ who attended private school in Toronto explained, “I think we learned that the Aboriginals were very helpful in the fur trade by showing the settlers around.” Second, three participants (12 percent) discussed how Aboriginal people’s orientation towards the natural world has affected notions of Canadian identity. For example, two 19-year-old

¹¹ Because 22 of 25 interview participants are female, only statements by males will be identified by gender.

students who attended public schools in Toronto made the following observations: “I think the way Canadians relate to nature was taken from traditional Aboriginal views”; and, “How nature is reflected as part of Canada ... ties back to Native roots.” These telling comments, in conjunction with the historical context mentioned above, demonstrate that students learned more about how Aboriginals’ ecological knowledge has impacted non-Aboriginal Canadians than how this knowledge is enacted by Aboriginal peoples themselves. As such, it seems clear that this specific curriculum expectation was not translated into the practice of the classroom in ways that were meaningful for the students interviewed.

There are also two instances where Aboriginal peoples and communities are referred to as potential, but not mandatory, directions for curriculum development. In these cases the reference is made in parentheses. For example, students are expected to “identify and explain the regional distribution patterns of various peoples across Canada (e.g., Aboriginal peoples, francophones, immigrant groups)” (OME, 1999:9). Six students (24 percent) commented that Aboriginal people were “stuck” on Reserves, however there was no mention of a more nuanced or specific understanding of the regional distribution of Aboriginal people by the interview participants. Indeed, one student explained that Aboriginal people do not have access to the same resources as non-Aboriginals *because* “most of them are living in the Northwest Territories.” This statement, while extreme, is representative of the general lack of understanding students demonstrated regarding the regional distribution of Aboriginal peoples in Canada today.

The second example of an indirect reference to Aboriginal issues in the Geography curriculum is found under the strand “Human-Environment Interactions.”

Here it is stated that students are expected to “evaluate differing viewpoints on the benefits and disadvantages of selected energy megaprojects (e.g., James Bay, Hibernia, Athabaska tar sands, Churchill Falls)” (OME, 1999:11). This curriculum expectation implicitly evokes Aboriginal perspectives as Aboriginal peoples are uniquely affected by such megaprojects, and they have been some of the most vocal opponents to such developments. Despite this connection, none of the students made reference to Aboriginal perspectives regarding energy development or to any other environment or resource related issue.

In sum, Aboriginal issues proved to be a minor but consistent theme in the Geography curriculum. As previously stated, this course had more direct references to such issues than either of the other curriculums under analysis. The overall impression left by the interview participants is that while the majority, 22 students (88 percent), did not at first remember learning about Aboriginals in Geography, at least 6 students (24 percent) ultimately reported that they did gain some basic knowledge. It should, however, be noted that this knowledge strays from the expectations laid out in the curriculum, and falls short of representing the realities facing Aboriginal communities in Canada today.

II Civics, Grade 10

Civics, Grade 10 is a mandatory half-year¹² course, which is made up of three strands that reflect the course’s focus on citizenship: “Informed Citizenship,” “Purposeful Citizenship,” and “Active Citizenship” (OME, 1999: 48-53). The overall curriculum expectation is that students will explore “what it means to be a ‘responsible citizen’ in the

¹² ½ credit

local, national, and global arenas” (OME, 1999: 46). This is reinforced by a series of questions that the curriculum is designed to address:

How do we govern ourselves? As our population becomes more diverse, how do we ensure that all voices are heard? How do we resolve important societal and community issues in the face of so many diverse and divergent views influenced by differing values? What role will Canada play within an increasingly interconnected global society? (OME, 1999: 46).

These questions seem to indicate a critical problem-solving pedagogy inspired by the liberal ideals of multiculturalism. This implied theoretical orientation combined with the substantive issue of citizenship is promising, however there are no *specific* curriculum expectations related to Aboriginal issues in the Civics curriculum. The optional status of Aboriginal issues in the Civics curriculum is affirmed by the fact that only two (8 percent) of the students interviewed reported engaging this subject matter in their grade 10 Civics class. Contrary to the stated goal of the curriculum, the responses of five participants (20 percent) reported that Civics focused exclusively on the structures of parliament. This focus evidently negates the engagement of more complex questions surrounding Canadian citizenship.

While there is a total absence of direct references to Aboriginal peoples or issues in the Civics curriculum, there are four instances where reference is made through the provision of non-mandatory examples of possible issues for teachers to address. In the first instance, within the curriculum strand “Informed Citizenship,” it is put forward that by the end of the course students will “analyse how dimensions of democratic decision making were practiced in different historical contexts (e.g., Magna Carta, Periclean Athens, Iroquois Confederacy)” (OME, 1999: 48). When interview participants were asked if they remembered learning about the Iroquois Confederacy, four (16 percent)

responded that they did. Follow-up questions revealed that these students had gained this knowledge in grade 10 or 12 History. When asked what and how they remembered learning about the Iroquois Confederacy, one student summed up the memories of the others by stating, “we just learned that it existed.” This indicates that students generally did not learn about the Iroquois Confederacy as a unique model of democratic decision-making as suggested by the Civics curriculum.

Also within the “Informed Citizenship” strand, it states that students will “describe the changing nature of Canadian citizenship rights and responsibilities based on an examination of provincial legislation, the Bill of Rights (1960), and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) (e.g., in terms of fundamental freedoms, democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, equality rights, language rights, Aboriginal rights)” (OME, 1999: 48). With regards to Aboriginal rights, the overall impression was that, while participants knew that Aboriginals have special rights, they had a narrow understanding of these rights and were unaware of why they existed in the first place. Most of the comments focused on education, taxation and, to a limited extent, land rights:

There are some benefits that they have like going to higher education and tax breaks (19-year-old from Bolton).

They definitely do [have equal opportunity] because they have their cards and stuff, so like I think our government is giving them the opportunity (19-year-old from Bancroft).

I’m not sure why, but I used to work in retail and I know they come in with their status cards, and I know some people make a big deal out of that, like why should they get it...? People just aren’t... they don’t, I don’t think we’re well educated on, well I’m not well educated on Aboriginals, like I don’t understand why they get that tax exemption, but I don’t hold a grudge against them for that. It’s just

lots of people think its unfair that they get tax exempt for it [for what?], for being Aboriginal. ... I think people put huge stereotypes on them, like all the land they own sometimes people are just like –why should they own that much, they don't need that much (20-year-old from Oshawa).

The limited understanding of Aboriginal rights conveyed by the interview participants is disconcerting considering the main thrust of grade 10 Civics – informed, purposeful and active citizenship (OME, 1999:48-53). It seems that good citizenship, as constructed by the Ministry of Education through the Civics curriculum, does not require an understanding of Aboriginal rights.

The Civics curriculum mentions Native self-governance twice as a potential direction for instruction. Within the curriculum strand “Purposeful Citizenship” and under the sub-section “Beliefs Values, and Multiple Perspectives,” it states that by the end of the course students will “compare the varied beliefs, values, and points of view of Canadian citizens on issues of public interest (e.g., privacy, reducing voting age, freedom of information, compulsory military service, Native self-government, Quebec sovereignty)” (OME, 1999: 50). Within the same strand, but under the subsection “Civic Purpose, Community, and Personal Responsibilities,” the curriculum states that Civics students will “describe, compare, and analyse Canadian cases in which contrasting value systems, multiple perspectives, and civic purposes co-exist (e.g., constitutional debates, Quebec sovereignty question, Native self-governance” (OME, 1999: 51).

It is encouraging that, when asked directly, ten participants (40 percent) remembered learning about Native self-government in high school. Of these, two people reported learning about Native self-government in classes other than Civics: grade 12 Politics and grade 12 Law. The rest of the respondents were not clear in which class they

covered this issue, but it is a safe assumption it was grade 10 Civics as this is the class that includes this expectation in its curriculum. Seven students commented that Native self-government was only briefly touched upon. For instance, one respondent commented that Native self-government “sounds familiar, I think we just learned the concept, not in detail,” and another recalled “it was probably a definition on a test.” The depth of understanding of the concept varied among the respondents from one woman who remembered completing a project on Native self-governance and the establishment of Nunavut, to another woman who equated self-governance with tax exemption. Still, it is interesting to note that more participants reported learning about Native self-governance than any of the other contemporary Aboriginal issues they were asked about during the interview process.

Unlike grade 9 Geography and grade 10 History, the grade 10 Civics curriculum includes no expectations that students will learn about Aboriginal issues. As this is the only high school course dedicated to teaching students about the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship, the omission of Aboriginal issues is conspicuous. The stated goal of *Civics, Grade 10* is to create informed, purposeful, and active citizens. Therefore, it is implied by the curriculum that this kind of engaged citizenship can be imparted to students without exploring the relationship between the Canadian government and Aboriginal peoples. By constructing Aboriginal issues as optional and secondary, the Civics curriculum reinforces the position of Aboriginal peoples on the margins of Canadian society.

III Canadian History in the Twentieth Century, Grade 10

Canadian History in the Twentieth Century, Grade 10 is a full-year course that builds upon the knowledge garnered in Ontario's grades 1 through 6 social studies program and the compulsory grade 7 and 8 History classes (OME, 1999:3). By tracing the major developments in Canadian society over the last hundred years, the grade 10 History curriculum is designed so that students will:

analyse the elements that constitute Canadian identity, learn the stories of both individuals and communities, and study the evolution of political and social structures ...[and] learn about different interpretations of the past, and will come to understand the importance in historical studies of chronology and cause-and-effect relationships" (OME, 1999:27).

These goals for learning are addressed through five curriculum strands: "Communities: Local, National, and Global," "Change and Continuity," "Citizenship and Heritage," "Social, Economic, and Political Structures," and "Methods of Historical Inquiry" (OME, 1999:25-26). One of the "Overall Expectations" for grade 10 History emphasizes the importance of French-English relations in regards to Canadian identity formation (OME, 1999:28). This theme is carried out extensively through the specific expectations for the course. Notably, learning about Aboriginal peoples and their relations with Canada's 'two founding nations' are not specified as goals anywhere in the grade 10 History curriculum. Thus, it was surprising to note that more interview participants (fourteen students or 56 percent) reported learning about Aboriginal peoples in History than in any other course. While it is heartening to discover that a meaningful number of students remember covering Aboriginal issues in one of the compulsory courses, the fact that History was mentioned most frequently may indicate that Aboriginal issues are overly

represented within an historical framework by the practice of Ontario's high school curriculum.

The first of two specific references to Aboriginal issues in the grade 10 History curriculum is located within the curriculum strand "Change and Continuity." Here it states that by the conclusion of this course, students will be able to "evaluate the impact of social and demographic change on Aboriginal communities (e.g., relocation, urbanization, education, pressures to assimilate)" (OME, 1999:30). The extent to which this curriculum expectation was fulfilled was measured by interview questions asking if students remembered learning about the reserve system, residential schools, and assimilation. The same number of students, nine (36 percent),¹³ reported that they remembered learning about the reserve system or about residential schools, but only four students reported learning about both. With regards to Canada's system of Aboriginal reserves, seven students (28 percent) reported learning about where and when they were established and less about why. One student commented that in her grade 10 History class in a Toronto private school "we learned that the government set them [residential schools] up, but not about why they set the up. We kind of went around that." Another student who attended public school in Bolton revealed the potential consequences of such an omission by explaining that in her class she learned about "how [Aboriginals'] situations changed when the settlers came and they had to be put on reservations." By constructing the reserve system as an unavoidable result of colonization, this student implicitly constructs Aboriginal peoples as obstacles to the creation of the Canadian nation. Interview questions addressing what and how students remember learning about

¹³ It is interesting to note that in the case of residential schools, which were generally run through a Catholic Church and State partnership, only one of the students who attended Catholic school reported learning about them.

residential schools revealed a similar theme; all nine of the students (36 percent) were able to identify the basic function of the schools, but only five (20 percent) had a sense of how these schools had impacted Aboriginal communities. This suggests that the main thrust of this curriculum expectation (“evaluate the impact”) was regularly missed.

Finally, an impressive sixteen students (64 percent) reported learning about assimilation in grade 10 History. Less impressive was the near consensus that assimilation was presented as a concept to be memorized rather than applied critically to the experiences of Canada’s minority groups. For instance, one student commented that in terms of assimilation she learned “not so much about it pertaining to Aboriginals ... we just learned the term to, you know, be tested on it.”¹⁴ Overall, the ways in which this specific curriculum expectation has selectively been met demonstrates the complicated relationship between the theory and practice of curriculum as mediated through the memories of students.

The second specific reference to Aboriginal issues in the grade 10 History curriculum is found under the strand “Citizenship and Heritage” where it states that by the end of the course, students will be able to “describe the contributions of Aboriginal peoples in forming national organizations (e.g., National Indian Advisory Council, National Indian Brotherhood, Assembly of First Nations)” (Ontario: 1999:32). I found that while eleven (44 percent) of the students interviewed remembered learning about the Assembly of First Nations, only one student reported that she had also learned about the National Indian Advisory Council and the National Indian Brotherhood. Of the eleven respondents who reported learning about the Assembly of First Nations, just under half

¹⁴ This could attest to the testing regime that is dominant within the current instrumental approach to schooling in Canada.

were able to describe, to some extent, the organization's function. This demonstrates that, although there is room for improvement, this curriculum expectation was met with some success.

There is one instance where the grade 10 History curriculum refers indirectly to Aboriginal peoples. Within the strand "Communities: Local, National, and Global," under the subsection "Canadian Identity," the curriculum establishes that students will "produce an evaluation of the contributions to Canadian society by its regional, linguistic, ethnocultural, and religious communities (e.g., Aboriginal nations, Franco-Ontarians, Métis, Doukhobors, Black Canadians)" (OME, 1999:28). Also within this strand there is a similar expectation that students will be able to "describe how Canadians of various ethnocultural backgrounds, individually and as communities, contributed at home and overseas to the war effort during World War I and World War II" (OME, 1999:29). While examining the contributions that Aboriginal peoples have made to Canadian society is not a mandatory part of the curriculum, I spent considerable time attending to this topic because of what it reveals about the type of information students learn about Aboriginal peoples.

Interview participants were asked: "Do you remember learning about any contributions that Aboriginal peoples have made to Canadian society?" A resounding twenty-two of the students (88 percent) said they did not recall learning anything along these lines. Some students expressed embarrassment about their lack of knowledge. For example, one 21-year-old student from Kanata declared, "This is embarrassing, we never even discussed it that way [with regards to contributions]... I don't know anything about this, sorry." Other students were less forthcoming. For example, four participants (16

percent) pointedly asserted that while they could not answer my question with their high school knowledge, they were able to answer it after their first year of university. The impression given by these students' insistent claims to knowledge is that they did not want to come across as ignorant about Aboriginal contributions to Canadian society, which suggests they believe this information to be important. In this light, it is especially disappointing that this aspect of the grade 10 History curriculum was not learned.

The remarks of the three respondents who reported that they did learn about Aboriginal contributions to Canadian society in their high school classes are also telling. The first of these participants, a 21-year-old from Picton, answered that Aboriginals "were the foundation of this country – I learned that in high school, but I couldn't elaborate on that, you know if someone asked me why." This statement is interesting for two reasons: first, her use of the past tense indicates that Aboriginal peoples' foundational role in Canada is in the past; second, her inability to explain why Aboriginals are the foundation shows that her knowledge is less critical than it is pragmatic. If Aboriginal peoples are the foundation of the Canadian nation, this participant leaves the impression that this foundation has been built over and forgotten in the course of Canadian history.

A 19-year-old public school student from Picton had a similarly interesting answer to the question of Aboriginal contributions to Canadian society:

I'd probably say the cultural impact that they've had on Canadian society, such as the statue in front of the Canadian embassy in the States, we learned about that a little bit. But just I guess how Native culture can reflect what Canada means and like how nature is reflected as part of Canada and that ties back to Native roots, So I'd say a little about that, other than that I don't know what I'd say.

The first half of this response is curious for obvious reasons: how does a statue in front of a Canadian embassy in the United States reflect Aboriginal peoples' contributions to Canadian society in a meaningful way? That this is what immediately sprung to mind suggests that it must have been the subject of a lesson or classroom project. The second half of this students' response evokes the common association of Native peoples with the natural world. This theme is picked up in the response of the third participant, a 20-year-old from Nappanee, who answered: "It was something that I was interested in so... I guess I'd relate [Aboriginal contributions] to community values maybe. I don't know ...I think the way Canadians relate to nature was taken from traditional Aboriginal views." While it is a legitimate answer to the question about Aboriginal contributions to Canadian society, the romantic notion of Aboriginal peoples as environmental stewards does not reflect the expectations of the grade 10 History curriculum. Indeed, none of the students interviewed reported actively evaluating the contributions of Aboriginal communities to Canadian society, nor did any report learning about Aboriginal contributions during the World Wars. The neglect of Aboriginal contributions in the practice of the curriculum points to the reification of stereotypical notions of Aboriginal peoples as passive victims or undeserving beneficiaries of the Canadian state.

Taken as a whole, the information garnered from interview participants suggests that the few grade 10 History curriculum expectations that address Aboriginal issues have been met with only marginal success. This is particularly interesting considering how many participants reported learning about Aboriginal issues in grade 10 History. This begs the question: if most students did not cover the topics mentioned in the History curriculum, what *did* they learn about Aboriginals in their grade 10 History class?

Despite the curriculum's focus on twentieth century history, many students mentioned learning about the period of early contact:

[Grade 10 History] covered colonial history, contact, fur trade. And they actually covered a bit before that, about Aboriginal culture and communities all the way up to settlement (19-year-old from Toronto).

I remember the stuff about upper and lower Canada, and the Aboriginals in lower Canada and Jean Talon. First contact, and why they came over and the fur. A lot of it was the Hudson Bay Company (21-year-old from Kanata).

There was some trading involved with fur and whatnot... guns (20-year-old from Brighton).

The theme of early contact was also repeated in comments by students who remembered learning about Aboriginal-Settler relations:

We learned how Europeans came over and pretty much took over, and sort of pushed the Aboriginals out of the way and made them slaves.. and that kind of thing. I think the Europeans just took them out of the space and colonized the land for themselves (19-year-old from Ottawa).

Not much, I think I learned that the Europeans came over and spread the flu to the Aboriginals ... I could be totally wrong here...but they were invaded and a lot of them died off, and their culture was totally destroyed and the whole idea that the white race came over and etcetera, etcetera (19-year-old from Toronto).

While these observations may indicate a more critical approach to Aboriginal issues in the curriculum, these students' understanding of historical events is less than nuanced.

The notions that Aboriginals were enslaved and that their culture was destroyed contain seeds of truth, however neither is entirely accurate. Moreover, these students' understanding of colonial processes inaccurately portrays Aboriginal peoples as passive victims.

The place of Aboriginal issues in the grade 10 History curriculum is clearly marginal, and the few curriculum expectations that do relate to Aboriginal peoples have been met with only minimal success. The intent of the course is for students to explore

the elements of Canadian identity, to learn multiple interpretations of the past, and to study how political and social structures have evolved (OME, 1999:27), and the impression given by the students interviewed is that Aboriginal issues were all but eliminated from the pursuit of these goals. It is also remarkable that eleven respondents (44 percent) did not remember learning anything about Aboriginal peoples in grade 10 History. Once again, the omission of Aboriginal issues from the practice of the curriculum affirms Aboriginal peoples' subordinate position in Canadian society.

IV Beyond Geography, Civics, and History

As anticipated, many students reported learning about Aboriginal issues in courses outside the mandatory *Canadian and World Studies* curriculum. In most instances, this meant that students had elected to pursue social studies courses at a higher grade level. For instance, four participants (16 percent) reported that they covered Aboriginal issues in grade 12 History courses. In fact, one participant who attended Catholic school in Stittsville commented, "my grade 12 History was predominantly surrounded around the native history of Canada," and two others made similar statements. Another participant reported that he had gained most of his knowledge about Aboriginals from a grade 12 American History class:

Well from the basic required courses that you take it was dealt with briefly. But, in the other history courses I took that's where I learned about it more. So like for example, American History more thoroughly dealt with it. I took American history and that was pretty much, you know, the whole struggle with the natives and the fighting with them and stuff like that. I think it was the American's who basically took large groups of Aboriginals from places and moved them to other areas because they wanted to develop in the areas where they had been. I'm not sure if that was Canada as well, but in America they were basically exiled from

their area and moved somewhere else to benefit ... you know the uh... white settlers (19-year-old male from Kingston).

While it is troubling that students schooled in Ontario can be more familiar with Aboriginal issues in America than in Canada, it is also encouraging that Aboriginal issues are being dealt with in-depth in at least some parts of the high school curriculum. In addition, three students (12 percent) reported learning about Aboriginal issues in grade 12 Law. The topics students reported covering in Law included treaties and Aboriginal justice. Likewise, three students (12 percent) remembered learning about Aboriginal issues in the transdisciplinary grade 12 course Sociology/Anthropology/Psychology. Two of these students reported that it was only briefly touched upon, and one remembered doing a specific unit on residential schools. Another student reported learning about Aboriginals in her grade 12 Canadian Literature course, however she was clear “it was just a little blurb, we didn’t get specific.” Finally, one participant reported learning about Aboriginal self-governance in grade 12 Politics, and another recollected completing a project on residential schools in grade 12 Religion. What these courses have in common is that they are all taught at the grade 12 level.

While I initially assumed that the representation of Aboriginal issues in upper-year high school courses may suggest they are interpreted as an advanced subject by the Ontario curriculum, my assumption was ultimately contradicted by the fact that four students (16 percent) reported learning significantly more about Aboriginals in their grade 6 through 8 courses than they did in their high school courses. For example, one participant offered an interesting reflection on her experience of the curriculum:

I did History in grade 10 and I don’t think we touched on Aboriginal history at all –we started at World War II or something. I did Native history mostly in grade 8

and I feel like I wasn't old enough to comprehend what was going on. And until I took grade 12 Canadian History, which is optional, I didn't have a full understanding of Aboriginal issues at all (19-year-old from Richmond Hill).

In the first part of this statement suggests that this respondent has been imparted with only a limited sense of Aboriginal history as she implies that Aboriginal history refers exclusively to a time-period prior to World War II. The second half of her comments are more reflective. Indeed, she points to a potential consequence of neglecting Aboriginal issues in the high school curriculum in favour of teaching them in an elementary setting: the complexities of the issues are sacrificed. All of the students who claimed that elementary school as the primary source of their knowledge reported that the emphasis was on Aboriginal culture pre-contact:

We learned about the tribes and what each tribe did within their tribes. Like the traditions, kind of thing, of each tribe, and their rituals and stuff. [In what time period?]. Oh, way way back (21-year-old from Kanata).

[We learned] more of the cultural aspects and the way of life historically (19-year-old from Toronto).

This focus, while valuable, runs the risk of relegating Aboriginal peoples to a distant past decontextualized from present realities. Students need to also be taught about the history of colonization and contemporary developments in Aboriginal communities.

Of the students interviewed, three reported (12 percent) that *Native Studies* or *Native Language* classes were offered from Grade 9 through 12 in their high schools. However, none of these students actually took one of these courses. Their reasons for choosing not to take one of these classes are telling. For example, one 19-year-old student from Nappanee complained, "there was a Native Studies course at my high school, but it wasn't ever offered. I think those classes should be offered way more often, and not just in high school, even at Queen's there's Native history courses that aren't being run for

another three years.” This student’s frustration indicates a desire to learn more about Aboriginal peoples, and it is unfortunate that this has proven difficult throughout her education. Making courses accessible is important, which is why a second student’s comments are remarkable:

We have a very high Native population at my high school in Forest, so there was an Ojibwa class. But I never heard of any Native Studies classes - no we did not have that. [Did you take the Ojibwa class?]] No I didn’t, well the Ojibwa classes were strictly for the Native students, to you know keep the heritage and language alive (20-year-old male from Forest).

Native language classes are in fact open to the entire student body. So, this student’s misconception that Native Language classes are exclusively for Native students is surprising considering the same assumption is not made about other elective language courses like German, Japanese or Arabic. Moreover, the fact that this assumption is made in conjunction with the notion that Native language courses are for protecting Aboriginal heritage and language points to a way of looking at Aboriginal peoples as inherently separate from the mainstream.

V Reflections

Aboriginal issues are given cursory treatment in grade 9 Geography and grade 10 History. In grade 10 Civics, Aboriginal issues are all but ignored. The impression left by all of the courses discussed above, was that students were not offered the opportunity to critically engage Canada’s colonial past and the ongoing struggles of Aboriginal peoples in school. Because there was a near universal lack of critical perspective exhibited by the students interviewed, it is my assumption that this was not an issue of memory, but rather that it is indicative of the general approach taken by teachers. The responses of the

interview participants demonstrate that Aboriginal peoples continue to be represented, in education and in wider society, as passive victims of inevitable progress, undeserving beneficiaries of government generosity, and/or environmental stewards with unique connections to the wilderness. While these limited perspectives reappeared in the portion of the interviews dealing with students' opinions about the curriculum and Aboriginal issues, I was encouraged to discover that many students wanted to move beyond these narrow constructions and learn more about Aboriginal issues in Canada. In the following chapter, I discuss student perspectives at length with the intention of illuminating the insights they offer explicitly and implicitly about the implications of neglecting Aboriginal issues in education.

Chapter Six

Student Perspectives on Curriculum and Aboriginal Issues

The time spent soliciting students' opinions about their experiences with the curriculum was one of the most rewarding aspects of the interview process. Students were asked broadly what they thought about what they had learned regarding Aboriginal issues. Participants were then asked if they felt they had learned too much, not enough or just the right amount about Aboriginal issues in high school. The results were telling: none of the respondents answered that they had learned too much, twenty-one (84 percent) said they had not learned enough, and four (16 percent) said they had learned the right amount. As discussed below, the participants who said they had not learned enough about Aboriginal issues were asked if and why they thought it would be important to learn more. Finally, all participants were asked if they would change the curriculum regarding these issues, and if so what kind of changes would they make? Overall, the information garnered through this part of the interview speaks instructively about potential directions for the improvement of the curriculum and its delivery. In addition, many of the students' responses affirmed the importance of the present project by commenting on the dangers of a seemingly apolitical curriculum that minimizes the role of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

I Students' Reflect on the Curriculum

Not all of the students' responses confirmed my thesis that Aboriginal issues are overlooked and undermined by the Ontario high school curriculum. As noted above, four participants (16 percent) said they believed they had learned the right amount about Aboriginal issues in high school. One student who attended a private school in Toronto¹⁵ had nothing but praise for the way her teachers addressed material relating to Aboriginal peoples:

Well I think in general you have to look at the Aboriginal side and not just the side we tend to look at – the one that you will look at if you don't have a good History teacher. You've got to look at both sides or you're not going to get the whole picture. [Do you feel like you got the whole picture?] Yes, I do. But, I also went to a high school that was very helpful... it was a very small high school. [If you could change anything about the curriculum would you?] I would make public school more like the school I went to.

This student obviously feels confident that her school addressed Aboriginal issues in a comprehensive way. However, it is interesting to note that this student assumed I was inquiring about the History curriculum, which suggests that she may conceive of Aboriginal issues exclusively within a historical context. This is a theme picked up by the other students who professed to have learned “the right amount” about Aboriginal issues. Indeed, the remaining three students who took this position made the following statements:

I could care less about that history (19-year-old male from Pickering).

I'm not really a history buff, but I think we covered everything (19-year-old from Oshawa).

¹⁵ As noted in the previous chapter, all respondents are female unless otherwise noted.

It depends on your interests really, and I prefer a different aspect of history. I mean if it was something I was more interested in then I'd probably feel I would want to learn more (20-year-old male from Kingston).

Beyond their focus on history, these students also expressed a shared disinterest in Aboriginal history. It seems they only learned “the right amount” because they did not care to learn more. This disinterest may result from Aboriginal material being taught within an historical framework lacking connection to present day Canadian society. Still, not all of the students who noted a lack of contemporary Aboriginal material in the curriculum shared this apathetic view.

Of the twenty-one participants (84 percent) who stated that they did not learn enough about Aboriginal issues in high school, nearly half (ten students) specifically mentioned a lack of contemporary material. Several of these students commented that the lack of a bridge between historical and contemporary Aboriginal issues left them without a sense of how history has informed the present. Two students were particularly explicit in making this critique of the curriculum:

I would say that [what we learn] is not sufficient for what's going on today. There definitely needs to be more coverage. It felt like a topic that we just brushed over briefly and ...I find it to be quite important in our society. Definitely more on, like, what's going on today. We definitely covered the historical aspects, but we didn't relate it to how they exist today and the repercussions of those actions. That would be my major concern about the curriculum (19-year-old from Brighton).

Yes, I think it's important that we learn more... especially about what is going on with them now, and how they're being treated, and the outcome of all of the different things the government has done. High school definitely did not prepare me for an understanding of the [Aboriginal] culture. It just taught me about the history and how it related to me. It didn't give me...hmm how do I say this? I didn't get the chance to learn about what's going on right now in the world with all of the different tribes. I mean, when you think 'Native' –I remember in high school you just had this one particular image that was never deviated from (21-year-old from Kanata).

Both of these students are clear in their assessment of the curriculum: there are consequences resulting from the absence of contemporary Aboriginal issues in the curriculum. While both students report learning an adequate amount about the historical issues pertaining to Aboriginal peoples, neither felt that their teachers addressed the impact of this history on Canadian society today.

Five of the ten students who noted a lack of contemporary Aboriginal material in the curriculum reported that Aboriginal issues were dealt with as a lead-up to the main eurocentric focus of the course:

I think we could have learned about it more, it wasn't that in-depth and it wasn't recent. It was all based in the past. It was more of a basis for what the rest of the course was on. It was kind of a lead-up to the main thing – the main subject of the course. We were talking about European issues and there just happened to be a lead up about when they came to Canada (19-year-old from Bolton).

I think they should focus on more social issues –more contemporary. It was kind of like they would talk about [Aboriginal issues] and then they'd move on to something else. Let's say they're talking about Europeans for two weeks, then maybe there would be a lead-up talking about the Natives for a couple days (19-year-old from Picton).

By presenting Aboriginal issues as a prologue to European issues, the curriculum is essentially constructing Aboriginal peoples as a prelude to Canadian society. By denying Aboriginal peoples' participation and concerns within Canadian society today, the curriculum reifies the subordination of Aboriginal peoples.

While the lack of contemporary Aboriginal issues covered by the high school curriculum was the most significant theme developed through the course of the interviews, several students also lamented the absence of historical information about Aboriginals in the curriculum. For example, a 19-year-old student from Mississauga

commented, “They were here before any of us, and we hardly know anything about it. I just think it’s kind of sad, really, we’re missing a chunk of our history.” By calling it “our history” this student seems to personalize the exclusion of Aboriginal material from the curriculum. Another student also made the absence of Aboriginal history in the classroom personal by relating this missing history to her sense of Canadian identity:

We definitely didn’t learn enough because European settlement has only been the past maybe five hundred years, when the Aboriginals have been here forever. Plus, there is a contrast between the relationships between the Euro settlers and the Natives, which needs to be explored because it has shaped our identities as Canadians. I found in high school they kind of just... it kind of felt like they were just teaching it because they had to and they didn’t actually care about what they were teaching us, or the importance of Natives in Canada or for our identities (19-year-old from Richmond Hill).

Clearly, this student felt her teachers failed to engage the issues in meaningful ways. Additionally, this oversight was perceived by the student as a denial of Aboriginal peoples’ role in the creation of a collective Canadian identity. Although this was the only student to bring up Canadian identity in relation to the implications of minimizing or excluding Aboriginal content in the curriculum, other students discussed the consequences of this omission in different ways.

All of the students who said that they had not learned enough about Aboriginal issues in high school were asked if and why they thought it would be important to learn more. Notably, five participants (20 percent) felt that the absence of discussion about Aboriginal issues in high school reinforces prejudicial attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples in Canada. These students recognized that negative attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples stem from a lack of knowledge about both the historical and contemporary realities that have rendered Aboriginal peoples subordinate to dominant Canadian

society. Of these students, three (12 percent) demonstrated a relatively complex understanding of the situation in their responses. For example, one student pointed to the unique history of Aboriginal peoples:

I definitely don't think they are treated the same way a white person in Canada is treated. I think that it's not even that they're treated the same way as other races are treated, they're just kind of a forgotten population almost and they have issues specific to their ethnicity and culture that I don't think are understood (21-year-old from Kanata).

This student's observation that Aboriginals are a "forgotten population" is supported by the way that Aboriginal issues "weren't a topic of discussion" at her school. She adds that the knowledge she did have about Aboriginal issues was a result of having "good parents," which indicates that this student believes that knowledge about Aboriginal issues is valuable. For another student, it is the prejudicial attitudes of his family and friends that lead him to believe there is a need for greater attention to these issues in high school: "It wasn't enough, because I think that it is important stuff. I think that in the curriculum it's undermined and not enough people know... just from talking to people around here, friends, family, citizens, they all have very negative views towards Aboriginal people." It seems that there is little effort made within the Ontario high school curriculum to challenge the negative opinions many Canadians hold about Aboriginal peoples.

Seven respondents (28 percent) stated that their high school education left them ill prepared to form an opinion on contentious issues involving Aboriginal communities. This theme was developed further when students were asked: "Do you think it would be important to learn more about Aboriginal issues? Student responses included the following:

Because I know it is such a big issue in our society right now, just like...well I know there are all the issues on reserves and there is still the stigma towards Aboriginal peoples and I think it would help to discuss it so that people actually have an understanding. Cause I know there's sort of the idea "oh they get all this money from the government and they don't have to do anything" and they don't really understand the cause or reasons. It's something that needs to be talked about more (19-year-old from Toronto).

I think so, because it is becoming such a big issue. All the time it comes up in the news and the media, and whether you agree with it or not, unless you know the facts you can't really have an educated opinion about it (19-year-old from Iroquois).

We learned nothing, so yes definitely it is [important] because I feel that relations between Aboriginal people in Canada in general are pretty rocky, and they're going to stay that way. So, I think that educational issues may help future generations be able to maybe kind of resolve some issues that have been going on for so long (19-year-old from Napanee).

These responses suggest that in order to develop informed opinions, Canadian students need to learn about Aboriginal issues, in all their complexities, while in high school. Moreover, the last student's comments cut to the heart of this project by suggesting a fundamental need for information in order that "rocky" relations with Aboriginal peoples in Canada may be resolved. According to these students, the minimization or exclusion of Aboriginal issues in high school curriculum leaves them unprepared to engage in the debates perpetually swirling around Aboriginal issues in Canadian society.

When asked how they would change the way Ontario's high school curriculum addresses or fails to address Aboriginal issues, interview participants offered a variety of concrete suggestions. Unsurprisingly, there was a consensus among those students who felt they had not learned enough about Aboriginals during their high school education:

more material needs to be covered. Five students (20 percent) mentioned the minimal amount of Aboriginal material in their textbooks. For example, one student reported:

I don't necessarily remember entire chapters and I think that would be important to have an entire chapter based upon Aboriginal people. Not just little, you know like the sticky notes? [You mean the sidebars? The boxes that supplement the chapter?] Ya exactly, there were like sidebars in one or two chapters, and I think it's more important to have some more in depth information required for the Ontario curriculum (19-year-old from Toronto).

That this student remembers Aboriginal issues in her textbooks being relegated to postscript, confirms the impression conveyed by many participants that Aboriginal issues were usually presented as a lead-up to the main European focus of the curriculum. In this same vein, other students argue that there needs to be a greater focus on Aboriginal perspectives:

I think I would encourage more focus on Aboriginals' point of view instead of the European point of view. Like every time we learned about it, it would be like how the Europeans did this and how that affected the European culture cause this is what they did to the natives. I think it's important for Canadian students to understand the impact that European colonization had brought on to the Natives and the type of treatment they experienced and that kind of things. Because a lot of times that sort of thing can be overlooked in public schools because if you are from a European background you don't want to think that your ancestors did all these bad things (19-year-old from Picton).

This student's astute observations point to a possible reason for the exclusion or minimization of Aboriginal issues in the high school curriculum: the reluctance of European Canadians to address the legacy of oppression that has characterized Aboriginal-Settler relations in Canada.

Other participants (eight students or 32 percent) were more pragmatic in the suggestions they offered for improving the high school curriculum with regards to Aboriginal issues. For example, a 19-year-old student from Mississauga said, "I think we

probably need at least a good unit on it.” When asked how long a unit is, this student responded, “You know, maybe three or four weeks.” Similarly, three respondents (12 percent) suggested that students should be required to complete “a project on Aboriginals” at some point in their high school career. More ambitious prescriptions for the curriculum came from four participants (16 percent) who suggested the need for classes dedicated to Aboriginal issues:

I think that dedicating a high school class to it would be helpful – I mean I wouldn’t venture to say it should be mandatory but an elective for students who want to learn more, and I think that if you were to have an impact on the grade 9 and 10 curriculum whereby more contemporary issues were dealt with, I think that then in grade 12 people would want to learn more about what is going on now with Aboriginal people (21-year-old from Kanata).

Now that we just talked about it, I probably would (change something) because all we really had was two history classes in grade 12 to pick from and they were both European history. There weren’t any specifics, like we didn’t go into specific histories they were just presented in a broad sense (19-year-old from Oshawa).

While there are Native Studies courses within the Ontario curriculum, it seems clear that they are not regularly offered or sought out. Regardless, these students’ suggestions for improvement are modest, and it is reasonable to expect that teachers could provide short instructional units that focus exclusively on Aboriginal peoples within their core curriculum.

Generally, the ease with which students came up with concrete suggestions for improving the high school curriculum demonstrates the feasibility of incorporating Aboriginal issues into the high school curriculum. However, this was not the case across the board as two students felt unprepared to even offer suggestions for improvement. For example, a 19-year-old student from Burlington commented, “like I say I’m ignorant - so,

how would I change the curriculum? - I don't know I don't have any suggestions because I don't have any knowledge about it." It is telling that so many students (twenty-one students or 84 percent) felt that their high school education was inadequate with regards to Aboriginal issues, and it seems that many students have a clear understanding of the simple changes required to improve the situation. During this portion of the interviews I was struck by what a simple and rewarding feat it would be to address these student suggestions. The participants' comments affirm the need for improvements, as well as the importance of advancing the role of Aboriginal issues in the high school curriculum.

II Aboriginal People and Equal Opportunity in Canada

In an attempt to understand how curriculum content impacts the ways that students perceive Aboriginal people in Canadian society, each participant was asked: "Do you believe that Aboriginal people have equal opportunity in Canadian society?"

Importantly, nineteen respondents (76 percent) answered that they do not believe that Aboriginals experience equal opportunity in Canada. Only four participants (16 percent) answered that they do believe Aboriginals have equal opportunity in Canadian society, and two participants (8 percent) gave ambiguous answers. All of the students interviewed were asked to explain their answers, which garnered rich data about how students make sense of the social inequalities faced by Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society.

The students who stated that Aboriginal people do not have equal opportunity in Canadian society supported their position with a variety of overlapping explanations. Most notably, seven students (28 percent) pointed to issues of stereotyping and racism as barriers to opportunity:

Even if people don't want to admit it, there's still a certain way of thinking about Aboriginal people. There tends to be more of a negative perspective than a positive perspective (19-year-old from Toronto).

I think it has to do with prejudice against them and certain stereotypical ideas... that they're all addicted to certain things and that maybe they're not as educated (19-year-old from Iroquois).

People put huge stereotypes on them, like all the land they own sometimes people are just like why should they own that much, they don't need that much land (19-year-old from Oshawa).

These responses evoke the stereotypes commonly applied to Aboriginal people. While these students stopped short of making an explicit connection between stereotypes and racism, other students were more direct:

It's just, I don't know... it is just structured in the way our society is, it's the same for black people unfortunately. It's not exactly the same...but... I think it is structural and cultural racism, white supremacy. But it's something that no one wants to admit to having. [Did you have discussions about racism in your classes?] Ya, racism but not related to Aboriginal issues (19-year-old from Toronto).

You know, it's like an old fashioned way of thinking like if African Americans had to sit on the back of the bus. It's kind of like that, like I'm not saying it is totally like white supremacist but I think it's kind of like that mentality (19-year-old from Toronto).

Interestingly both of these respondents mention white supremacy, and compare the situation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada to that of black people in both Canada and the United States. In the first statement, the student is clear that she thinks the problem is "structural and cultural racism, white supremacy." In the second of these statements, however, the student is more hesitant saying that the mentality faced by Aboriginals is similar to white supremacy. In the course of their interviews, both of these students noted that they had learned about racism and white supremacy in relation to African Americans

before the civil rights movement in the United States. However, neither student could remember learning about the racist treatment of Aboriginals in Canada. While the first student was able to extrapolate from her knowledge about anti-black racism and apply it to the position of Aboriginals in Canada, the second student acknowledged the connection but perceived the racism faced by Aboriginals in Canada to be less than that experienced by African Americans. The impression left by these students is that the concept of white supremacy was taught to them within the context of American society, and that Canadian correlates were absent from their experience of the curriculum. This may point to the power of multicultural ideals to take precedence over the realities facing Aboriginals, and all minorities, in Canada.

The most common explanation offered by students for the lack of equal opportunity experienced by Aboriginals in Canada is the historical legacy of subjugation. In fact, nine participants (36 percent) mentioned colonization as the root of Aboriginal peoples' unequal opportunity in Canadian society:

I just feel that because of what European settlers did to them in the past it has had a really negative affect on them now and it's hard for them to overcome the conflicts and issues that they're facing now. Because they are so far behind, Canadians just kind of push them down. They're having trouble rising above the past (19-year-old from Richmond Hill).

Uhm, well nowadays more than they used to, but I still think that they probably don't have all the opportunities that other people in Canada do. I think just because the Europeans sort of pushed them aside to begin with that uhm, that it hasn't changed sort of like the old values can't die, you know, it's just sort of understood that they're not as useful as we are, and obviously things have changed and people have changed, but you can't really erase what has happened, and because maybe it's not as prominent an issue people don't really think about it as much as they could (21-year-old from Kanata).

These responses point to issues that have arisen as a result of colonization and initial Aboriginal-settler relations. Both students use the verb "push" to describe how non-

Aboriginal Canadians have treated and continue to treat Aboriginal peoples: “Canadians just kind of push them down,” and “Europeans sort of pushed them aside to begin with.” Both participants also describe the entrenchment of inequitable power relations as the major difficulty to overcoming the legacy of colonization. Additionally, the second of these statements evokes the problem of prejudice: “the old values can’t die, you know, it’s just sort of understood that they’re not as useful as we are.” By describing the popular understanding of Aboriginal peoples as less useful to Canadian society than other groups, this participant recognizes the dominance of neoliberal rationality that constructs Aboriginals as unproductive and/or counterproductive economic actors in Canadian society.

Four other students (16 percent) who referred to history as the source of the inequality faced by Aboriginals were less certain of their answers. For instance, in response to my probing questions, students commented:

I don’t know, maybe its because we segregated them from the beginning, I don’t know. Cause they were treated differently than us from the beginning? I don’t know. [Can you explain further?] Well up North they wouldn’t have access to resources and education and that sort of thing... I hear about, not drug abuse, but glue sniffing and people dropping out of school early and that’s the impression I get, but of course I’m not knowledgeable in that area so... I don’t know why (19-year-old from Burlington).

Uhm, I guess just the same issues all throughout history, I mean Native people just being oppressed I guess. I’m not really sure, I don’t know. I wouldn’t think that they do [have equal opportunity] but I’m not exactly sure why, but I don’t think they do (20-year-old from Brighton).

It is interesting that while both students believe that Aboriginals have unequal opportunities in Canadian society, neither is able to explain why this is the case.

Although both of these participants refer to historical relations between Aboriginals and European settlers, the repeated statement “I don’t know” signals a general lack of

information about the contemporary situation. This confirms the general impression that Aboriginal issues in the curriculum are too often addressed within a strictly historical context.

Other theories offered by students to explain why Aboriginals do not have equal opportunity in Canada include the lack of political and public will to address the problems faced by Aboriginal communities. These students suggest that the challenges facing Aboriginals need to be addressed from outside of their communities:

Uhm I guess some people are just stuck in the past and they think that that's how it has always been. And not enough people, I guess, try and make a difference. [Can you be more specific?] Uhm, just... I guess basically politicians and stuff, a few of them say they want to help Aboriginal people, but you need more than a couple of people to say that (19-year-old from Stittsville).

No, I personally don't [believe Aboriginals have equal opportunity]. Cause I have a lot of friends who are from the Tyendinaga territories and that kind of stuff, and they have high poverty rates, high teen pregnancy, a lot of crime a lot of rape... I don't know I think they are socially not being recognized as being in trouble. I just think they need a little bit more attention (19-year-old from Picton).

The first student's comments imply that Aboriginal peoples need help in order to overcome the way "it has always been," thus tying the issue back to the historical context. The second student is astute in her understanding of the social problems present in Aboriginal communities, however, the solution she offers of "a little bit more attention" seems to underestimate the scope of the problem. Both respondents suggest that positive change is dependent on actions and attitudes outside of the Aboriginal community.

A final perspective commonly expressed by the participants who asserted that Aboriginals experience inequality of opportunity in Canada was regretful pessimism.

That is, four respondents (16 percent) lamented that, while they would like Aboriginals to have equal opportunity in Canada, they did not believe that to be the case:

I believe they should, but I don't think they do (19-year-old from Mississauga).

I would like to think so, but I don't think that's the reality (19-year-old from Toronto).

I'd like to say yes, but I don't think so (19-year-old from Stittsville).

No, I don't think so. I'd like to say yes, but I think there's still, even if people don't want to admit it, there's still a certain way of thinking about Aboriginal people (19-year-old from Toronto).

These comments are noteworthy because they demonstrate that some students implicitly perceive a disjuncture between the ideals of multicultural democracy, and the experiences of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Furthermore, these four students all offered complex explanations of the inequality faced by Aboriginals by providing more than one of the explanations discussed above (racism, colonialism, and a lack of political will). This shows that the students who expressed pessimism about the inequalities faced by Aboriginals tended to be those students who had the most information about why those inequalities exist in the first place.

Contrary to the positions taken by the majority of students who believe Aboriginals lack equal opportunity in Canadian society, two students referred to Aboriginals' minority status and described inequality as a justified consequence. One student in particular demonstrated a cynical perspective:

I guess they don't, but... but they're not the majority. We're a democratic society and the majority should rule. [Why do you think that the majority ruling translates into inequality for Aboriginals?] Because the majority is white British Canadians and the Aboriginals lost I guess. They were a blip in society, in history. [A blip?] Ya, a blip that's been passed over (19-year-old male from Pickering).

This student's comments amount to a justification of the oppression of Aboriginal peoples based on survival-of-the-fittest logic whereby Europeans 'won' control of the land and the nation, while Aboriginals simply 'lost'. Interestingly, this respondent frames his logic within the context of democracy, implying that minorities do not have rights within a democratic state because the majority rules. This reasoning contradicts the democratic values and multicultural ideals ostensibly supported by Canadian education. The way this student constructs Aboriginal peoples as a "blip" on Canada's socio-historical radar screen reinforces his view of Aboriginals as an obstacle that needed to be overcome in the process of building the Canadian nation. This self-identified "honky-white" student oscillated between indifference and aggression throughout his interview and was a unique participant as a result of the extreme positions he took.

The second student who mentioned Aboriginal peoples' minority status in explaining why they do not have equal opportunity in Canada interpreted inequality as a result of Aboriginal cultures. Her comments point to the power of stereotypes to definitively frame one's understanding of inequalities:

Uhm... I guess their way of life and their ethnicity. [How do you mean?] Well, I mean they are somewhat of a minority and they sort of, uhm some of them live sort of a different lifestyle. Like they don't mold, not all of them mold to I guess other people in Canada and how we live. [So you would explain continued inequality as a result of their culture?] Yes (21-year-old from Kanata).

This student places responsibility for the inequality experienced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada on Aboriginal peoples themselves because of their minority status and "different lifestyle." Specifically, she blames their inability to "mold" to a dominant Canadian way of life. Thus, she implies that assimilation is the answer to the inequalities experienced by Aboriginals in Canada –if they were more like the dominant culture they would not face

inequalities. Notably, this participant reported that she did not learn about Aboriginal issues of any kind during her high school education. This omission may explain her simplistic understanding of the challenges faced by Aboriginals in Canada. Accordingly, this student's perspective on the inequality of Aboriginals in Canada does little to support the exclusion of Aboriginal issues in the curriculum.

With regards to the four participants (16 percent) who said they believe that Aboriginal peoples have equal opportunity in Canadian society, each justified their opinions in different ways. For example, the first student to state that Aboriginals have equal opportunity said:

I think they do, if they choose to take advantage of it. Honestly, people on reserves don't have a lot of opportunities. But, people who choose not to live on reserves have the same opportunities as, like, my parents who are Portuguese, or even Irish or Italian or whatever. Like, I don't think it is that big of a deal, especially in Canada (19-year-old from Kingston).

This student constructs equality as a choice, and while she notes that living on a reserve can be a barrier to opportunity she also understands this as a personal choice. This participant draws on her own family history in comparing Aboriginals to European immigrant groups. In this way she affirms the neoliberal ideology that hard work is the only barrier to opportunity and success. This impression is confirmed by the student's final statement that inequality is not "that big of a deal, especially in Canada." Clearly, for this student, Canada is a multicultural land of opportunity.

The three other students who took the position that Aboriginals experience equality in Canadian society showed less conviction in their explanations. In fact, when one participant was asked to explain her answer in relation to continued inequality she

said only, “Good question, I don’t know how to answer you.” Another respondent was more willing to support her position, however her statement also revealed uncertainty:

Well I think they are treated differently, like people look at them differently and stuff, but they definitely do [have equal opportunity] because they have their cards and stuff, so like I think our government is giving them the opportunity, but I think a lot of it has to do with society and the way that they treat them and stuff...I guess... I don’t know (19-year-old from Bancroft).

Her argument is interesting because she constructs the government as altruistic and paternalistic in its orientation to Aboriginals: “our government is giving them the opportunity.” She suggests that Indian status cards give Aboriginals equal opportunity, which shows a lack of knowledge about how Indian status works. Also of note is the way she distances herself from the prejudice she perceives on the part of “people” and “society,” and how she dismisses this prejudice as a barrier to opportunity for Aboriginal peoples. Overall, it seems clear that the students who stated that Aboriginals have equal opportunity in Canadian society are not able to critically justify their positions.

The two participants (8 percent) whose responses could not be classified as either affirming or denying that Aboriginals have equal opportunity in Canada each referred to the complexity of the situation. Both respondents grounded their explanations in personal experiences with Aboriginal people. For example, one participant reflected on the experience of an Aboriginal friend:

I think they do in theory but in reality it’s not equal, it’s not an equal playing field [expand, what do you mean in theory?]. There are laws in place to make it so that they have an equal opportunity, but I’m not sure it is working. Let me think of an example.... Ok, an example...last summer I spent the summer in Whitehorse and I have a friend there who is First Nations, and in theory she was covered to go to University, like her band would cover it, but she wasn’t able to go because she couldn’t afford it. So, I’m not exactly sure how that works exactly? [Well even if your tuition is paid for, there are lots of other costs to consider.] Exactly! And so like, the opportunity is there in theory, but she just wasn’t able to pursue it, which

was a huge disappointment. She was a teenage mother and just didn't get out of that little circle. She's working full time, you know, and making the most of what she has (20-year-old from Brighton).

By drawing on the experience of a friend, this student points to a disjuncture between the theory and practice of equality in Canada. While she is "not exactly sure how it works," she is able to challenge the notion that Aboriginals have easy access to education.

The other participant to express ambivalence in regards to Aboriginal equality also draws on an Aboriginal friend's experience with education:

I think they are at a disadvantage, but I think that today they can get the same [opportunities] they just have to... Like, I personally have a friend who lives on a reserve up north and they like reach out to them up there at least. Like he got to go to a private school for free because of the land he lives on. Like, I think there are certain things that are done to help them out more today. And I think that they have to be... well it's kind of controversial cause if they, the government, tries to help them then we're putting that... like we're doing something for them, but in the back of our minds we're always doing something for ourselves. I think that our government has to encourage, like I think self-government is something that they have to be able to like keep over themselves, and I think that like if we try to oppress them or try to rule them the way we want to it's just not going to work, but if we give them a certain amount of power and work side by side, then with our help they can probably... well some of the issues could go away, but I think that we have to watch how much we try to affect them, you know what I mean? I'm having a hard time articulating myself... [Well do you mean not foisting stuff on them?] Ya, ya, you've got to apply it like help them help themselves (19-year old from Toronto).

This student implicitly challenges the paternalistic approach that has traditionally characterized government intervention in Aboriginal affairs, and advocates a hands-off approach: "we have to watch how much we try to affect them." Unlike the majority of participants, this student readily implicates herself as a member of the dominant group by using the pronoun 'we.' Clearly, this student recognizes that even well intended intervention can have adverse affects. This reflexivity stands in contrast to the responses of other students interviewed, and may be explained, in part, by the fact that she was the

only student to report learning about Aboriginal issues in all three required courses (Geography, Civics, and History). This participant attended a private school about which she said, “At my school we tried to look from every perspective, we weren’t really like other schools.” Taken in conjunction with the uncertainty expressed by many of the other participants, this student’s assumption about the quality of her education may be accurate.

III Reflections

While many students had opinions about Aboriginal peoples in Canada, it is clear that they generally lack the information and insight to support their positions. Indeed, through the interview process, it became evident that the majority of students felt that they did not learn enough about either the contributions of Aboriginal peoples or the challenges they face in Canadian society. Indeed That many participants were aware of the absence of information they have about both the historical and contemporary context of Aboriginal issues in Canada, confirms the need for changes to the curriculum. Reflecting on the importance of the present project, a student commented, “Just talking to you I’m glad you’re actually doing this because you don’t learn about [Aboriginal issues] in high school, you don’t learn that they have a specific history that effects who they are today.” The fact that so many students demonstrated an eagerness to learn more about Aboriginal peoples indicates that the curriculum is providing a disservice to students by excluding or minimizing Aboriginal material. Moreover, the Ontario curriculum is failing Aboriginal peoples by creating a new generation of Canadians who are ill equipped to address Aboriginal demands for social justice. Student perspectives on the opportunities available to Aboriginal peoples in Canada indicate that some young Canadians support actions to

improve the situation. Unfortunately, this research suggests that the information and support needed to help students meaningfully engage social justice issues is conspicuously absent from students' experiences in the classroom.

Chapter Seven

Insights and Implications

The minimal inclusion of Aboriginal issues in the formal expectations of grade 9 Geography, grade 10 Civics and grade 10 History, combined with the fact that 84 percent of students interviewed felt they did not learn enough about Aboriginal issues, suggests that much work needs to be done by both the creators and practitioners of Ontario's curriculum. Despite the well-intentioned goal of the *Canadian and World Studies* curriculum "to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and values they need to become responsible citizens and informed participants in Canadian democracy in the twenty-first century" (Ontario, 1999:2), the vast majority of students interviewed graduated from high school without a basic understanding of Aboriginal issues. Thus, it is implied that knowledge about Canada's colonial history and ongoing Aboriginal struggles is unnecessary for responsible citizenship and informed participation in Canadian democracy. This demonstrates the power of hegemony in education to disadvantage and disempower minorities by privileging narratives that obscure, undermine and ignore their struggles against entrenched systems of domination. Eurocentric hegemony in education is achieved despite, and perhaps through, publicly stated priorities to the contrary. That is public commitments to equality and inclusion allow Canadians to rest assured that Canada is a just society without feeling compelled to explore how and if these commitments are met.

The Canadian government claims that official multiculturalism has encouraged "racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding" (Canada, 2007). Within the

context of this research, it seems that the ideals of multiculturalism are not, according to the students interviewed, being manifested in the practice of Ontario's social studies curriculum. Indeed, most of the students interviewed expressed, explicitly and implicitly, a fundamental lack of cross-cultural understanding regarding the historical and contemporary struggles of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Without this basic knowledge, it is impossible for cross-cultural understanding to exist as anything other than an ideal. In this final chapter, I will highlight the disjuncture between Canada's multicultural ideals and the theory and practice of Ontario's high school curriculum. This will be accomplished through an overview of my findings, and the implications they suggest for Canadian education and wider Canadian society. In addition, I will offer prescriptions for meaningful change drawn from both the suggestions of the students interviewed, as well as my own personal reflections. Finally, I will discuss directions for further research, and consider the wider philosophical implications of this thesis.

I A Summary of Key Findings

Remarkably, nine of the students interviewed (36 percent) did not remember learning about Aboriginal issues in high school. Of those remaining students who did remember learning about Aboriginal issues, the majority (fourteen students or 56 percent) reported that this learning took place in their History class. Interestingly, the History curriculum contained only two specific expectations relating to Aboriginal issues. Despite the fact that the Geography curriculum contained three direct references to Aboriginal issues, only six students (24 percent) ultimately remembered learning about these issues in Geography. The Civics curriculum contained no specific references to Aboriginal issues,

and this was confirmed by the fact that only two students (8 percent) reported covering these issues in Civics. To put this in context, the total number of specific curriculum expectations ranged from seventy-four in Geography, to forty-five in Civics. As such, it is a reasonable conclusion that Aboriginal issues are given only cursory attention in Ontario's mandatory social studies curriculum.

In terms of the information students report learning about Aboriginal issues in Geography, Civics and History, a dominant theme was the presentation of these issues within an historical context with little or no connection to contemporary Aboriginal issues. The relegation of Aboriginal issues to History has several overlapping implications. First, students did not have a clear understanding of how historical events have shaped the contemporary situation, which results in students' inability to make connections between historical injustices and contemporary Aboriginal struggles. As a result, many students are unable to understand why Aboriginal peoples continue to refer to historical events in their current demands for social justice. Second, Aboriginal peoples are represented by the curriculum as historical figures with little relevance today. This reinforces stereotypical notions that Aboriginals are stuck in the past or resistant to the march of progress because of cultural deficiencies. Third, the representation of Aboriginal issues as historical issues serves to depoliticize the curriculum content by detaching it from the contemporary context. This allows teachers to explore Aboriginal issues within a context that does not require students to critically engage questions surrounding the practice of democracy, citizenship and multiculturalism, or the specters of privilege and oppression in Canadian society.

Another consistent theme within students' accounts of curriculum practices was that the information taught about Aboriginal peoples was almost exclusively negative in character. For example, twenty-two participants (88 percent) reported that they had not learned about any positive contributions that Aboriginal peoples have made to Canadian society. Of the three remaining students, none could provide concrete examples of Aboriginal contributions to Canadian society. By ignoring Aboriginal contributions to Canadian society, the curriculum constructs Aboriginal peoples as passive agents who have been acted upon by the Canadian government and the dominant population it represents. By implicitly denying Aboriginal agency, the curriculum denies the concerted efforts made by Aboriginal peoples and communities to resist the imposition of foreign systems of domination. This occludes students' engagement of critical questions surrounding Aboriginal movements toward self-determination and the ongoing disappointments they face.

Because Aboriginal issues are consistently overlooked and undermined in the practice of Ontario's high school curriculum, the stereotypes applied to Aboriginal peoples remain unchallenged and implicitly reinforced. As noted by Clark (2006), Dion (2005) and Gardner (1995), dominant educational practices construct Aboriginal peoples as passive victims requiring pity; undeserving beneficiaries of government altruism; culturally deficient misfits; and/or romantic mythical others with unique connections to the environment. Through my interviews, I found that students' understandings of Aboriginal peoples were consistent with these four stereotypical archetypes. As a result of these limited, and inaccurate, representations of Aboriginal peoples and cultures, students' perspectives are also limited. For example, while nineteen respondents (76

percent) stated that Aboriginal peoples do not have equal opportunity in Canadian society, less than half offered explanations of this inequality that did not rely on the stereotypes mentioned above. So, although most students recognize the inequalities experienced by Aboriginals in Canada today, very few had enough information to explain these inequalities beyond common sense understandings. This, of course, relates back to the tendency of curriculum practices to present Aboriginal issues within an historical context disconnected from present realities.

The status quo of Aboriginal marginalization in Canadian society is reinforced by both the expectations laid out in Ontario's mandatory high school social studies curriculum, and the experiences of students in Ontario's classrooms. This runs counter to the values touted by curriculum documents and various levels of government. Clearly, the theory and practice of Ontario's education system are disjointed. As a result, students are able to maintain an uncritical acceptance of Canadian multicultural values, which translates to the creation of false consensus key to maintaining hegemonic power relations. Students cannot resist that which they do not understand. As such, the suppression of Aboriginal issues in the curriculum serves state interests by leaving asymmetrical power relations unchallenged. While I would not go so far as to suggest that there is a conspiracy at work, I do think that this is a clear manifestation of hegemony at work.

If the education system does not support the critical engagement of social justice issues, it is difficult to imagine how the average Canadian is supposed to have the knowledge to responsibly contribute to the creation of a multicultural democracy founded upon equality and inclusion. Of course, the curriculum ostensibly supports critical

perspectives through expectations that students will analyse and evaluate conflicting beliefs and values as they relate to democratic citizenship, and “develop an appreciation of others’ beliefs and values about questions of civic importance” (OME, 1999:46). So, while the Ontario curriculum contains only limited content relating to Aboriginal issues, it does purportedly emphasize cross-cultural understanding and advocate a critical orientation towards diversity. That students’ claim that this critical perspective was missing from their classroom experience, points to the gap between the theory and practice of the curriculum. As a result, the solution to the problem must include but cannot be limited to greater incorporation of Aboriginal issues in the curriculum as evidently curriculum expectations do not reflect common classroom practices. Therefore, recommendations for change must be rooted in the realities of the classroom.

II Recommendations for Change

In formulating my suggestions for change, I have found it necessary to identify my intended audience. As noted above, this thesis is intended as a contribution to the literature in the sociology of education generally, and to critical education studies in particular. While I hope that my research will eventually be received by the academic community, I am also aware that meaningful change in educational and curricular practices will only come through engagement of the issues by those on the frontlines of public education. As such, those who develop the curriculum and those who implement it are an important audience for this research, and my hope is that my findings can help spur improvements in students’ experiences of the curriculum.

My primary prescription for change involves the critical engagement of Aboriginal issues in high school education. I anticipate that resistance to this suggestion may involve an argument such as: why should Aboriginal issues take precedence over the issues faced by other Canadian minority groups? I have several responses to this question. First, I am not arguing that Aboriginal issues should take precedence over the issues of other minority groups. Second, suggesting that increasing the representation of Aboriginal issues in the curriculum means limiting the incorporation of other social justice issues is nonsensical, and amounts to a zero-sum game. Indeed, such an argument would have to be based on the notion that if the education system opens the door to critically exploring Aboriginal struggles, then the issues of a myriad of other minority groups would also need to be addressed. It is my contention that this would also help create a truly informed citizenry capable of actively engaging in and supporting multicultural democracy. Third, I believe that, if necessary, the argument could be made that Aboriginal peoples are unique in Canada, and that their histories and contemporary struggles are central to the past, present and future of the Canadian nation. In addition, Aboriginal demands for self-determination present specific quandaries for the Canadian courts and governments that will have to be addressed by Canadian people at some future juncture. Aboriginal peoples have made it clear that they will not give up their historic rights, and nor will they stop using all tactics available to them to ensure that their rights are respected. By denying students information about historical and contemporary Aboriginal issues, the education system fails to contribute to a process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals prolonging the conflict that continues to characterize Aboriginal relations Canada.

Assuming that the case for greater inclusion of Aboriginal issues in the curriculum has been successfully made, there is still the question of how this is best accomplished. The students interviewed offered pragmatic suggestions that demonstrate the ease with which Aboriginal issues could be fortified within the curriculum. Students' prescriptions for change were based on their perceptions of deficiency in the practice of the curriculum. For example, several students noted that their teachers relied heavily on textbooks to guide their lessons, and that the textbooks they remember using did not address Aboriginal issues in substantive ways. Indeed, four students commented that they remember Aboriginal issues being relegated to sidebars within chapters dedicated to other topics. By presenting Aboriginal issues within sidebars, textbooks visually frame Aboriginal issues as separate from the main content of the curriculum. If textbooks were rewritten so that Aboriginal issues were embedded within the primary text, students felt that their teachers would have spent more class time exploring these issues.

Students also argued for the incorporation of instructional units dedicated to Aboriginal issues. Instructional units were defined as anything from a week to a month of lessons in which students would be required to complete projects or write tests dedicated to Aboriginal issues. Other students suggested that there should be entire courses dedicated to Aboriginal issues. Generally, students were clear that they needed and wanted to spend more class time addressing Aboriginal issues. Three students told me that they saw their teachers' lack of knowledge about Aboriginal issues as the main barrier to greater incorporation of these issues in the curriculum. Extrapolating from this, another key suggestion for improvement would be to require social studies teachers to learn more about Aboriginal issues during their training in university. Indeed, if

Aboriginal issues were an integral part of the social studies curriculum, then teachers would need to have a greater knowledge base from which to draw from.

Of course curricular change requires far more than improving textbook material and strengthening instructional units; meaningful change will require a shift in pedagogy. Students need to be given the opportunity to critically engage historical and contemporary issues of social justice in an environment that fosters critical questions about privilege, oppression and power. Teachers need to divest themselves of the discourses of neutrality that frame their work as apolitical, and recognize that an apolitical curriculum is inherently and dangerously political in the ways that it obstructs and subverts meaningful discussions about social justice in Canada. This means that teachers need to teach critically and start asking hard questions of themselves and their students –questions that require hard answers and deep reflection. While I am aware that such a process would be difficult for teachers and students alike, I think it is necessary if the education system is going to truly assume its responsibility for fostering the development of informed and engaged citizens. Moreover, a critical perspective would include better integration of Aboriginal issues in the curriculum so as to avoid their marginalization and segregation from so-called core curricular content.

The pedagogical shift I am recommending here has already been, purportedly, embraced by Ontario's education system. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education has produced a document intended to guide the development and implementation of anti-racism in schools. This document, *Antiracism and Ethno-Cultural Equity in School Boards*, states:

Antiracist curriculum provides a balance of perspectives. It enables all students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and provides each student with the

knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to live in a complex and diverse world. It challenges the Eurocentric nature of curriculum and of the society in which young people are growing up. Curriculum development and selection is made on the basis of what a student requires to function effectively in a culturally and racially diverse society (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993:13-14).

So, the theory behind the pedagogical commitments I am arguing for have already been endorsed by the provincial government, and once again it seems the crux of the problem lies in the disjuncture between the theory and the practice of the curriculum. The Ontario Ministry of Education needs to follow up on these purported commitments by supporting the integration of critical perspectives in the curriculum, and investing in the creation of instructional materials and teacher training programs that facilitate the delivery of antiracist pedagogy. Moreover, there should be a system of checks and balances that ensure that students are taught in ways that promote the antiracist principles publicly embraced by the Ministry of Education. This could involve, for example, short surveys given to students during the provincial exam process. Such student evaluations of the incorporation of antiracist principles could help focus efforts to improve curriculum practices, and ground reform efforts in the practice of the classroom rather than in abstract ideals, as is currently the case.

III Directions for Further Research

This research has raised as many questions as it has answered. I began this project with questions about what the average Canadian knows about Canada's colonial history and ongoing Aboriginal struggles. Education has provided an insightful entry point to discussions of post-colonial power relations and public knowledge in Canada. It is easy to imagine how my research goals could be attended to via research routes other than the

one I have taken here. Following from the previous discussion, for example, analyses of textbooks could provide insight into how hegemonic discourses are embedded in education. As noted above, many teachers rely on textbooks to guide their approaches to curriculum expectations. Thus, questions about which textbooks are most often used, and how textbooks differ across time and place, would provide interesting avenues of inquiry. Additionally, it would be fruitful to investigate teacher training programmes in Canadian universities. An analysis of if and how social studies teachers are required to consider social justice issues in general, and Aboriginal issues in particular, would provide greater insight into how and why the curriculum is interpreted in certain ways. In addition to investigating teacher training curriculum, teachers themselves would undoubtedly prove to be powerful sources of insight about educational practices and potential directions for improvement. It would be particularly interesting to investigate how teachers' practices are influenced by unofficial expectations, classroom dynamics, and access to resources and materials. By conducting focus groups and/or interviewing teachers about what they see as barriers to engaging social justice issues in the classroom, prescriptions for change would be responsive to the realities of the classroom. Another way of getting at the practices of the classroom would be to observe them first hand.

Further research with students would also be valuable. Research designs could incorporate focus groups, face-to-face interviews, and surveys. These methodological possibilities open up diverse avenues for pursuing the research questions I have engaged here through telephone interviews. For example, working with students face-to-face would allow me to make more of the hesitations and puzzlements expressed by students in response to my questions. Regardless of the particular methodology employed,

research with a greater number of participants would be very valuable in that it would allow me to make remarks about emergent patterns regarding class, race and gender. It would be interesting to explore how these social categories influence how students make meaning of inequality in general and Aboriginal issues in particular. Moreover, while I have focused this research on the education system, this is not to suggest that students learn in a vacuum. Indeed, it would be insightful to explore how factors like family environment have influenced students' perspectives. For example, it would be valuable to ask students whether their families discussed Aboriginal issues at home, or whether their families were actively involved in what their children were taught. This line of inquiry would allow greater discernment of the relationship between curriculum materials, outside influences, and the tendency to retain or engage issues of inequality and power.

This thesis is concerned with questions beyond the practices of the classroom. For example, it would be fascinating to try and answer questions like: what is education for?; who is education for?; and how is power exercised through education? Within a Canadian context, questions about power and hegemony, neoliberalism and multiculturalism, citizenship and democracy, as well as Aboriginal relations, Aboriginal social-movements and the oppression of Aboriginal peoples and communities need to be addressed in order for social justice to be advanced. The wider philosophical project here is how do we, as Canadians, account for our colonial past and attempt to move beyond the legacy of domination and oppression that has too long characterized Aboriginal relations in this country. How can Canada best address Aboriginal demands for social justice? What would it mean to honour historical commitments to Aboriginal peoples? How can we bring Canada into line with the beliefs and values it represents on the

international stage? What is the role of the average white Canadian in pursuing these goals? I look forward to sorting through and unpacking these questions as I enter the next phase of my academic and intellectual career, and it is my hope that some answers can be brought into focus within my lifetime –for these are the questions I will be asking all of my life.

IV Final Thoughts

This project represents an attempt to contribute to a process of meaningful reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. I have made the case that the destitution of Aboriginal communities is a reflection of the ways in which Aboriginal peoples and cultures have been pushed to the periphery of Canadian society. I have argued that Canada's shameful colonial legacy must be dealt with in order for multicultural democracy to become more than an abstract concept. To this end, I have demonstrated that citizenship, democracy and multiculturalism must be viewed as capricious and contradictory concepts within the contexts of education, and Aboriginal relations in Canada. It is my contention that the oppression of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is facilitated by an education system that wears the guise of apolitical neutrality while abdicating its responsibility to help young people critically engage social justice issues. While Ontario's curriculum officially embraces anti-racist pedagogy, my research has revealed that Aboriginal issues are marginalized in both the theory and practice of Ontario's mandatory Geography, History, and Civics courses. Students' themselves were able to recognize how the limited representation of colonial history and Aboriginal issues in their social studies classrooms limits their understanding of Aboriginal peoples and

Aboriginal relations in Canada. In fact, the vast majority of students expressed a need and a desire to learn more. It is my hope that this research amplifies students' voices and represents a clear call for meaningful counter-hegemonic change in education.

Works Cited

- Aboriginal Institutes' Consortium. 2005. *Aboriginal Institutions of Higher Education: A Struggle for the Education of Aboriginal Students, Control of Indigenous Knowledge, and Recognition of Aboriginal Institutions: An Examination of Government Policy* edited by LuAnn Hill. Ottawa: Canadian Race Relations Foundation.
- Apple, Michael W. 2001. "Educational and Curricular Restructuring and the Neoliberal and Neo-conservative Agendas: Interview with Michael Apple." *Curriculo sem Fronteiras*. Jan/Jun 1(1):1-xxvi.
- Apple, Michael W. 1979. *Ideology and Curriculum*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Assembly of First Nations (AFN). 2006. *Royal Commission on Aboriginal People at 10 Years: A Report Card*. Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations.
- Anderson, David and Ann Pohl. 2002. Teaching About Aboriginal Peoples." *Education Canada*, 42(3):16-19.
- Bastien, Betty. 2004. *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: the Worldview of the Siksikatsitapi*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.
- Berg, Bruce. 2004. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 5th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Canada. 2007. *Canadian Multiculturalism: An Inclusive Citizenship*. Available online at http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/inclusive_e.cfm. Ottawa: Ministry of Canadian Heritage.
- Cardinal, Harold. 1999 (1969). *The Unjust Society*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.
- Carrington, Bruce and Alastair Bonnett. 1997. "The Other Canadian 'Mosaic' – 'race' equity education in Ontario and British Columbia." *Comparative Education* 33(3):411-431.

- Cassidy, B., R. Lord and N. Mandell. 2001. "Silenced and Forgotten Women: Race, Poverty and Dissability." Pp. 75-107 in *Feminist Issues: Race Class, and Sexuality* 3rd ed., edited by Nancy Mandell. Toronto: Prentice Hall.
- Castagna, Maria and George J. Sefa Dei. 2000. "An Historical Overview of the Application of the Race Concept in Social Practice." Pp. 19-37 in *Anti-Racist Feminism: Critical race and Gender Studies*, edited by A. Calliste and G. J. S. Dei. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Chansonneuve, Deborah. 2005. *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School Trauma Among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
- Clark, Penney. 2006. "Images of Aboriginal People in British Columbia Canadian History Textbooks." *Canadian Issues*. Fall: 47-51.
- Dabulikis-Hunter, Susanne. 2002. *Outsider Research: How White Writers Explore Native Issues, Knowledge and Experiences*. Bethesda, MD: Academica Press.
- Dei, George J. Sefa, and Leeno K. Karumanchery. 2001. "School Reforms in Ontario: The 'Marketization of Education' and the Resulting Silence on Equity." Pp. 189-216 in *The Erosion of Democracy in Education: from Critique to Possibilities*, edited by J. P. Portelli and R. P. Solomon. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises.
- Dei, George J. Sefa. 1999. "Knowledge and Politics of Social Change: The Implication of Anti-Racism." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20(3): 395-409.
- Denzin, Norman K. 2001. *Interpretive Interactionism*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND).1996a. *Highlights from the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: People to People, Nation to Nation*. Available online: <http://ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/rpt/mwle.html>. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND).1996b. *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Available online: http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sgmm_e.html. Ottawa: Government of Canada.
- Dick, Bob. 2005. *Grounded Theory: A Thumbnail Sketch*. [online] Available at <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html>.
- Dion, Susan. 2005. "Aboriginal People and Stories of Canadian History: Investigating Barriers to Transforming Relationships." Pp. 34-57 in *Possibilities and Limitations: Multicultural Programs and Policies in Canada*, edited by Carl E. James. Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

- Dyck, Noel. 1991. *What is the Indian 'Problem': Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Indian Administration*. St. John's NFLD: The Institute of Social and Economic Research.
- Ebert, Teresa L. 1995. "Subalterity and Feminism in the Moment of the (Post)modern: The Materialist Return." Pp. 203-227 in *Order and Partialities: Theory, Pedagogy, and the "Postcolonial"* edited by Kostas Myrsiades and Jerry McGuire. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Ellsworth, Elizabeth. 1992. "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering?: Working through the Oppressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy." Pp. 138-166 in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* edited by Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore. New York: Routledge.
- Erasmus, Georges. 1989. "Twenty Years of Dissapointed Hopes." Pp. 1-42 in *Drum Beat: Anger and Renewal in Indian Country* edited by Boyce Richardson. Toronto: Summerhill Press Ltd.
- Fanon, Franz. 1967 (1952). *Black Skin, White Mask* (Charles Lam Markmann Trans.). New York: Grove Press.
- Fleras, Augie and Jean L. Elliott. 2007. *Unequal Relations: An Introduction to Race, Ethnic and Aboriginal Dynamics in Canada*, 5th ed. Toronto: Prentice Hall.
- Fournier, Suzanne and Ernie Crey. 1997. *Stolen from our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.
- Freire, Paulo. 2006 (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- Gardner, Susan. 1995. "'And Here I am, Telling in Winnebago How I Lived my Life': Teaching Mountain Wolf Woman." Pp. 359-375 in *Order and Partialities: Theory, Pedagogy, and the "Postcolonial"* edited by Kostas Myrsiades and Jerry McGuire. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Giroux, Henry. 2004. *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy*. Aurora ON: Garamond Press.
- Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine Publishing.
- Goodson, Ivor F. 1992. "On Curriculum Form: Notes Toward a Theory of Curriculum." *Sociology of Education* 65(1): 66-75.

- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *The Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith. New York: International Publishers.
- Grande, Sandy. 2004. *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Griffith, Alison I. 2001. "Texts, Tyranny, and Transformation" Educational Restructuring in Ontario." Pp. 83-98 in *The Erosion of Democracy in Education: from Critique to Possibilities*, edited by J. P. Portelli and R. P. Solomon. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises.
- Hardy, Cynthia and Nelson Phillips. 2002. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Horkheimer, M. 1982. *Critical Theory*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Jackson, Tom. 1999. "History." Pp. 135-156 in *Promoting Equality in Secondary Schools* edited by D. Hill and M. Cole. London: Cassell.
- Kelly, Elizabeth A. 1995. *Education, Democracy, and Public Knowledge*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Koenig, Wolf and Alanis Obomsawin (Producers), and Obomsawin, Alanis (Writer/Director). 1993. *Kanehsatake: 270 years of Resistance*. Montreal: National Film Board of Canada.
- Kvale, Steinar. 1996. *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Linklater, Clive, Victor O'Connell, Beth Cuthand and Pauline Douglas. 1982. "The Constitution Story." *Saskatchewan Indian*, Constitution Special Edition (April): 4. Available online: <http://www.sicc.sk.ca/saskindian/a82apr04.htm>.
- Levine-Rasky, Cynthia. 2006. "Discontinuities of Multiculturalism." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 38(3): 87-104.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Maracle, Brant Joseph. 1977. *Questions We Indians are Asked*. Oshawa, ON: Maracle Press Ltd.
- Marshall, James D. 1999. "The Mode of Information and Education: Insights on Critical Theory from Michel Foucault." Pp. 145-165 in *Critical Theories in Education*:

- Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*, edited by T. S. Popkewitz and L. Fendler. New York: Routledge.
- Mongia, Padmini. 1995. "Introduction." Pp. 1-18 in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, edited by P. Mongia. New York: Arnold.
- Monture-Angus, Patricia. 1995. *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Mukherjee, Arun P. 1990. "Whose Post-Colonialism and Whose Post-Modernism." *World Literature Written in English* 30(2): 1-9.
- National Aboriginal Health Organization. 2004. *Preliminary Findings of the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey 2002-2003*. Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization.
- Ng, Roxanna. 2003. "Toward an Integrative Approach to Equity in Education." Pp.206-219 in *Pedagogies of Difference: Rethinking Education for Social Change*, edited by P. P. Trifonas. New York: Routledge.
- Ontario Ministry of Education (OME). 2006. "Frequently asked Questions for Parents." Retrieved January 23, 2006 (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/faq-parents.html>).
- Ontario Ministry of Education (OME). 1999. *Canadian and World Studies: The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10*. Toronto: Ministry of Education and Training.
- Osborne, Ken. 2001. "Democracy, Democratic Citizenship, and Education." Pp. 29-62 in *The Erosion of Democracy in Education: from Critique to Possibilities*, edited by J. P. Portelli and R. P. Solomon. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises.
- Orona, Celia J. 2005. "Temporality and Identity Loss Due to Alzheimer's Disease." Pp 171-196 in *Grounded Theory in Practice* edited by A. Strauss and J. Corbin. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Pandit, Lalita and Jerry McGuire. 1995. "Introduction." Pp.1-14 in *Order and Partialities: Theory, Pedagogy, and the "Postcolonial"* edited by Kostas Myrsiades and Jerry McGuire. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Ponting, R. 1997. "The Socio-Demographic Picture." Pp. 68-114 in *First Nations in Canada: Perspectives on Opportunity, Empowerment, and Self-Determination* edited by J.R. Ponting. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Portelli, John P. and R, Patrick Solomon. 2001. *The Erosion of Democracy in Education: from Critique to Possibilities*. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises.

- Price, June. 1999. "In Acknowledgment: A Review and Critique of Qualitative Research Texts." Pp. 1-24 in *Making Meaning of Narratives* edited by R. Josselson and A. Lieblich. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Radhakrishnan, R. 1993. "Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity." *Callaloo*, 16(4): 750-771.
- Regnier, Robert 1995. "Warrior as Pedagogue, Pedagogue as Warrior: Preliminary Reflections on Aboriginal Anti-Racist Pedagogy." Pp. 67-86 *Anti-Racist, Feminism, and Critical Approaches to Education* edited by R. Ng, P. Staton and J. Scane. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc.
- Rezai-Rashti, Goli. 1995. "Multicultural Education, Anti-Racist Education, and Critical Pedagogy: Reflections on Everyday Practice." Pp. 4-19 in *Anti-Racism, Feminism, and Critical Approaches to Education*, edited by R. Ng, P. Staton and J. Scane. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press.
- Saanich Indian School Board. 2007. "ŁÁU,WELNEW Tribal School." Retrieved April 15, 2007 (<http://www.sisb.bc.ca/index3.html>).
- Scheurich, James. 1999. *Rage and Hope: Giroux on Freire*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin. Available online at <http://www.perfectfit.org/CT/giroux6.html>
- Sears, Alan and Andre Hughes. 1996. "Citizenship Education and Current Educational Reform." *Canadian Journal of Education* 21(2): 123-142.
- Shohat, Ella. 1995. "Notes on the Post-Colonial." Pp. 322-334 in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, edited by P. Mongia. New York: Arnold.
- Stout, M. D. 1997. "Stopping Family Violence: Aboriginal Communities Enspirited." Pp. 273-298 in *First Nations in Canada: Perspectives on Opportunity, Empowerment, and Self-Determination* edited by J.R. Ponting. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Tejeda, Carlos, Manuel Espinoza and Kris Gutierrez. 2003. "Toward a Decolonizing Pedagogy: Social Justice Reconsidered." Pp. 10-40 in *Pedagogies of Difference: Rethinking Education for Social Change*, edited by P. P. Trifonas. New York: Routledge.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol¹⁶

- 1)
 - a) Have you read and understood the letter of information?
 - b) Do you have any questions?
 - c) Do you understand that participation is voluntary, that you may refuse to answer any question you find objectionable, and that you can withdraw yourself and your data from the study at any time?
 - d) Do you consent to be interviewed?
 - e) Do you consent to having your interview audio taped?

- 2)
 - a) What is your date of birth?
 - b) In what city or town did you attend grade 9 and 10? If it was a small town, what was the nearest city?
 - c) What years did you attend grade nine and ten?
 - d) For grades 9 and 10, was the school you attended: public, private, French, Catholic, other?
 - e) How would you describe your ethnicity?

- 3)
 - a) You were required to take grade 9: Canadian Geography; grade 10: Canadian History in the 20th century; grade 10: Civics in high school, did you cover colonial history and/or Aboriginal issues in any of these classes?
 - b) Were any Native studies classes offered at your school?
 - c) I am interested in your experience of courses that dealt with Canada's colonial history, and courses that dealt with Aboriginal peoples – are there any courses you took in high school that dealt with these issues that we haven't already talked about?

- 4)
 - a) What historical information do you remember learning about European colonization of Canada as it relates to Aboriginal peoples?
 - b) What information do you remember learning about Aboriginal peoples in Canada today?

¹⁶ After obtaining and recording the participants consent to be interviewed, as used the following protocol as a guide rather than as a verbatim script. As such, I strayed from the interview protocol whenever necessary to draw out more information and pursue diverse avenues of inquiry. Probing questions were asked whenever clarification or greater detail was needed.

5)

Now I am going to go through a list of concepts, in no particular order, and I want you to tell me whether or not you learned about any of them in high school. If you have we will discuss what you remember learning, and in what format you learned it (ie. Did you learn this through a teacher's lecture, a guest speaker lecture, a documentary film, a particular project, etc.).

- a) British North America Act (as it applied to Aboriginal peoples)
- b) Indian Act
- c) Indian agents
- d) Indian Status
- e) The reserve system
- f) Assimilation
- g) Residential schools
- h) Treaties
- i) Land claims
- j) Assembly of First Nations
- k) National Indian Brotherhood
- l) National Indian Advisory Council
- m) Aboriginal Self-Government
- n) Iroquois Confederacy
- o) Oka crisis
- p) Nunavut
- q) Did you learning anything in relation to Aboriginal issues regarding about energy megaprojects like the one at James Bay?
- r) Did you learn anything about Aboriginal women? Bill C-31, for example?
- s) Did you learn about any of the contributions Aboriginals have made to Canadian society?
- t) Is there anything else, not on this list, that you remember learning?

6)

- a) What do you think about what you learned about these issues?
- b) Do you feel you learned too much, not enough or just the right amount?
- c) Do you think it would be important to learn more? If so, why?
- d) If you could change anything about the curriculum as it relates to these issues, would you? And if so how?

7)

- a) Do you believe that Aboriginals have equal opportunity in Canadian society?
 - b1) If so, how do you explain continued inequality?
 - b2) If not, then what do you believe are the reasons for this inequality?

8)

- a) Before we conclude is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix B

Interview Participants

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity ¹⁷	Date of Birth	Type of High School	Location of High School
1	Female	White	1986	Public	Brighton
2	Female	Portuguese	1987	Catholic	Kingston
3	Male	White Canadian	1986	Public	Kingston and Forest
4	Female	White	1987	Public	Iroquois
5	Female	White Canadian	1987	Public	Mississauga
6	Female	White	1987	Public	Ottawa
7	Female	White	1987	Public	Toronto
8	Female	White	1987	Catholic	Kingston
9	Female	White	1987	Catholic	Stittsville
10	Female	White	1987	Public	Bancroft
11	Female	White	1987	Public	Oshawa
12	Female	White	1987	Private	Toronto
13	Female	White	1987	Private	Toronto
14	Female	Caucasian	1985	Catholic	Kanata
15	Female	French Canadian	1987	Private Anglican	Richmond Hill
16	Female	Caucasian	1987	Public	Bolton
17	Female	Caucasian	1987	Public	Nappanee
18	Male	Honky White	1987	Public	Pickering
19	Female	Jewish	1987	Private	Richmond Hill
20	Male	White Caucasian	1986	Public	Kingston
21	Female	White	1987	Public	Oakville
22	Female	Dutch Canadian	1987	Public	Picton
23	Female	White	1987	Public	Whitby
24	Female	European	1987	Public	Toronto
25	Female	British Heritage	1987	Private Anglican	Burlington

¹⁷ Ethnicity is described using the interview participants' own words.

Appendix C

Curriculum Exemplar: Civics, Grade 10¹⁸

Overview

As we move into the twenty-first century, Canada is undergoing significant change. We are struggling with a range of demanding questions, such as these: How do we govern ourselves? As our population becomes more diverse, how do we ensure that all voices are heard? How do we resolve important societal and community issues in the face of so many diverse and divergent views influenced by differing values? What role will Canada play within an increasingly interconnected global community? Our responses to these questions will affect not only our personal lives but the future of our communities, our provinces and territories, and our country. In civics, students explore what it means to be a “responsible citizen” in the local, national, and global arenas. They examine the dimensions of democracy, notions of democratic citizenship, and political decision making processes. They are encouraged to identify and clarify their own beliefs and values, and to develop an appreciation of others’ beliefs and values about questions of civic importance.

Strands

The Civics course is organized into the following three strands: **Purposeful Citizenship, Informed Citizenship, and Active Citizenship.**

Purposeful Citizenship¹⁹

Overall Expectations

By the end of the course, students will:

- examine beliefs and values underlying democratic citizenship, and explain how these beliefs and values guide citizens’ actions;
- articulate clearly their personal sense of civic identity and purpose, and understand the diversity of beliefs and values of other individuals and groups in Canadian society;
- demonstrate an understanding of the challenges of governing communities or societies in which diverse value systems, multiple perspectives, and differing civic purposes coexist.
- demonstrate an understanding of a citizen’s role in responding to non-democratic movements (e.g., supremacist and racist organizations, fascism, and communism) through personal and action groups (e.g. actions of the Righteous Among Nations during the Holocaust, Medgar Evers, Emily Murphy).

Specific Expectations

Democratic Beliefs and Values

By the end of the course, students will:

¹⁸ (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999: 46-48)

¹⁹ For the sake of brevity, only one “strand” will be presented here.

- describe fundamental beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship (e.g., rule of law, human dignity, freedom of worship, respect for rights of others, work for common good, sense of responsibility for others, freedom of expression);
- explain, on an analysis of cases in local, provincial, national, and global contexts, how democratic beliefs and values are reflected in citizen actions;
- articulate and clarify their personal beliefs and values concerning democratic citizenship, and determine the influence of significant factors (e.g., community, nation, cultural group, religion, gender, socioeconomic status) on their sense of Civic purpose.

Beliefs, Values, and Multiple Perspectives

By the end of the course, students will:

- compare the varied beliefs, values, and points of view of Canadian citizens on issues of public interest (e.g., privacy, reducing voting age, freedom of information, compulsory military service, Native self-government, Quebec sovereignty);
- explain how different groups (e.g., special interest groups, ethnocultural groups) define their citizenship, and identify the beliefs and values reflected in these definitions;
- analyse a current public issue that involves conflicting beliefs and values, describing and evaluating conflicting positions;
- describe how their own and others' beliefs and values can be connected to a sense of civic purpose and preferred types of participation.

Civic Purpose, Community, and Personal Responsibilities

By the end of the course, students will:

- describe and assess the contributions that citizens and citizens' groups make to the civic purposes of their communities;
- describe, compare, and analyse Canadian cases in which contrasting value systems, multiple perspectives, and civic purposes co-exist (e.g., constitutional debates, Quebec sovereignty questions, Native self-governance);
- research and summarize the introduction of the Nuremberg laws, the public response to these laws in pre-World War II Europe, and the subsequent erosion of human rights that led to the Holocaust;
- analyse the evolution of Canada's participation in international tribunals, from the Nuremberg trials after World War II to the International Court of Justice's ongoing prosecutions involving war crimes and genocide (e.g., Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia);
- describe ways citizens can be involved in responding to issues in which contrasting value systems, multiple perspectives, and differing civic purposes coexist, and determine their own sense of responsibility in relation to these opportunities for involvement;
- demonstrate an ability to anticipate conflicting civic purposes, overcome personal bias, and suspend judgment in dealing with issues of civic concern.