

# Discovering, Recovering, and Covering-up Canada: Tracing Historical Citizenship Discourses in K–12 and Adult Immigrant Citizenship Education

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## Abstract

In Canada, cultural diversity has always been a contested cornerstone of citizenship and of citizenship education. In the last decade, a number of provinces, including Alberta and Ontario, have published citizenship and character education documents and social studies curricula in which ideas of cultural diversity are central and shape dominant understandings of nationhood. Meanwhile, the federal government produced its own citizenship education text: a study handbook for adult immigrants taking the citizenship test. Recognizing an interesting opportunity to compare how citizenship and diversity are presented to youth and to adult immigrants, we offer a critical analysis of the extent to which current

discourses reflect, revise, or reassert those that were prominent in the past. We find that within educational curricula, liberal social justice discourses are taking a background to those that promote social cohesion and a narrow vision of Canadian identity and history and that de-emphasize progressive ideals of engaging with difference and committing to social action policies. At the provincial K–12 level, a neoliberal understanding of individual development and economic rationales is dominant, while at the federal level, there is also a shift toward neoconservatism that recovers the imperial roots of Canadian citizenship ideals while covering up the strong history of equity, diversity, and civic action.

*Keywords:* citizenship education, multiculturalism, neoliberalism in education

## **Résumé**

Au Canada, la diversité culturelle a toujours été une pierre angulaire contestée de la citoyenneté et donc de l'éducation civique. Au cours de la dernière décennie, certaines provinces, dont l'Alberta et l'Ontario, ont publié des documents de formation sur la citoyenneté et ses caractéristiques, de même que des programmes d'études sociales au centre desquels on trouve des idées de diversité culturelle qui façonnent les courants de pensée dominants du pays. Pendant ce temps, le gouvernement fédéral créait son propre manuel d'éducation civique : un manuel d'étude pour immigrants adultes qui s'apprêtent à passer le test de citoyenneté. Voyant là une occasion intéressante d'examiner comment la citoyenneté et la diversité canadiennes sont présentées aux jeunes, comme aux immigrants adultes, nous avons effectué une analyse critique de la mesure par laquelle les discours actuels reflètent, renvoient ou réaffirment la citoyenneté et la diversité, qui occupaient autrefois le premier plan. Nous constatons que les passages des programmes d'enseignement qui prônent un discours libéral de justice sociale reprennent le contexte des passages qui favorisent la cohésion sociale ainsi qu'une vision étroite de l'identité et de l'histoire du Canada, tout en se décentralisant des idéaux progressistes visant à s'engager envers la différence et les politiques d'action sociale. À l'échelle provinciale, de la maternelle à la fin du secondaire, une compréhension néolibérale du perfectionnement individuel et de la logique économique est dominante, tandis qu'à l'échelle fédérale, ce changement récupère les racines impériales des idéaux de la citoyenneté canadienne, tout en traitant une longue histoire d'équité, de diversité et d'action civique.

*Mots-clés :* éducation civique, multiculturalisme, néolibéralisme en éducation

During the past twenty years, there has been a resurgence of interest in citizenship education in Canada in both K–12 schooling policy and program materials designed for adult immigrants. Because Canada has one of the highest rates of immigration in the world and was the first country to develop an official policy of multiculturalism,<sup>1</sup> it is known for integrating diverse cultures. There is a pattern of tension between more assimilationist and more integrationist and equity-based interventions in education (Joshee, 2004), and these tensions reflect different approaches to diversity, citizenship, and changes in socio-economic and political conditions in the country (Osbourne, 2000a). A rise of neoliberal discourses in policy on education and citizenship that focuses on individualism and social cohesion has been widely documented by researchers and scholars (Joshee, 2007, 2009; Reid, Gill and Sears, 2010; Richardson, 2008; among others).

This paper offers a critical analysis of current discourses of diversity in Canadian citizenship education and the ways they reflect, revise, or reassert those that were prominent in the past. First, we outline the contemporary ideological context in which nationhood is iterated through citizenship and education policies and practices. We frame this context using Joshee's (2009) identification of three main ideologies driving discourses of citizenship and diversity in contemporary educational policy: liberal social justice, neoliberal, and neoconservative. Next, we build on the work of Joshee and Johnson (2007) who identify three historical discourses: commonwealth, mosaic, and social action. Using these points of reference, we conducted a critical discourse analysis to identify traces of the historical citizenship discourses relating to cultural diversity from K–12 educational policy and secondary school social studies curricula in two of Canada's largest English-speaking provinces, Ontario and Alberta. We compare these findings with discourses evident in the new citizenship study guide, *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*, produced by the federal government for use by adults preparing for the citizenship test.<sup>2</sup> Finally, connecting to contemporary ideologies, we raise

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1 The Canadian Multicultural Act of 1988 legislated the official policy of multiculturalism from the 1970s. It encouraged full participation of all minorities and was implemented in all government agencies, departments, and corporations.

2 The booklet is a study guide for the citizenship test, which is the last step for landed immigrants before receiving citizenship and must be taken by those who are between the ages of 18 and 54 and meet the citizenship criteria. Failure rates have increased significantly since the implementation of the new test that accompanied the new booklet (McKie, 2013).

the implications of our findings for equity and diversity-oriented education policy. We find that the opportunities within educational curricula advocating liberal social justice discourses are taking a background to those that promote social cohesion and a narrow vision of Canadian identity and history. In this way, there is a silencing of more progressive ideals of engaging with difference and committing to social action policies formerly present in educational policy. At the provincial K–12 level, a neoliberal understanding of individualism is dominant. At the federal level, this shift recovers the imperial roots of Canadian citizenship ideals while covering up the strong history of equity, diversity, and civic action.

## **Context and Theoretical Framework**

The concept of being a citizen of a nation involves drawing boundaries that determine who *does* and *does not* belong (Pashby, 2008). In Canada, citizenship status and membership in the nation has been tied intimately to the pursuit of colonial practices of territorial acquisition and encounters with so-called native societies (Anderson, 2006; Richardson, 2008; Willinsky, 1998). Citizenship in Canada, as in other countries, has historically been conceptualized in the image of the autonomous White male individual (Goldberg, 1993). French Canadians received certain language rights, and Catholic minorities in English Canada and Protestant minorities in French Canada received education rights. The government defined members of the diverse First Nations communities via a legal Indian status, which simultaneously provisioned certain rights and defined “Indians” in colonial terms as other than Canadian. This had a particular implication for women who lost this status if they married a non-“Indian.” Immigration policies also created official systems of racism, ranging from parsing out land on the prairies to White, male European settlers, to charging a head tax on Chinese immigrants. Thus, race, culture, and gender have always defined citizenship in Canada, and nation building has served to reinforce hierarchies (Alarcon, Kaplan, & Moallem, 1999; Mohanty, 2004; Razack, Smith, & Thobani, 2010). As Isin and Wood (1999) contend, nation building can be characterized as “an imperialist practice that [has] found its strongest expression in citizenship to mark out the Other” (p. 55).

Citizenship action in the twentieth century problematized the historically normalized citizen through the women’s rights, civil rights, gay rights, and aboriginal politicization movements, among others, along with theoretical frameworks influenced

by postmodernism and postcolonialism (McCollum, 2002; Painter, 2002; Richardson, 2002). Canada's multicultural policy was created during a political context marked by the legislation of more rights for French-language speakers and the politicization of First Nations groups. As Tully (2000) argues, multiculturalism opened discursive spaces for contestations over recognition. However, the application of theories of multiculturalism can also be criticized for failing to significantly attend to Canada's colonial past or to alter the power dynamics accounting for differences in the social status of minority cultures. In popular understandings of "celebrating different cultures" through adding cultures into the "multicultural mosaic," an ethno-cultural minority can be reinforced as the "Other" in relation to a "neutral" dominant culture in such a way as to commodify culture (Yon, 2000, p. 57). In addition, representations of multiculturalism that lack critical attention to intersections of race, gender, and nationhood can also serve to reinforce gender inequality. Scholars have pointed to the denial of gender issues in Canada in this regard. They argue that attention to gender inequality in mainstream media and in curricula present sexism and women's issues as problems existing outside Canada or as problems exclusively within certain minority communities in Canada (Ingram, 2009, 2013; Jiwani, 2006a, 2006b; Subedi, 2010).

Education, which grew from religion-based schooling into twentieth-century mass schooling, has played a central role in socializing citizens to adopt certain desired values and to develop a sense of belonging in the national society (Bickmore, 2006; Giroux, 2005; Schwille & Amadeo, 2002). Thus, formal education has been a key way for governments of diverse, colonial peoples to prepare all citizens to "display enthusiastic loyalty to the state" (Heater, 1990, p. 76). This was explicitly manifested in the forced residential schooling of generations of First Nations peoples, and it was more implicitly manifested in the hidden curricula and dominant narratives of nationhood that were reflected in citizenship education policies and textbooks. The implementation of the requirement for landed immigrants to take a test as a last step to gaining citizenship and the corresponding test-preparation materials represent another way in which narratives of good citizenship and nationhood are formalized. Indeed, contemporary citizenship education in Canada is rooted in the ongoing negotiation process of defining nationhood. This is a process of contestation that occurs through ideological struggles in the context of real and perceived political pressures (Sears, 2009).

Joshee (2009) provides a framework that recognizes contemporary multiculturalism in educational policy in Canada as a complex web of intersecting ideologies, of which three predominate: liberal social justice, neoliberal, and neoconservative. Her

analysis of over 200 current documents found that liberal social justice discourses are overshadowed by a strong dominance of neoliberalism across all levels of government with an increasing prevalence of neoconservatism at the federal level. Liberal social justice discourses reinforce the importance of the state nurturing a caring and just society, and are focused on ideas of the right to one's identity and to recognition of that identity. The redistribution discourse asserts the importance of redressing the unequal distribution of goods and power among social groups marked by intersections of class, race, culture, and gender, among other systemic inequities. Joshee (2009) found that until the late eighties and early nineties, liberal social justice discourses were strongly evident in educational policy in Canada.

However, the nineties ushered in the era of neoliberalism and more recently, a neoconservative agenda at the federal level. Though current education policy documents use the language of diversity and equity, this language is increasingly less evident (Joshee, 2009, p. 96). Neoliberal discourses reflect an ideology of rationality, competition, and economic imperative, whereby individuals are primarily resources for the economy; celebrating and appreciating cultural diversity is good for business. Neoliberal multiculturalism focuses on social cohesion as a corrective measure that can help to increase social solidarity and "restore faith" in the institutions of government (Joshee, 2009, p. 99). In a related, but different manner, neoconservatism asserts the role of the state.

The rebranding of museums and reissuing of citizenship materials, as well as expensive marketing campaigns for celebrations of the anniversary of the War of 1812, are examples of a neoconservative push at the federal level (Geddes, 2013). These recent initiatives are part of an effort to build public interest in Canadian history in preparation for 2017, the 150th anniversary of Confederation. They also draw on a popular discourse that Canadians do not know their Canadian history, thus constructing a double crisis of identity and citizenship (Sears & Hyslop-Marginson, 2007).<sup>3</sup> Osborne (2000b) points out that throughout Canadian history there have been moments of crisis around how the past is taught.

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3 It is important to point out that the perceived crisis in history education was also a concern of the previous Liberal government, particularly after the publication of a provocative book by historian Jack Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History* (1998). Osborne (2000b) points out that in 1990, then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien declared that if Canadian history were taught better, "the nation would be healthier" (p. 6). Since then, the Conservative government under Steven Harper has interpreted this crisis in specifically neoconservative terms.

The Conservative government under Steven Harper has a strong neoconservative approach to this double crisis. Complaints from a variety of civic groups assert that the version of history displayed by these efforts favour a view of Canadian history that privileges the contributions of the great men of Canadian history at the expense of those of women and minorities. There is a focus on battles, military exploits, and Anglo-Saxon–British heritage, without attention to the struggles for inclusion by a range of marginalized groups such as women; First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups; and immigrant populations (Porter, 2012). From within this context, the new citizenship handbook for adult immigrants was developed, along with a corresponding new, more challenging test. Joshee (2009) identifies neoconservative ideology in specific visions of the past that are associated with the dominant group whose traditional values are glorified. A neoconservative discourse of social cohesion reasserts the role of the state in this regard. This version of inclusion re-inscribes a “we/they” dichotomy, where “we” represents a dominant, English-speaking, White group that is hard-working, decent, and virtuous, and “they” represents those who do not fit the dominant norm, including Indigenous peoples, immigrants, certain women, and the poor (Joshee, 2009, p. 96–97).

Therefore, in policies related to citizenship education, neoliberal and neoconservative discourses each reframe or de-emphasize liberal social justice versions of diversity. One result is that members of groups viewed as diverse or different from the norm are, themselves, seen as the problem and as potential threats to social cohesion. The central function of this view of education is to integrate students (youth or adult immigrants) into the dominant society rather than to change the exclusionary impulses of the dominant society (Pashby, 2013). Within this framework, inequities become constructed as individual issues, distracting attention from how power is embedded within social structures. While neoliberal discourses focus on social cohesion as getting along and building business skills, neoconservative discourses draw on ideas of the tolerant Canadian of a golden past, a tradition of tolerance marred only by occasional lapses. This latter characterization is echoed directly in the words of current Prime Minister Stephen Harper: “We . . . have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them” (Ljunggren, 2009, para 10). Despite the neoliberal onslaught of the nineties and the current resurgence of neoconservative discourses, especially at the federal level, Joshee (2009) notes that there is still evidence of a presence, albeit muted, of liberal social justice discourses in citizenship education policy.

## **Mode of Inquiry and Data Sources**

Citizenship education research tends to focus on K–12 education, and this paper addresses this gap in the literature by considering conceptualization of citizenship at different levels of education policy: in this case provincial K–12 and federal adult immigrant citizenship education. Official K–12 school curricula are designed for young citizens preparing to enter adulthood and are created by provincial governments. Citizenship test preparation materials are developed by the federal government for landed immigrant adults, who have presumably been socialized outside Canada. In most provinces, educational curricula are developed through an exhaustive process of consultation with educators, historians, and a variety of stakeholder groups, while federal citizenship education materials are developed based on the federal government's agenda and consultations with a narrower set of interested parties. Both examples of citizenship education assume a deficiency in the learner's knowledge, and this learner becomes someone who requires socialization in Canadian versions of the principles of democracy and citizenship.

In our study of citizenship education documents, we used critical discourse analysis to approach policy, curriculum, and citizenship test materials, and we recognize how each is involved in the construction of meaning (MacLure, 2003). We matched current and historical discourses through a close reading of citizenship education texts. This research grew out of a comparative project that identified citizenship discourses in the pre- and post-WWII eras in Canada and the United States (Joshee & Johnson, 2007; Joshee, Johnson, & Pashby, 2009). The original study examined policy documents and articles on citizenship education in scholarly journals published between 1930 and 1955. The study we describe here elaborates on Joshee's (2004, 2009) three sets of contemporary discourses—liberal social justice, neoliberal, and neoconservative. We also draw on the Canadian findings from the original study, which include three discourses explained in the next section—commonwealth, mosaic, and social action. We identified key phrases and examples used to describe citizenship and diversity in contemporary educational policy documents, including secondary school social science curricula, citizenship education, and character education documents published before and including 2012 in the two most populous and economically influential English-speaking provinces in Canada: Ontario and Alberta (Alberta Education 2005a, 2005b; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2005, 2008). We analyzed these findings using the two sets of



frameworks: historical (Joshee & Johnson, 2007) and contemporary discourses (Joshee, 2009). We then compared those findings to a similar discourse analysis of *Discover Canada*, the new guidebook for immigrants applying for citizenship, (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Overall, we considered how contemporary discourses of citizenship echo or revise historical discourses.

## Historical Discourses

The findings of the original study (Joshee & Johnson, 2007) assessed the enduring idea (commonly reproduced in educational curricula and policy) of Canada's long history of accommodation of cultural diversity. The study found three overarching discourses evident in citizenship and diversity policy in 1930–1955: the commonwealth discourse, the mosaic as Canada's unique identity, and citizenship as social action. A key finding in this work is a historical tension between explicit intolerance in immigration policies and a positive view of diversity in popular understandings of a multicultural mosaic.

In the first historical discourse—the *commonwealth* discourse—Canadian identity was based on Christian traditions where Canada was trustee of the British Empire's noble past. A group of intellectuals and community organizations in the UK and in the new dominions were committed to liberal imperialism, which stressed the importance of British, Christian traditions to Canada, and the world, as inspiration for international understanding. Some liberal imperialists ascribed explicitly to White supremacy including the Anglican Archdeacon of Montreal: “The British Commonwealth and Empire today is a necessity to the world; its importance for Europe lies in the fact that it is the champion of the world supremacy of the White Man” (Gower-Rees, 1947). It is important to note that in the commonwealth discourse, freedom was understood as ordered liberty under the British Crown, thus positioning liberty beside White supremacy. Cultural diversity was evidence of the strength of British colonialism.

In the second historical discourse—the *mosaic as Canada's unique identity*—governments at different levels promoted a vision of Canada as inclusive of all cultural groups and celebrated diversity as a hallmark of Canadian democracy (Joshee & Johnson, 2007). Groups were cemented into a mosaic by the idea of a unique Canadian diversity, but the underlying assumption, tied to the commonwealth discourse, was that British

traditions of openness and Christian values enabled this. The third discourse, *citizenship as social action*, tied citizenship to action that betters a more equitable society and emphasized the need for all citizens to be actively involved. This discourse intersects with the *mosaic* discourse and was influential in such initiatives as the Civil Liberties Association (CLA) (1944), which was established for the explicit purpose of defending minority rights. The CLA put on two conferences, and these led to the development of the Toronto Committee for Intercultural Relations, which was established to coordinate the work of a number of groups interested in minority rights and intercultural relations.<sup>4</sup> In the late 1940s, this work included organizing regular conferences and developing community-based and school-based education programs (Archives of Ontario).

The social action discourse emphasized the importance of active participation in building equitable communities and demonstrates the historical roots of social justice orientations to citizenship (Joshee et al., 2009). By 1942 there was also growing scepticism about governments' (federal and provincial) approaches to diversity among certain groups. The notion that Canada's unique national identity is built on a long history of pluralism and acceptance of cultural and religious diversity remains a core concept in the mosaic discourse and was central in the era of official multiculturalism in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, the historical work, identifying three intersecting historical discourses, points out a significant tension: in celebrating diversity, the cementing of the mosaic—what makes Canada so unique—was tied to the traditions of justice inherent through its British imperial past (Joshee & Johnson, 2007; Joshee et al., 2009).

## Findings

### K–12 Education Policy Documents

Findings from our analysis of current citizenship education and social studies curriculum documents in Ontario and Alberta identified traces of the three historical discourses. In line with Joshee (2009), we found that neoliberal discourses are dominant

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<sup>4</sup> The Committee for Intercultural Relations included representatives of the Church of England, the African Canadian community, the Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Welfare Council, the Holy Name Society, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Ontario Teachers' Federation, and the Canadian Association for Adult Education (Archives of Ontario).

in provincial-level citizenship discourses. In this context, the commonwealth discourse is reasserted through the idea of Canada as a leader of human rights, while the mosaic discourse is often expressed as superficial understandings of celebrating diversity and is taken for granted by the existence of diverse demographics. Racism is largely presented as a problem in the past solved through Canada's tolerant traditions while social action is assumed in both the idea that Canada is a champion of human rights and that social action is an individual choice for personal development.

The Ontario context is dominated by neoliberal discourses, but there are instances where liberal social justice discourses of diversity are evident. There was attention to issues of racism in multicultural policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993), and recently there has been a significant return to liberal social justice discourse in the 2009 *Equity and Inclusive Schools* strategy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009 p. 2) and in new courses in gender studies and equity studies. Also, the Ontario social studies curriculum contains traces of the commonwealth discourse where colonizers are referred to as settlers, and colonization is described in a manner that minimizes relationships of power, oppression, and dominance (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). In the secondary school social science curriculum, *Canada and World Studies* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005a, 2005b), which includes history, geography, and political science, the mosaic discourse is evident, and multiculturalism and gender inequality are generally seen as *fait accomplis* rather than as ongoing processes. The mosaic discourse acknowledges that injustices happened in the past and recognizes that they were wrong. The injustices include the forced removal of Black Nova Scotians from their neighbourhood in Africville, the turning away of Jewish refugees travelling on the ship *St. Louis*, the internment of Japanese Canadians during the World War II, and the forced residential schooling of generations of First Nations peoples.

We found a contemporary discourse—*Canada as a defender of human rights*—that builds from the three historical discourses. It is tied strongly to the idea of forging a Canadian identity that, through recognizing past wrongs and the contributions of special individuals of marginalized groups, brings everyone together.<sup>5</sup> The Ontario *Canada and World Studies* Grade 10 History curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005a) shows a trace

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5 For a strong critique of how the discourse of Canada as a champion of human rights contradicts the lived realities of minoritized women in Canada, see Jiwani (2006b).

of the interconnected social action discourse when it focuses on Canada's international contributions and asks students to "describe how Canada's participation in selected world events and contributions to international organizations and agreements (e.g., the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; peacekeeping . . . ) have contributed to an evolving sense of national identity" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005a, p. 55). Significantly, the curriculum connects the valuing of human rights and peacekeeping to the idea that Canadian national identity is ever evolving, which is ironic given the recovering of imperial discourses evident at federal level.

The Ontario Grade 10 Civics course (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002) includes a strong notion of civic responsibility, echoing both the mosaic and social action discourses. Students are to apply their knowledge of civics and their skills of "purposeful and active citizenship" to a project of "personal interest and civic importance," such as helping out at a food bank, participating in community festivals, and "becoming involved in human rights, antidiscrimination, or antiracism" initiatives (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 69). While social action is an option implied in the final items, ultimately, the locus of responsibility for social change and civic action is placed entirely on the individual (Sears & Hyslop-Marginson, 2007; see also Porter, 2012). We recognize this as a neoliberal framing of the historical discourses. Canada's British traditions enable open-mindedness and a set of interpersonal values that cement the mosaic, and social action is re-inscribed as a personal choice that does not necessarily involve attending to social justice issues.

Consistent with this neoliberal view of citizenship, in June 2008, the Ontario Ministry of Education published *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12* and launched a character education initiative acknowledging the importance of the social studies curriculum and the mandatory 40 hours of community service requirement for high school students. In a special section on citizenship, it explicitly takes up social cohesion as a central discourse:

Character development is an avenue through which students develop respect for self, others, property, the environment, diversity, human rights and other attributes upon which we find common ground as Canadians . . . They develop an understanding of the interconnectedness and linkages that underlie social cohesion. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 22)

Interconnection and independence become part of a neoliberal frame of social cohesion through a notion of individual respect for difference and “finding common ground,” despite those differences; the cement of the mosaic is strong. Character education is the “cornerstone of a civil, just and democratic society” and is the “foundation of our publicly funded education system” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 5). However, recognizing the historical discourses, these Canadian ideals are rooted in liberal imperialism, which imposes a consensus that can overstep conflict and systemic inequities.

Furthermore, the existence of a diverse demography is presented as de facto evidence of a positive respect for difference: “The increasing diversity of Ontario’s population creates an opportunity for us to determine the beliefs and principles we hold in common . . . in building consensus on character attributes [school boards] are, in essence, engaged in a process of finding common ground” (p. 6). Citizenship and character education are used interchangeably, which has significant implications for how these concepts are applied and taken up in schools. A question remains regarding what happens when diverse communities have diverse understandings of and desires for finding common ground. Overall, in the Ontario documents, the main locus for social cohesion is the individual student–citizen, but the documents lack in-depth attention to systemic inequality based on race, culture, gender, sexual-orientation, religion, or other group-based exclusions. Osborne (2000a) warns against the conflation of citizenship with character by “equating the good citizen with the good person,” a loose and vague notion of citizenship that depoliticizes the concept so that citizenship education becomes “submerged in a concern with the shaping of personality and character” (p. 27).

There are also traces of historical discourses in Alberta. The social studies curriculum echoes the commonwealth discourse in its positioning of Canada as champion of human rights, and it also opens up spaces for challenging this view and for fostering social action. Multiple sets of discourses sit side by side in the social studies program of study:

The [Social Studies] program reflects multiple perspectives, including Aboriginal and Francophone, that contribute to Canada’s evolving realities. It promotes the building of a society that is pluralistic, bilingual, multicultural, inclusive and democratic. The program emphasizes the importance of diversity and respect for differences as well as the need for social cohesion as foundations for the effective functioning of society. It promotes a sense of belonging and tolerance in students as they engage in active and responsible citizenship at the local, community, provincial, national and global level. (Alberta Education 2005a, p. 1)

The inclusion of multiple perspectives and respect for difference represent an extension of the mosaic discourse, in this case, in a liberal social justice frame. In fact, in Grade 6, when studying the origins of democracy, students are asked to compare Ancient Greece with the Iroquois Confederacy (Alberta Education, 2005a). This reflects the liberal social justice recognition of rights and recognition that corrects a deficit view of Aboriginal cultures and history.

Once again, as in the Ontario documents, a strong neoliberal framing of the mosaic is evident in the emphasis on social cohesion for the “effective functioning of society” and not for an equitable and socially just society. Furthermore, differences are linked to a degree of conflict to be “worked out,” thereby implying that any conflicts are resolvable if diversity is simply seen as a strength: “Social studies addresses diversity and social cohesion and processes that students can use to work out differences, drawing on the strengths of diversity” (Alberta Education, 2005a, p. 5). Indeed, the only time conflict is explicitly mentioned in the program of studies is in the section dealing with global, not national, issues (Pashby, 2013). However, the Alberta social studies curriculum explicitly promotes a critical engagement with liberalism when Grade 11 students are asked to evaluate the viabilities of liberal principles in “the context of contemporary issues,” such as racism or terrorism (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 23). The social action discourse is also strongly represented in the social studies curriculum. Teachers are to lead students to “accept responsibilities associated with individual and collective citizenship” and to “explore opportunities to demonstrate active and responsible citizenship through individual and collective action” (Alberta Education, 2007, p. 23).

Like Ontario, Alberta has an overarching citizenship and character education policy. *The Heart of the Matter: Character and Citizenship Education in Alberta's Schools* was adopted in 2005 and was, in part, an extension of work that had begun much earlier under the banner of Safe and Caring Schools, an initiative of the Alberta Teachers' Association. The dominant discourse in the document is social cohesion, set out on the first page:

Character and citizenship education is a deliberate effort to cultivate civility, ethical behaviours, self-management skills and personal attributes that our society values in its school graduates, community members and employees. It represents a consensus on certain attributes or core values such as respect, responsibility, fairness, empathy and self-discipline that transcend socioeconomic and cultural

lines. Character and citizenship education nurtures these attributes in an explicit, intentional, focused and systematic manner by promoting, modelling, teaching, expecting, celebrating and consciously practising them in everyday actions.

(Alberta Education, 2005b, p. 1)

A key message of the document is that diversity is a potential danger that requires management by developing a single cohesive vision of character and identity. The development of these character traits will help to create safety, which “cannot be taken for granted,” in Alberta’s schools and society (Alberta Education, 2005b, p. 3). The focus is on celebrations of diversity and developing interpersonal skills; these may occur outside an engagement with difference in distribution of power and resources. In this sense, the neoliberal discourse of social cohesion echoes the three historical discourses, while serving to reduce equity and diversity to individual skills and superficial celebrations.

Overall, our analysis of K–12 documents finds contemporary discourses in social studies curricula and citizenship and character education policies echo the mosaic discourse from the early-mid twentieth century, reproducing the idea that diversity is inherently part of a unique Canadian identity. There is a focus on being positive about diversity and recognizing historical wrongs related to racism and exclusion, and these are evident in some liberal social justice framings. The commonwealth citizenship discourse is present in a minor but important way in the championing of Canada as a defender of human rights and a world leader in peacekeeping, and it is also evident in the idea that racial inequities have occurred in the past and been rectified. In both provinces, a social action discourse is still present but often reified in a problematic, contemporary neoliberal approach, where citizenship becomes conflated with character (Joshee, 2004; Osborne, 2000a). An important insight is gained from identifying the traces of the historical discourses in the contemporary documents. A conflation of character and citizenship presents social action as a personal choice. Intercultural skills are motivated as much, if not more, by future work skills as by promoting social justice and equity.

### ***Discover Canada: Handbook for Adult Immigrants***

Recognizing a gap in the citizenship education literature connecting how citizenship is presented in K–12 and adult immigrant educational documents, we compared the K–12 findings to an analysis of the citizenship guide (Citizenship and Immigration Canada,

2012). It serves as the foundation for testing adult immigrants applying for Canadian citizenship and can be directly tied to the idea of the crisis of Canadian history and a narrow version of Canadian identity and nationhood. *Discover Canada* replaced the Liberal government's *A Look at Canada* (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001). First published in 2010, it was promoted as a response to the new challenges facing Canada, including a growing number of immigrants, a perceived crisis in civic participation, and an aging baby boomer generation. When the new booklet was released in 2010 (it was revised again in 2012), Joe Friesen, a *Globe and Mail* reporter specializing in immigration issues, warned in the nationally syndicated newspaper that the current "Conservative government will redefine what it means to be Canadian" (Friesen, 2009).

Dean Del Mastro, then Parliamentary Secretary, said that the federal government had a deliberate strategy to strengthen Canada's national identity because of their belief that it has been "lost" (Taber, 2011). In the new federal citizenship handbook, there are also traces of the historical discourses. However, unlike the provincial documents, the federal citizenship education text accentuates the commonwealth discourse with its emphasis on a historical understanding that links more directly back to liberal imperialism. *Discover Canada* portrays Canadian identity in a much narrower frame than was evident the previous Liberal government's document. *Discover Canada* reasserts Canada's early British colonial history and reconceptualizes Canada's leading role in the larger global community, reflecting the liberal imperialist roots of the commonwealth discourse. Indeed, the current book represents a move from celebrating Canada as a nation committed to peacekeeping and international development to one that is known for its monarchy and military might. This new, muscular Canadian identity, with a foregrounding of Anglo-Saxon traditions and the characterization of Canadian history as a long list of important men and military battles is illustrative of a renewed patriotism that harkens back to ideas of liberal imperialism.

*Discover Canada* features numerous mentions of Canada's military forces and accomplishments, and knowing military history has been added to the official list of what must be learned to obtain citizenship. There are several pages on various wars, battles, and invasions. In particular, the book includes a prominent section on the War of 1812 as a highlight of Canadian history, despite the fact that the war pre-dates Confederation (i.e., the existence of Canada), and its outcome is historically contested. Unlike the previous document that highlighted Canada's leadership in environmentalism, *Discover Canada*



significantly shifts the framing of Canada as it relates to the environment and to the larger international community. Social action is constructed as individual behaviours—immigrants are specifically directed to “avoid waste and pollution” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, p. 9)—rather than to be proactive and to work for systemic change at home and through international accords. Thus, there is a reframing of the responsibility of the state from being a provider of justice through, for example, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to being a provider of military security.

Moreover, *Discover Canada* downplays Canada’s historically significant role within global international development institutions. Rather it highlights Canada’s membership in NORAD and NATO and includes several pages on the Canadian military. The previous booklet, perhaps in an overstated way, focused on Canada’s peacekeeping leadership. The current booklet does not highlight Canada’s role in creating the UN Peacekeeping program but mentions, instead, “Canada has taken part in numerous UN peacekeeping [initiatives]” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, p. 24). The reassertion of the commonwealth discourse not only corresponds to the downplaying of the social action discourse, but also repositions the mosaic discourse. For example, *Discover Canada* traces the Canadian traditions of pluralism and equity back to the Magna Carta in 1215:

Canadian law has several sources, including laws passed by Parliament and the provincial legislatures, English common law, the civil code of France and the unwritten constitution that we have inherited from Great Britain. Together, these secure for Canadians an 800-year-old tradition of ordered liberty, which dates back to the signing of Magna Carta in 1215 in England (also known as the Great Charter of Freedoms). (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, p. 8)

*Discover Canada* minimizes more recent policy changes, such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) and the Multicultural Act (1988), and instead highlights early colonial history and celebrates British monarchic tradition. The booklet also includes various images of the Queen along with the words for “God Save the Queen,” positioned under those for “O Canada” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, p.40).

The guide cites gender equality as a key Canadian value attributed to Canada’s British Anglo-Saxon heritage. It frames gender inequality as an issue within certain immigrant communities and downplays its persistence within mainstream Canadian society. Similar to representations of colonialism and cultural diversity, this particular framing of gender equality distracts from a focus on how gender inequality continues to

be reproduced in Canadian schools, citizenship structures, and society at large (Ingram, 2013). Furthermore, there is a move away from concepts of social justice toward unconditional patriotism, emphasizing notions of social cohesion instead. *Discover Canada* focuses more deliberately on the *expectations* of Canadian citizens, as opposed to their entitlements. The neoconservative discourse of we/they (Joshee, 2009) operates by reinforcing hierarchical constructions related to race, culture, and gender. For example, there is a direct statement in the new document warning that “Canada’s openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, “honour killings,” female genital mutilation, forced marriage or other gender-based violence. Those guilty of these crimes are severely punished under Canada’s criminal laws” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, p. 9). While there is no context given to the implied warning to immigrants, it is evident that it is directed at particular cultures by the use of the term “honour killings,” and in the 2012 revised version, the term “forced marriage” was added (p. 9). The statement supports women’s rights and it also implies there is no gender-based violence in dominant Canadian culture. A we/they binary is constructed through the downplaying of social justice traditions while certain immigrants are constructed as threats to Canada’s social cohesion. Our findings thus demonstrate the historical and contested nature of how race, culture, and gender are constructed within ideas of Canadian identity and nationhood.

The revised version (2012) of the handbook does nod to the social action discourse by contributing a sentence about gay rights, which is a welcome addition; however, in the same section, entitled “Diversity in Canada,” it also constructs a we/they distinction from certain immigrant others. While pointing out that “the majority of Canadians were born in this country and this has been true since the 1800s,” it is acknowledged that, “millions of newcomers have helped to build and defend our way of life.” (p. 12). That way of life is tied to the British imperial past that is celebrated throughout the document, and the word “defend” signals a sense of outside cultures as threatening, which is consistent with the earlier warnings. The handbook further constructs a we/they binary by adding another caution to immigrants, specifically those “from places where they have experienced warfare or conflict”: “Such experiences do not justify bringing to Canada violent, extreme or hateful prejudices” (p. 12). This deficit construction positions immigrants from war-torn countries as threats to an already cohesive society. While it is laudable to take a stand against prejudice, the book fails to acknowledge that many such immigrants likely appreciate and understand peace, justice, and democracy in ways many Canadians do not. Furthermore, it presents Canada as a place free of prejudices.

Rather than focusing on a history of diversity and working toward equity, *Discover Canada* speaks more of how Canadians obey the law and relish in the glory of war stories. Historian and advisor for *Discover Canada*, Rudyard Griffiths, articulates the shift toward neoconservative discourses that echo liberal imperialism and downplay earlier nods to more progressive-minded policy as unimportant to Canadian identity: “In our political traditions and civic culture, Canada was thoroughly British and a proud member of the *Commonwealth* of Nations—the inventors of multiculturalism ‘jettisoned’ the national symbols, threatened civic cohesion and survival—to respond to perceived threat of US and growing diversity” (Griffiths, 2009, p. 145, italics added). Furthermore, former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Jason Kenney, has articulated the commonwealth discourse explicitly: “[W]e have this tradition, as I mentioned, of embracing diversity, grounded in our historic, I would say British liberal imperial, tradition of pluralism” (Kenney, 2009).

## Conclusions

Our findings reveal how colonial legacies and historical discourses of citizenship remain present in both K–12 policy and adult immigrant citizenship education materials. Thus, there are contradictory ways that provincial and federal policies in Canada conceptualize cultural diversity and citizenship. In the K–12 education documents, the dominant discourses are neoliberal but with some presence of liberal social justice discourses. The adult immigrant citizenship education documents are dominated by neoconservative discourses and a silencing of liberal social justice ideas. Neoliberal discourses ignore differences, see diversity as a fault line, and therefore perpetuate the privileging of a dominant culture through a deliberate exclusion of mentions of systemic inequality. We find that a strong neoliberal discourse of citizenship and diversity dominates K–12 materials and is also evident in adult immigrant citizenship education. This version of citizenship centres on the individual citizen, avoids in-depth analysis of systemic inequalities, and continues injustices. The central messages in the documents express a social cohesion discourse and are attached to the historical mosaic discourse as if inclusion of diverse groups has already occurred and the “pieces” of the mosaic are pre-existing and already cemented. Neoconservative discourses reinforce liberal imperialist ideas of the tolerant Canadian and are strongly evident in the citizenship education materials produced by the current Conservative federal government.

The metanarratives of citizenship and diversity embedded in current education policy documents reflect contemporary ideologies and historical discourses. The commonwealth discourses connected to liberal imperialism are inherent in neoliberalism and are explicit in neoconservatism. These narratives must be acknowledged and critiqued in order to reassert attention to taking action to redress inequality in Canada. We recognize, along with Mohanty (1990), that “[the] issue of subjectivity represents a realization of the fact that who we are, how we act, what we think, and what stories we tell become more intelligible within an epistemological framework that begins by recognizing existing hegemonic histories” (p. 185). Rather than recognizing the problematic traces of liberal imperialism and the significant traditions of social action, the K–12 documents gloss over them with a positive attitude toward a mosaic approach to diversity and conflate character with citizenship by focusing on the importance of interpersonal skills and respecting others, rather than on challenging systemic inequities. *Discover Canada* actually brings back the imperial narrative, which had been re-framed toward peace keeping and human rights, and it de-emphasizes the liberal social justice narrative that built on the social action discourse.

Indeed, the conceptualization of citizenship in the K–12 documents and the adult materials de-emphasizes goals related to social justice and systemic change in favour of the development of individual dispositions and personal choices. Our analysis demonstrates that the opportunities to emphasize social justice are faint, especially in the federal documents. Ironically, in *Discover Canada*, adult immigrants are presented with a covering-up of social justice oriented aspects of Canadian citizenship, while British imperialism is recovered as central to the Canadian narrative. Although more muted, there are still ample opportunities within the K–12 documents to draw upon more social justice discourses and to revive a more justice-oriented approach to citizenship. Further research could examine the extent to which these discourses are taken-up or resisted by teachers and young and adult learners. Also, it would be important to examine other discourses available beyond liberal social justice, including those responding to postcolonial critiques and that are more critical of the assumption of individual autonomy and of modernity as progress (Mignolo, 2000; Pashby, 2013).

Educators concerned about promoting a more equity-focused and complex view of Canada and Canadian citizenship can draw on and recover aspects of the social action discourse of the past and find spaces in the muted social justice discourses of the present

to construct more critical understandings of diversity and citizenship that acknowledge colonialism and imagine new ways of relating with differences. That includes the contributions and critiques of those groups who have been and continue to be marginalized as well as newcomers who bring their own experiences to Canadian citizenship. It is notable that there are different versions of Canadian citizenship presented to different populations—in this case K–12 students and adult immigrants. This distinction reflects dominant political leanings at the two levels of government responsible for citizenship education. This study has demonstrated that constructions of citizenship are multiple and dynamic. Citizenship and diversity are central discourses of nationhood that are not static but ever changing; even as they are rooted in history, they adapt to present realities. In this sense, there are always opportunities to engage in a strong recognition of past wrongs that shape the present, to address inequities in the present, and to imagine new ways of relating to differences and constructing versions of community for the future.

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