

**Rethinking Belonging in Western Nations: Theorizing the Public Commons as a Shared Pluralistic Community**

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**Abstract:**

Western nations are becoming increasingly socially and ethnically diverse. National policies aim to address this diversity through policies such as multiculturalism in Canada, which promotes appreciation for cultural pluralism. However, policy rhetoric can hide social issues related to increasing diversity. Using Canada as a case study discussion, this article begins by reviewing some of the issues associated with increasing social and ethnic diversity, including racism and conflict over values, and then discusses these issues in relation to contemporary political concepts which aim to build social harmony. It argues that we need to rethink how we understand diversity within a communitarian conception of community, theorized as that of the public commons. The article concludes with recommendations that aim to improve citizenship education, with a focus on increasing youth's knowledge of civic life, particularly their understanding of this concept of the public commons.

**Key words:** commons, Dewey and democracy, citizenship education

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**Rethinking Belonging in Western Nations Today**

A number of Western Nations, including Canada, the United States, and England, are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse. Increasing ethnic diversity, in the sense of one or even multiple cultural and/or ethnic identities (and not a biological or essentialized conception of race) brings a number of advantages to nations, including an increased array of perspectives, cultural enhancement, and the addition of skilled and talented individuals to the nation (Brosseau & Dewing, 2015; Gulliver, 2011; Government of Canada, 2014; Kymlicka, 2010; Ministry of

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Education, 2008). These benefits have been celebrated by policymakers and theorists. However, current thinking about how individuals engage with each other in social spaces are generally framed within liberal concepts, which may augment related social and cultural issues. This paper begins by exploring some of these issues and then discusses how we can reconceptualize how we think about the kind of society we live in and how we engage with each other in order to address these issues, using Canada as a case study example. It concludes with educational recommendations to address the challenges discussed.

### **Contemporary Social Issues**

A number of issues related to class, gender, and race exist in Western nations. This section briefly reviews five.

#### *Racism and exclusion*

Much has been written about “white privilege” and racism (Rothenberg, 2015). In Western nations, ethnic minorities may face a number of social inequities, such as lower salaries and profiling (Ornstein, 2000; Reitz & Banerjee, 2006). Immigrants can end up in low-paying jobs that other citizens do not want to do. Workers from other nations may even be brought in for unattractive, temporary work where they are paid less than local workers (Perry, 2010). For example, in Canada, international farm workers are brought in to farm for lower salaries and often work in difficult conditions (McDonald & Barnetson, 2016). Most citizens, further, underestimate the amount of racism in their societies and in schools (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006). Tensions between ethnic groups, for example, have been documented in Surrey, British Columbia (Bascaramurty & Friesen, 2012; Oujla-Chalmers, 2010), and there are stories of ethnic tensions between students at universities and issues between male and female students and professors (Kantor, 2013; Robeyns, 2003).

#### *Social segregation and white flight*

The concept of “white flight” has been documented in the United States (see, e.g., Zhang, 2008) and is occurring in some Canadian cities as well (Vancouver Sun, 2013). Two University of British Columbia geographers found that Vancouver neighborhoods are becoming increasingly segregated, with wealthier whites placing themselves in neighborhoods away from ethnic minorities: “Growing inequality, growing polarization do not make for social stability, or even fairness” (Mendleson, 2012).

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*Extremism*

Occasionally, social exclusion can lead to alienation with current structures and possibly to extremism (Osler, 2010). Youth in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, for example, have been linked to terrorist activities both within their borders and overseas. Examples include the DC Five, the Portland Seven and the Boston bombers, the London bombings, “John the Beatle,” the rapper who killed an American journalist, and Toronto 18. Most recently in Canada, racially motivated attacks have occurred in Toronto, including verbal and physical attacks on Muslims, Jews, and Sikhs. Police report that hate crimes are rising yearly, and arguments have been made that institutions such as health care are biased against some groups (Kong, 2018).

*Conflicts over values*

Canada’s multiculturalism policy is conceptualized under a liberal, “dual highway” model in which individuals can keep their values while adapting to some of those values found in Canada. At the same time, Canada itself is open to changes and adapts to the values of its varied ethnic populations. Generally, this fluid and flexible process allows individuals to adapt to Canada, and for Canada to adapt and change (Kymlicka, 2008, 2010). However, this fluidity can hide a tension in which individuals may hold values that conflict with those of other citizens, and these individuals may believe that it is acceptable to hold these values due to the policy of multiculturalism. For example, in Kingston, Ontario, 58-year-old Mohammed Shafia from Afghanistan and his second wife in the polygamous family killed their daughters aged 19, 17, and 13, as well as the first wife, by drowning them in the family car. The father felt that the daughters were shaming him by not following the family’s cultural traditions. In a similar vein, in 2007, Aqsa Parvez was strangled by her brother at the age of 16 for refusing to wear the hijab. Other examples include Kaur Sidhu, Amandeep Atwal, and Khatera Sadiqi, all killed by family members who felt they had dishonored the family (CBC, 2011).

A research study conducted with youth in Canada highlighted the importance of family backgrounds to youth civic attitudes.<sup>1</sup> The study found that there were statistically significant connections between students’ civic attitudes and behaviors and their backgrounds. Youth’s family backgrounds may influence how youth perceive citizenship and how they choose to participate civically (Lenzi, 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> The full study’s findings are described in another article written by the author (Broom, 2016).

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*Theorizing ethnic pluralism*

The fifth issue related to social and cultural issues and pluralism lies in how it may be theorized. While government officials may over-emphasize the positive features of ethnic diversity in nations such as Canada, academic discourse generally draws its lens, language, and approach from critical theory. Pashby, Ingram, and Joshee (2014) describe three major ideologies through which multiculturalism can be understood: liberal social justice, neoliberal, and neoconservative. A review of academic work on multiculturalism (e.g., Banks, 2007; Fleming & Morgan, 2011; Levine, 2007; Levine-Rasky, 2014; Peck, 2014; Ricento, 2013; Rinaldo, 2014; Sears, 2009) finds that academic work is found largely within the social justice orientation. Academics describe the social inequalities encompassed within, and maintained by, current multicultural discourse. They describe white privilege and the disadvantages that some might face, often drawing from Derrida's work. They criticize neoconservative ideology for supporting a narrow, traditionalist view of what it means to be Canadian, presenting an overly positive narrative of the past focused on "great men" and downplaying or ignoring present and past social injustice in Canada, based on racialization.

For example, Pashby, Ingram, and Joshee (2014) describe Albertan and Ontario curriculum documents and the Canadian government's citizenship guide and take a critical stance arguing that these guides focus on neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies, with insufficient attention to social justice ideology. They state:

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... 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. (p. 7)

However, there are more than these three lenses through which we can theorize and understand ethnically pluralistic societies, with implications for how education occurs. That is, calls for social cohesion may not necessarily be made at the expense of varied ethnic groups. Stating that individuals in society ought to share some bridging capital (Putnam, 1995, 2007) or values does not take away from the ability of individuals to also hold their own views and cultural traditions. The majority of citizens can consider sharing values that allow all individuals space to flourish (as

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will be further discussed below), such as not using violence to solve problems or viewing women as subservient to men. By definition, being open-minded means understanding that people have different ideas and that we need to recognize and value this. It does not necessarily follow that, if we share some values in common, some people are “othered” and isolated. Some common values, such as open-mindedness and respect for multiple points of view, may be ones that allow us to maintain and value varied social and ethnic backgrounds. This concept forms the basis for another way of theorizing how we connect to and relate to each other as diverse ethnic and social beings in pluralistic societies, which will be discussed after reviewing terms and language related to culture and democracy, as identity and belonging are understood as multilayered, complex, and diverse, yet also connected. This complexity is a necessary precondition for exploring Western societies today in ways that do not essentialize or “other” some citizens.

Culture is understood to be alive: “Culture is fluid, organic and ever changing, as it integrates new elements and repudiates others” (Broom, 2011a). Further, individuals acquire culture through their lived experiences from their earliest ages of language acquisition. This conception of culture has implications for considering belonging, for it implies that youth develop particular views shaped by their lived experiences with one or more than one culture. Youth may hold complex, multiple identities. Through discussions embedded in reflection (Dewey, 1916), individuals can come to negotiate understandings of their multiple and possibly hybrid identities.

#### **Democracy and Community**

Drawing from Dewey’s (1916) work, democracy is understood to be relational and communal. That is, individuals have their own interests, but they also have connections to others that bond them as an “imagined” community (Anderson, 2006). Values that individuals may agree to hold in common include those necessary for providing the spaces and places within which all individuals in society can flourish, including: open-mindedness, respect for others, plurality, equality, openness to discussion and negotiation, and a connection to the nation within which individuals live. The strengths of these connections determine the strength of the nation:

The two points selected by which to measure the worth of a form of social life are the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups. (Dewey, 1916)

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**Rethinking Belonging**

Some liberal theorists (see, e.g., Kymlicka, 2010) argue that autonomy and freedom are the key values of a society. Individuals are free to do as they like in their spaces and to “tolerate” others. This conception may lead individuals to live siloed lives. Social and ethnic groups may segregate socially and physically, having few connections and relations between each other. Under a liberal conception, individuals may “tolerate” others not with a feeling of respect or community but because they follow a belief which allows individuals freedom to do what they would like to do in their lives, as long as it doesn’t affect them. This conception can be critiqued, as the foundation of society is not autonomy but rather community: Humans are social beings and live in communities to share mutual advantages with each other and for survival (Broom, 2011b; Dewey, 1916). This is not to say that autonomy is not important—it is, but it is not the most important feature of society, for underlying autonomy is the need for community. Community is understood in Rousseau’s sense of a social contract: Each of us gives up some of our autonomy in order to receive advantages and help from others in a society. Community is a conceptual public “commons” in which each of us is given the advantages that come from living in a society (such as law, governance, order, protection from violence, security, specialization, and diverse services) in exchange for giving up some of our autonomy in the public space. That is, individuals are bounded in the public space. These boundaries begin where actions infringe on the ability of others to live well and have the opportunity to flourish in the public commons (Broom, 2010).

This focus on the public commons has implications for how we think of an inclusive society. As each of us has to give up some of our autonomy in order to nurture and sustain the public commons, the elements which we share in the public commons ought to be those ideas, values, traditions, and practices that enhance and protect the commons, which allow all others who use the public commons to benefit in spaces that allow for growth or flourishing (Broom, 2010). Practices that negatively affect the ability of others to flourish in the public commons or the social, political, and other benefits found within the commons (such as laws or governance) should be reviewed. An example would be practices that oppress women, or racist attitudes towards particular individuals or groups. Practices that do not negatively influence the commons or that enhance it (such as diverse perspectives) should be encouraged, for we all benefit from rich and diverse perspectives and traditions. The public commons includes all individuals who are citizens of a nation, regardless of ethnic, social, economic, or cultural background. The nation is understood as a bounded legal and political space within which elements of culture, society, politics, and law are articulated through various means including education and media.

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**Theorizing Belonging as a Public Commons**

Cultural and critical race theorists and social geographers theorize that land and space are not neutral variables. Rather, they are inscribed with identity, power, belonging, exclusion, and social class in dynamic processes connected to political, social, legal, and other factors (Edmonds, 2010). Communities used to have (or still have) commons: land that was available to all community members to use. During the Agricultural Revolution in Europe, these lands were taken over as “geographies of exclusion” emerged (Sibley, 2015). In North America, Indigenous lands were taken over, mapped, measured, and parceled off into “private property” as part of a global Imperial ambition by European nations competing for access to markets, trade, and land, with devastating consequences for local indigenous peoples (Edmonds, 2010). Claiming land as private property was a process of exclusion and power embedded in Western concepts of law and privilege, and enacted through social, political, economic, and legal means (Edmonds, 2010; Sibley, 2015). Personal and social identity is also weaved into this process of taking “ownership,” signaling through social means who was included or excluded, why, and how (Sibley, 2015). Awareness of this process of exclusion opens up possibilities of new ways of thinking about how we engage with others.

*Public space: Owned by everyone and no one*

A public “space” open to all and from which we all benefit is our conceptual public commons today. This public commons is theorized to include social, economic, political, intellectual, digital, cultural, and other resources that belong to the community and that are managed by the community and in the interest of the community. The “tragedy of the commons” (Lloyd, 1833; Hardin, 1968) refers to damage done to the commons by individuals working in their own self-interest rather than in the common interest. However, when community members have access to the commons, they can develop rules that are in the best interest of all and that are, for example, sustainable in both an economic and environmental manner (Ostrom, 1990), that provide spaces for all to use the commons and to benefit from them. Features for this to happen include: a clear definition of what the commons are and who is part of them that fits local conditions; collective, autonomous decision making; monitoring and consequences for infractions of/in the commons; conflict resolution processes and multiple, nested layers of organization if needed (Ostrom, 2012). It is in everyone’s interest to take care of the commons: We take care of things that we value, for they bring us benefits and growth.

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The commons are thus a conceptual and physical community that includes environmental, social, economic, political, intellectual, digital, cultural, and structural items both tangible and intangible, which all citizens of a nation are part of and from which they all benefit (Nemeth, 2012). Examples of factors included in our public commons are social features (such as relationships between people; social aid), environmental features (such as water and land), political rights and processes (such as democracy), legal rights (such as human rights), intellectual benefits (such as books, knowledge, schools, research), digital goods (such as the internet), cultural factors (such as stories, plays, music), and structural features (such as roads, parks, and public buildings such as libraries) (Nemeth, 2012). Many nations have rich public commons, but sometimes they can be taken for granted.

The community overall (including smaller nested communities if needed) regulates how individuals participate and benefit from the commons. When conflicts emerge, these are settled through community discussion and negotiation. The main aim should be making decisions that are in the best interest of all users of the public commons, decisions that provide spaces and places where individuals can flourish. We can evaluate the “publicness” of the commons by considering factors such as who can access the commons (access), who controls how decisions are made (agency), in whose interest decisions are made (interest), and the interactions that are facilitated in the commons (intersectionality) (Nemeth, 2012).

In sum, the public commons are a set of structural, physical, and conceptual elements in interaction with relationships between people, underlain by an understanding of their common value to the community at large. Ethnic, social, and cultural diversity is a component of the public commons. Values and actions are explored in relation to the effects they have on both the commons and others within the commons. For example, if a person is engaging in racist behaviors, which hurt other members of the community and thus the public commons, they must be addressed through the communal processes of managing the commons described above. We are not just individual atoms going about our lives; we are intricately linked to others and to our communities through our public commons.

*Distinguishing a public commons approach from a liberal one*

The model of ethnic relations which views individuals as atoms who go about their affairs leaving others to do the same, may have the unintended consequence of leading to a society that lacks community-mindedness. As a result, there may be no real drive to address racial or other social issues. Each individual is an atom doing as he or she likes, and as long as he or she isn't bothered

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personally, there is no motivation to get involved. This paper's community-focused model implies another sense of relationship between people, one in which we feel a sense of connection to others through a recognition of the commons that we all benefit from; we don't just "tolerate" others. In the public commons, all citizens are welcome, and all citizens work to regulate behaviors or beliefs that harm or limit the ability of others to enjoy the commons. There is an understanding of the bonds that unite us and that we share through the benefits we all enjoy in the public commons, which builds connections between people that foster care and concern for others.

Social policies are established through complex discussions and negotiations in which all citizens are welcome to share their perspectives. All citizens should have the equal right to share their perspectives about the public commons, and decisions should be made based on complicated conversations (Pinar, 2008) and overlapping consensuses (Rawls, 1987). Perspectives and ideas should be studied in relation to how they affect the ability of individuals to use and benefit from the public space to the best of their potential, and how they protect and nurture all citizens and provide spaces and places for flourishing (Broom, 2010). This model implies that our education should pay more attention to making connections that bond us as a community and within the commons more explicit within schools.

This model also implies that the ways in which the three discourses—liberal social justice, neoliberal, and neoconservative (Pashby, Ingram, & Joshee, 2014)—are understood as opposites can be rethought. It is not that one is "right" and the other is "wrong" but that all three have elements of truth existing in dialectical tension (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2012). Ethnic relations and education for diversity, in other words, require us to consider the need for social cohesion (supposedly a neoconservative feature), attention to individual rights (supposedly a neoliberal feature), and open-mindedness and respect for the positions of all individuals, no matter their social, gender, cultural, and economic backgrounds, as social inequities have existed and continue to exist in society today (supposedly a liberal social justice position). In other words, there are common values that our society—our public commons—should all embrace. These are the values that we need for our public commons to provide spaces for individuals to participate, benefit, and grow: open-mindedness, respect for pluralism, a humble acknowledgement of our situated perspectives that position us differently in society, and a feeling of connection to others and to our public commons. These values underlie and cross ideological and cultural positions and perspectives and are necessary for the building of rich pluralistic policies and practices; we can't have democracy in spirit if we don't have open-mindedness or are not willing to dialogue

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with others. Pashby, Ingram, and Joshee (2014), for example, argue that curriculum documents do not give sufficient attention to institutional inequalities. Thus, the authors have a particular value that they believe we should all share in society: that we should pay attention to social inequalities. In other words, while Pashby and others focus on criticizing neoconservatives for aiming to foster common values in Canadians, these authors and other writers have values in their work that they believe we should encompass, presumably as a society—that is, common values. Indeed, no perspective is value-free.

To acknowledge the need for social cohesion does not mean that we have a simpleminded attachment to the nation. It entails both feeling a connection to the nation and to all citizens (our public commons) while at the same time recognizing how inequalities exist (and have existed) in the nation and should be addressed. If discussion focuses on critique and “deconstruction” and does not foster a sense of social cohesion, of community-mindedness, among youth, we are in danger of fragmenting into competing ethnic groups who “tolerate” others only in name. Spaces are already dividing ethnically. We can educate our youth to be critical of current inequities and issues in our society *and* pay attention to developing our students’ appreciation of what we have using appreciative inquiry, for overemphasizing problem solving can limit social improvement (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

Putnam (1995) describes this as the need to increase “bridging capital,” the building of bonds or connections between individuals. His most recent research (Putnam, 2007) has found that trust between and within ethnic groups declines as ethnic diversity increases. This appears to be happening in Western nations as neighborhoods divide among ethnic lines (Mendleson, 2012) and racist comments and attacks increase. Howe (2010) found, for example, that young Canadians vote less than other groups in society because they have less of a sense of social cohesion: Youth may not realize the rich and vibrant public commons in which they participate, from which they benefit, and to which they can continue to add.

We can build connections that bond groups in society as well as build increased trust across ethnic, social, and cultural groups. We should both appreciate and celebrate what we have (our current public commons) as well as critically discuss what we can improve (such as expanding our public commons).

#### **Public Commons: Connecting to Global and Indigenous Concepts**

Considering individuals in a social space to be connected through the public commons links to work at the global level and to concepts in some indigenous traditions. At the global level, the

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*global commons* refers to parts of ecosystems that humans and living creatures in general share together, including the atmosphere, biosphere, ecosphere, oceans, and space, and even newer areas such as the internet and radio frequencies (Milun, 2016). Issues related to their management relate to how international laws from Roman times to the present have been developed through a Western concept of land appropriation framed around the concept of *terra nullis*, rather than the concept of *res communis*, the Roman law applied to objects that are held by all (Milun, 2016). Western colonial-like appropriations of global land have been shattered by Indigenous court cases, which have successfully argued against Western encroachment on Indigenous lands, setting precedents for new ways of engaging in the commons.

Concepts and practices related to these global common spaces could be improved through connections to Indigenous ways of thinking about how we use and engage with each other in space and place by comparing *res communis* to *res nullius* (empty land which can be taken), the latter concept of which has shaped Western thinking regarding expropriation (proprietary ways of thinking) of these commons (Milun, 2016). Recently, United Nations declarations have supported the role and rights of Indigenous peoples in land and land management. This way of thinking about land and natural resources can be applied to thinking about all forms of “commonly” shared social, cultural, physical, conceptual, and other goods: our public commons.

While Indigenous people vary in their concepts, traditions, and practices, many tend to have a view of land ownership and resource use that connects to the view of the public commons theorized in this paper: natural resources are imbued with spiritual meaning, and humans and natural resources are seen to be interconnected (NoiseCat, 2017). Indigenous people have taken colonial governments to court with some success in changing resource use. In New Zealand and India, for example, rivers have been given the status of persons and their management is to be combined between Indigenous and local peoples (NoiseCat, 2017). According to Crowfoot, an Indigenous chief:

As long as the sun shines and the waters flow, this land will be here to give life to men and animals. We cannot sell the lives of men and animals; therefore we cannot sell this land. It was put here for us by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not belong to us. (quoted in Various, HERB, 2019).

This concept of belonging is key: We don't individually own elements of public commons, we share them as a community, and we manage them in the interest of the community overall. Each of us comes into this world with nothing, and we all leave the world with nothing. The things we

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use in this world are those that belong to all of us. We use objects and elements of our public commons only for the short span of time during which we live. Our public commons should nurture the lives of all community members now and in the future. Indigenous thought, further, significantly connects physical, social, and emotional features in holistic and harmonious ways of thinking: There are spiritual, ethical, and emotional dimensions to our thinking about the commons. On a final note related to how we think about and engage in public commons, Hardison (2006) cautions us to consider how our own thinking limits our ability to understand Indigenous concepts related to the commons. He describes the commons as local spaces in which members share and in which their management in the best interests of all occurs through a “guardianship” model, which may include reciprocity. Hardison cautions us to consider who decides what is placed in the commons and who benefits from its use, to prevent Western expropriation of Indigenous knowledge or goods that may be considered sacred.

### **Educational Implications**

Educational programs can focus attention on specifically teaching youth to understand the meaning of living in a community, and the meaning and value of the public commons. Youth should come to understand the many roles that people play in the community to allow them to live their lives and the benefits and responsibilities that come from being a community member. This should include attention to teaching students the common bonds that unite them and that citizens share in common: our public commons. Youth can learn about the common values that we require for our public commons to flourish, such as appreciating the public commons, believing in the equality of all people regardless of race, gender, and class (while acknowledging and aiming to repair the social injustices found in the past and present), fostering open-mindedness, building respect for people of diverse backgrounds, and developing youth’s appreciation and understanding of the responsibilities related to taking care of our public commons, and using conflict resolution processes to solve disagreements. These are the common values that help our community—our public commons—function.

Education can include developing an orientation towards society that involves care for others and a sense of connection/concern for the nation and for fellow citizens: an awareness of the rich public commons we have and how we can continue to foster and protect them. It can foster an appreciation and understanding of what values, attitudes, and practices the commons require in order to flourish. These are part of building students’ common connections or values. Attention should also be given to allowing students to explore their values in order to understand their situated perspectives and reflect on them, as culture, personal experiences, and parents’ views

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can shape youth's views. Educators can consider including community engagement experiences that build students' sense of capacity/empowerment, for research has shown that students' civic experiences and learning by doing are significant factors in learning (Broom & Bai, 2011).

Curriculum materials can interrogate the very concepts they aim to foster through the course of study. That is, the courses themselves can be self-reflective. They should also not be simplistic or present an overly ideological or ideal image of the nation's public commons.

The final section of this paper presents some lesson ideas:

*Sample teaching ideas*

As youth often express political, cultural, and social views that are rooted in their backgrounds, lessons can have students explore what their values are and the roots of these beliefs. Students can study various ethnic, social, cultural, and economic groups in order to understand them better and learn about values we share in common, the meaning of the public commons, and the relations between the commons and a flourishing community. They can learn about what connections bring us together as diverse people within one community with a shared public commons. They can explore what benefits we receive from our public commons (social, economic, political, intellectual, and digital benefits, for example) and how and why we should take care of it.

Class discussions can allow students to be introduced to their classmates' varied perspectives and to have a chance to share their own perspectives and then reflect on these. Experiential activities can involve the students in community activities that build their knowledge of and connections to local community. Education can help students become conscious of their context and how the values and attitudes they hold interact with those that support the nation's public commons.

**Conclusion**

Western nations are growing increasingly ethnically diverse. One reason is the attraction of a rich public commons—the many and diverse social, cultural, physical, legal, and other goods shared as a national community. The commons flourish in spaces and places of common shared values such as respect for others, equality, and open-mindedness, in dialogue with multiple, diverse perspectives rooted in varied ethnic, social, and economic experiences. Education that spans ideological positions while being rooted in an understanding of the significance of a community with a rich public commons should not be indoctrination. It should include self-reflection and

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dialectical thinking by all, including educators, to ensure that all citizens feel that they are part of the public commons and that they are given the respect and opportunities that they and all citizens can benefit from; this is itself a common value. Education can reflect on the meaning and elements of living in a community, *as* a community, with rich public commons that are worth valuing, protecting, and nurturing in the interests and benefits of all.

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**Catherine A. Broom** is an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia Okanagan whose work explores the meaning and processes of Citizenship Education in the past and present, with a particular focus on community and ecological-mindedness. This paper is dedicated to her father, who died of cancer in 2017.

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