Oh Canada, Whose Home and Native Land?
Negotiating Multicultural, Aboriginal and Canadian Identity Narratives

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Abstract

Using autobiographical narrative inquiry methods I seek to explore how the juxtaposition of personal narratives of my children's lived experiences, with identity narratives held by Aboriginal people and the dominant white society, facilitates or impedes the affirmation of my children's identity as "multicultural" Canadians. How might such a framing lead to positioning minority children in the margins of social and educational contexts? I begin by telling a mother's story of my Canadian 'born and raised' son's experience in which he was caught between the dominant and historical narratives of residential schooling structured in Saskatchewan curriculum. I then move into discussing the challenges of the contested spaces of Canadian identity and complexity of negotiating multifaceted, complex, and hybrid identities. I conclude by offering a discussion of the often unexamined perspectives and practices of Canadian multiculturalism by opening a possibility for critical research in the teaching of the social sciences curriculum.

Keywords: minority Canadians, identity legitimation, multicultural identity, social studies curriculum, Aboriginal peoples, residential schools, eurocentrism, dominant society

Current Curricular Binaries

Curriculum, in any time and place, becomes a contested site where debate occurs over whose values and beliefs will achieve the legitimation and respect provided by acceptance into the national discourse (Klieberd, 1995, pp. 250-251). In the Canadian jurisdiction of Saskatchewan, imperatives to reconcile the history, presence and aspirations of the province's Indigenous peoples and the largely Caucasian settler population have preoccupied curriculum makers for well over two decades (Cottrell & Orlowski, 2014; Tupper, 2007, 2012, 2014). More recently, because of a significant increase in ethnocultural diversity due to immigration, an

additional challenge of accommodating the values and beliefs of "Newcomers,"[1] who neither have a dominant European background nor Aboriginal roots, has arisen. The identity struggle of ethnically diverse Canadians has rarely been explored in light of how they are positioned in this struggle. Here I[2] seek to describe and interrogate the tensions within this very new curricular space from the perspective of one "Newcomer" parent. My purpose is three-fold: firstly, to explore how the juxtaposition of my personal parent narratives regarding my children's lived experiences, with identity narratives held by First Nations people and by members of the dominant group with "white privilege" (McIntosh, 1988) or settler society, facilitates or impedes the affirmation of my children's identity as "multicultural Canadians"; secondly, to mobilize that narrative to initiate a conversation on how the construction and transmission of Social Studies curriculum might more accurately acknowledge and accommodate the rapidly-changing demographic and socioeconomic realities of Canadian society (with a specific focus on the Saskatchewan context); and thirdly, to create an ethical and honouring space for silenced voices in order to prevent an identity legitimation battle and move closer to being a just and democratic Canadian society.

My over-arching goal is to explore Canadian curricular possibilities for moving from a place of binaries defined by guilt and blame, oppressors and oppressed, winners and victims, home and land to a place of shared hope and responsibility for a different future for all Canadians. I ask how we might envision a future in which a more holistic approach to the

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[1] The term Newcomer in this paper refers to visible minority Canadians. According to the Employment Equity Act of 1995, "members of visible minorities" means persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colors.

[2] This paper is written in the first person, expressing the voice and lived experiences of the first author and members of her family. The second author contributed demographic details and provided intellectual and moral support for the first author, bringing insights from a White immigrant experience and a relationship of alliance with Indigenous peoples.

inclusion of multiple narratives, realities, perspectives, identities, beliefs and practices in educational institutions can be embraced to animate a more socially just future for all.

Local Context

The need to address issues related to immigration, cultural diversity, and the challenges of building and maintaining community cohesion under conditions of rapid change has become increasingly urgent in Saskatchewan, one of Canada's three Prairie Provinces (Falihi & Cottrell, 2015). Approximately 18% of the population claim Aboriginal status (Peters & Lafond, 2013) while the remainder of the population is descended predominantly from northern, central, and eastern European immigrants who settled the Canadian prairies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Falihi & Cottrell, 2015). Until very recently, less than 5 percent of the population identified as a members of visible minorities (Anderson, 2005). Longstanding Saskatchewan demographic trends changed dramatically after 2004, when the government implemented measures to encourage economic development in the province through labour mobility and investment (Garcea, 2008). Partly due to these policy incentives, the number of immigrants coming to Saskatchewan from outside the country, as well as migrants from other parts of Canada, increased dramatically, resulting in a population growth of over 120,000 people in the last 10 years (Garcea, 2006; Keatings, Down, Garcea, Zong, Huq, Grant, & Wotherspoon, 2012). The 2006 national census revealed that Saskatchewan's foreign-born residents had almost doubled to approximately 7.6 percent of the population in the previous decade, and these numbers continue to increase. Since many of these Newcomers have come from China, South Asia, Philippines, Africa, Latin America and Syria, visible minorities have increased from 3.6 percent of Saskatchewan's population in 2006 to 6.3 percent in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Adding further complexity to the Saskatchewan context is a troubled history of colonial relations between Aboriginal peoples[3] and predominantly Caucasian Settlers within the wider provincial community, which has made the recent demographic changes particularly sensitive (Cottrell, Preston, & Pearce 2012; Falihi & Cottrell, 2015; Keatings et al. 2012). Because of historic treaties, First Nations people occupy a unique liminal space as both a racialized and a legal/political group with a constitutionally protected legal status. However, because of the troubled history and persistent racism, many Aboriginal peoples in Saskatoon experience "statistically probable lives of immiseration" (Green, 2005, p. 519). Recent curricular changes, such as the mandatory teaching of treaties and the history of residential schools, represent laudable attempts to wrestle with the legacies of colonialism within the school system. However, as the story shared below demonstrates, those initiatives are premised on a neo-colonial binary in which the economic and cultural influence of Settlers has dominated the positioning of Indigenous peoples. Such a binary ignores the new Saskatchewan reality of diversity and does not accommodate the values and beliefs of "Multicultural Canadian" school aged children.

> We use the term "multiculturalism" to capture the politicized understanding of the issues…. instead of talking about culture in a depoliticized way as just being about food, habits, tastes, clothing, or customs…. a talk about race, color, ethnicity, gender, and class (Dei, cited in Kelly, 1999).

[3] The Canadian government defines Aboriginal peoples as First Nations (Indians), Métis, and Inuit. Two thirds of Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan identify as First Nations, roughly one third as Métis, and less than 1 percent as Inuit (Statistics Canada 2015). Peters (2005) further noted that it is essential to recognise that the Aboriginal population is heterogeneous in terms of its history, legal rights, socioeconomic status and cultural identities. She concludes that Aboriginal peoples prefer to identify with their cultural community of origin rather than the legal categories established by the Canadian state. Many prefer to call themselves by their particular origins such as Cree, Dene, etc.

In essence, curricular development and implementation have not kept pace with the recent transformations in demographics, inter-group relations, and identity/power dynamics within the province, as schools seek to wrestle simultaneously with the legacies of colonialism and the challenges of globalization (Falihi & Cottrell, 2015). It is within this rapidly changing context that my son's story resides.

Methodological Considerations

In this paper I employ autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as methodology since it offers the potential to produce meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience… to sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in silence, and to forms of representation that deepen our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). An additional merit of this methodology is that it treats research as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act (Adams & Tony, 2015).

"To begin a story, someone in some way must break a particular silence" (Wiebe & Johnson, 1998, p. 1). I begin with an honest confession of my naivety and ignorance regarding the plight of Canada's Indigenous people and their colonial history. Simultaneously, I also express great disappointment and frustration with Canada's political, institutional and ethical irresponsibility in not doing enough to educate Newcomers and visible minorities about Aboriginal peoples, broken treaties, land theft, cultural genocide and the history of residential schools which underpin much of the deplorable conditions facing Aboriginal Canadians today. Although it precipitated great confusion and angst, I also consider it a stroke of luck that my son's story became a catalyst for my own learning in this area, requiring me to deeply acknowledge Aboriginal peoples' history and the responsibility of all Canadians to contribute to

a process of reconciliation. In the process, I learned that Aboriginal peoples and visible minorities share a colonial past and mutual vulnerability to minoritized Canadians. Sharing vulnerability is one of our unique strengths as it teaches us what equality and justice signify, what compassion and humanity mean and the significance of ethical equilibrium for all Canadians.

The same vulnerability which I felt upon coming to Canada and struggling to integrate into the dominant culture in search of acceptance is the vulnerability which I feel at this time relaying my story. Ellis (1999) acknowledged the vulnerability experienced by the researcher doing autobiographical work in revealing him- or herself, of not being able to take back what has been said, of not having control over how readers will interpret what is said, and of feeling that his or her whole life is being critiqued. Jean Jacques- Rousseau (Confessions, 1782) asserted:

> I may omit and transpose facts, or make mistakes in dates; but I cannot go wrong about what I have felt, or about what my feelings have led me to do; and these are the chief subjects of my story. (cited in Kim, 2015, p. 122)

I position myself as a mother who feels passionate about my love, care and concern for my son. What I felt about his positioning as a Canadian is the main subject of my story. I am a mother researcher who asserts that I cannot compromise my morality or conscience anymore by passively accepting the official stories presented to my children through curriculum. Instead, I seek to author my own and my children's stories and to present these to Canadians in an attempt to attain legitimation of my Canadian born children's identity. Personal narratives, according to Laslett (1999), can address several key theoretical debates in contemporary sociology: macro and micro linkages; structure, agency and their intersection; [and] social reproduction and social change" (p. 392). My story goes beyond reflection and makes me a subject for critical analysis

(Kim, 2015). It is a story which allows readers to enter and feel part of a story that includes emotions and intimate detail and examines the meaning of human experience (Ellis, 1999). It invites readers to feel the dilemmas, to think with a story rather than about it, and to join actively with the author's decision points (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), becoming co-participants who engage with the story line morally, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually (Richardson, 1994). While writing this story I struggled with anxiety producing questions "about how to represent myself, how others would respond to my story, how to work ethically" (Wall, 2008) and if it is a right time and context in which to present my story.

Search for Canadian Identity: Where Do I Legitimately Belong?

September, the month of welcome, waving hands, and a new academic year, with the joy and anticipation of a new autumnal beginning. Looking at my eldest who was beginning her first year of university, I could see a cosmic map of her future – arrays of academia before my eyes. With a pivot in the opposite direction, I looked at my youngest who was preparing for his last year of elementary school. Images of his birth, his first day of kindergarten, and the lunch boxes in which he refused to take biryani and potato cutlets, swirled through my mind. Especially from Grade 2 onwards, he insisted that I, donning my shalwar-kameez. drop him off at the school entrance and not at the classroom door. What he did not understand was that, on the first formal day of school, as I dropped him off with excitement, not only did I share my child with the school, but also the tender bundle of my dreams, hopes, goals, culture, and beliefs.

On the fourth day of this new school year, with the confidence that my son had found his place of belonging in the classroom amongst his Grade 8 classmates and teachers, I asked him how everything was going, what he thought of his homeroom teacher, and what he was learning. In a tired voice he replied, "I almost fell asleep in class today." He was saying this to me in the

evening so I proposed to him to go to sleep earlier from now on in order to further himself from his summer sleeping patterns. He said, “No. It’s because of the movie that they show us repeatedly in Social Studies class.”

“Which movie?” was my curious response.

“A movie about Aboriginal people,” he stated.

I asked him what he saw in this movie and he said, “All about residential schools, how their land was taken and what ‘we’ did to them.”

In a highly cautious and alert voice I inquired, “Who did what to them?” “We, the Europeans,” he replied.

That was a profound moment for me as a parent in regard to the identity formation of my children as “multicultural” Canadians. The moment these words escaped my son’s lips, I was overcome with shocked surprise. In his tired and throwaway words I recognized identity choices my son had made regarding “Us” versus “Them” and “Winner” versus “Loser.” A multitude of questions rushed through my mind. Why was my son relating himself to the White oppressors and not the Aboriginal oppressed? Was he taking the blame because he is non-Aboriginal? Yet, as a son of Pakistanis, he is not White either. So why then was he considering himself a part of the colonialist regime? Is it because of the obvious white dominance, Eurocentrism, and power and authority that exists in Canadian society (Bannerji, 2000; Razack, 2004; Thobani, 2007)? Or is it because he understood that a great injustice has been done to Aboriginal people which he has not personally suffered, therefore leaving him with the only option of associating himself to the Europeans? Or is it because of compassion fatigue (Tester, 2001) as result of becoming inured to the narrative of residential school brutality? In what ways had well-intentioned curriculum and/or curriculum implementation compelled him to become part of or take sides in

someone else's legitimation battle, at the expense of negating his own right to a unique identity, culture, and beliefs?

A host of other questions followed. How might the provision of curriculum to children containing this explicit information on residential schooling widen or lessen the gap between the "Oppressed" and "Oppressors"? How may it cause 'multicultural' students to get trapped in a history of contact between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans, forced to take one side? How may repeated exposure to deep historical violence lead non-Aboriginal students' to desensitization, both to violence and compassion? And how may it lead Aboriginal students to become hyper-sensitive to their historical oppression, capable of seeing themselves as no more than victims and non-Aboriginal students as no more than oppressors? And how may the continued realities and messages of inequity in our society and world negatively affect White children's sense of self and attitudes toward others?

In considering these questions, my emotions as a parent shifted from a state of tension to incredulity, trying to understand when and how my son's struggle of belonging became one of transformed in-betweenism. How had my son's 'identity struggle' over how much he belongs to Pakistani ethnicity and how much to dominant Canadian culture transformed into an 'identity conflict' regarding how much he belongs to white Europeans and how much to Aboriginal people? I wonder also if my son must accept blame and responsibility for colonization and the resulting residential schooling, and speculate about the possible implications of this for his identity formation? If he accepts the blame, he is not only associating himself more with the oppressors but also surrendering himself consciously to historical acts of violence and injustice that he did not commit, in the name of belonging. If he denies the blame, then his Canadian citizen-hood, loyalty and patriotism is doubted. It is ironic that he is caught between Aboriginal

history and dominant culture through curriculum. Additionally, I feel it is important that my son is taught about the various forms of colonialism, imperialism, Indo-Pak partition and about who the British Raj was so that he understands his positioning as both oppressed and oppressor in his complex and multiple identity as a Canadian with a Pakistani ancestry. Perhaps this may cause him to think differently about his choice of the word *we* while saying what we did to them; or perhaps this may allow all of us as *we* to understand our complex positioning as Canadians.

Apprehensive Whisper Interrupts Silence

It is critical that every Canadian know, acknowledge and learn both 'dark' and 'white' sides of Canadian history and how it shaped Canadian identity and the positioning of Canadians on this globe. Teaching about historical injustices, mistreatment of Canada's Indigenous people, the history of residential schooling, and colonization, in this neo-colonial era serves as a great weapon for challenging Eurocentric ideology and knowledge. It is important that educators "constantly re-create the spaces by asking, whom does this space harm or exclude" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 31)?

How can we forget or dismiss Canadian history as it continues to shape our existence in this era of neo colonialism, an era in which control is exercised through means of emotional manoeuvers, identity politics, economics and immigration. Teaching and learning about history or culture is inevitable and desired. Understanding the complexities of world history can be one of the most vivid paths to justice, how the world works and interacts, and how individuals can collectively make a difference. On the other hand, it is equally significant to teach historical narratives through multiple lenses and to ensure that the identities of diverse students do not become buried or camouflaged. If, in an attempt to decolonize Canadian curriculum, culturally diverse students still relate themselves more with Europeans and white dominance, then

curriculum clearly continues to reinforce the Eurocentric understanding of difference, infused with the ideology of superiority and inferiority. Therefore, it continues to be a concern for social justice which verifies very much the existence of power, authority, and Eurocentric ideology in Canadian society.

St. Denis (2011) highlighted the ideology of Lawrence and Dua (2005), stating that the "people of color in settler formations are settlers on stolen land…. and historically may have been complicit with on-going land theft and colonial domination of Aboriginal Peoples" (p. 311). My children and I, as Canadian citizens, take full responsibility for being settlers on stolen land as we acknowledge that "we are exercising a treaty right simply by living where we do" (Epp, 2008, cited in Tupper, 2012, p. 143) and we appreciate that our "ongoing privileges are directly connected to treaties" (Tupper, 2012, p. 146). The deliberate use of the term *settler* has the potential to contribute to anti-colonialism and transformative peacebuilding, as it may set us on a decolonizing pathway toward more just and peaceful relations with Indigenous peoples (Regan, 2010; Tupper, 2014). However, I still wonder how we can hold ourselves accountable for the "ongoing land theft and colonial domination of Aboriginal people" as we 'Canadians of color' are ourselves subject to ongoing racialization and discrimination. How can we deny that this very colonial rule destroyed our own home country, forcing us to leave for a better life, only to be treated as second class citizens in Canada? In many ways, our very different racialized identities are a product of that very colonial rule. I appreciate it is difficult to determine how my children are more or less privileged than Aboriginal people. Aboriginal peoples are fighting for their rights on their land and in their home. But my son, who is born on Canadian land and raised in Canada, and who calls Canada his home, has not been accepted by either Aboriginal peoples or White Canadians. Who is he then? He is not an immigrant as he is born in Canada. He is not a

tourist as he is not visiting Canada. He is not a Pakistani as he is neither born nor raised in Pakistan. He is not a white European settler either. Let me put it this way, he is non-Aboriginal, he is non-white, he is non Pakistani, and a significant part of his identity is that he is a Muslim.[4]

My son is certainly a Canadian and "a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian" (Trudeau, 2015), but my son's experience also demonstrates that it is not that simple. Despite being positioned as commodified objects of production and key players promoting the Canadian economy as highly qualified cheap labor, we keep being discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, color, name, language, accent, qualification and so on. For how long will my children have to experience "democratic racism" (Henry & Tator, 1994, p. 1)? What role do educational institutions play in addressing the legitimate concerns of students around diversity and equity issues?

Issues of Racism

As Hall (1978) stated:

> Racism is not a set of false pleas which swim around in the head. They're not a set of mistaken perceptions. They have their basis in real material conditions of existence. They arise because of concrete problems of different classes and groups in society. Racism represents the attempt ideologically to construct those conditions, contradictions, and

[4]From the perspective of the second author this section highlights the complexity of Canadian 'identity conflict' since many white groups (such as Irish, Italians, Ukrainians, etc) also experienced significant persecution and exclusion in the past because they were deemed "other" in particular historical contexts. It also raises complex questions about the necessity or appropriateness of historical guilt in contexts of post-colonial reconciliation. Awareness and acknowledgement of past injustices and their contribution to current inequities, recognition of White privilege and a commitment to contest ongoing oppressive and discriminatory practices, are likely far more appropriate and useful positions in advancing reconciliation than debates about who should demonstrate guilt.

> problems in such a way that they can be dealt with and deflected in the same moment. (p. 35)

As a parent, I inquire into why my Canadian children must be reminded regularly that "our home and native land" is not theirs. It is the "Native Land" of the Aboriginal people and the "Home" of the white dominant culture. What then is left for my Canadian children who are born and raised on this land? Is it only their home built on someone else's land or is it their homeland? Or neither? How can they construct and shape their identity and a sense of belonging without a land and a home? How can they develop their sense of responsible citizenship in such a scenario where curriculum is inappropriately inculcating their dispositions as Canadians? Does it mean our national anthem insults half of the Canadian population? Does it mean that my son begins every morning at school with hypocrisy by singing, "O Canada, Our Home and Native Land"? Identities are usually produced within the play of power, representation and difference which can be either constructed negatively as exclusion and marginalization or celebrated as a source of diversity, heterogeneity and hybridity (Bhabha 1996; Butler, 1993; Gilroy, 1997; Hall, 1996; Laclau, 1990; Woodward, 1997). Castells (1997) asserted that identity acts as a source of meaning and experience for people through self-construction and individuation particularly on the basis of cultural attributes in a context marked by power relationships. Danzak (2011) drew attention to the ideology of Chang (2008), that "self-discovery in a cultural sense is intimately related to understanding others" (p. 194). In terms of my son's identity narrative, his cultural self-discovery is not surfacing as "related to understanding others" (p. 194) but, rather, "relating himself to others to make others accept him" (p. 194). In an attempt to develop a sense of belonging on the school landscape and to conform to the curriculum, he is compromising his cultural self-discovery by choosing between the only two presented options of either identifying

with Aboriginal people or white culture. In critical ways, curriculum, or the delivery of mandated curriculum, does not enable him to work toward the legitimation of his own identity as a Canadian but rather requires him to fit into a process of legitimizing his identity in relation to the binaries presented to him. Sterzuk (2008), in *Whose English Counts*, caused me to reflect on my children's identity by raising a question about "Whose identity counts?" (p. 9). Learners whose "cultures had been discounted and marginalized" (Williams, 2008, p. 511) "often devalue their own experiences, believing that their cultural and linguistic identities must be forfeited once they enter the classroom" (Griffiths, 2014, p. 107).

My oldest son in Grade 12 is finishing his last year of high school. While sitting in his psychology class and learning the First Nations unit, he wondered why he had to learn about First Nations culture in Psychology and English as well as in History. He said, "It makes sense to learn about First Nations culture and history in History class, but I don't understand why it has to be taught in English and Psychology."

I asked him how he felt about learning that history.

He responded, "It's significant because Canada is their land and it belongs to them."

"How do you feel learning about white culture?" I then asked.

He replied, "It's fine because it's their home and country."

With my heart thrumming in my ears I calmly asked, "Then where is your home?" He simply smiled and his smile spoke volumes. When we dismiss student voices or narratives, it becomes part of the suspicion of anything that cannot be quantified and objectified. If you can quantify it, then you know that there is a problem (Dei, cited in Kelly, 2009). It is valuable for teachers to get students to always ask what has not been said – by the student, by the teacher, by the text, by society (Ellsworth, 1997). Clandinin, Steeves, Yi, Mickelsoon, Buck, Pearce, Caine,

Lessard, Desrochers, Stewart, & Huber, (2010) acknowledged, "Within the institutional landscape, claiming an identity can be more challenging than passively accepting one" (p. 473). I agree that on school, social, political and economic landscapes, identity making remains complex, contested and questioned.

Is working towards eradicating racism our priority or preparing our children for the ongoing systemic racism that they will repeatedly face on many grounds, beginning with their name? Every time we pass through an airport and show our passports, the officer starts calling headquarter using alpha, bravo etc. It is a strange kind of embarrassment that we go through in those moments because of being routinely and excessively interrogated. When my children ask me why we are always held there the longest in line, compared to other passengers, I only have one option of identity left in that instance. I tell them it is because we are Muslims and the officers are fulfilling their duty. At the airport we become only Muslims, not Canadians. This kind of racism requires us to never forget that we are different Canadians, therefore deserving of being treated differently. "Racism is sometimes visible only to its victims. It remains indiscernible to others who therefore deny its existence" (Henry & Tator, 1994, p. 3). How will we prepare our children in advance for the upcoming exclusion and racism they will potentially encounter on the social and institutional level and in the work force? What are the implications of teaching about and preparing our children for racism and marginalization? How does preparing our children for racism in advance affect their sense of citizenhood? Which institutions and individuals have the role and responsibility to teach and prepare children for both racism and citizenship? And, if we do not prepare them for such harsh realities of racism, will they react to systemic racism by being beaten and battered by it? As a parent of children who live with all of these complex questions and challenges to their identity, these issues are fundamental to me. I

am trying to find a place for my Canadian children's identity and their voices on this land and in their home, Canada.

Students as Embodied Beings

Students do not go to school as disembodied youth. They go to school with bodies that have race, religion, color, class, language, gender, and sexuality (Dei, cited in Kelly, 2009). Experiences of marginality teach the politics of color. Color and language are interrelated as these two realms are the actual determinants of the face of a real 'standard Canadian.' Color matters more than language because my children speak English as their first language. But, since their color is different than the color white, they find themselves constantly engaged in negotiating, renegotiating and struggling to identify according to the group of people they are surrounded by and the kind of environment they are in. The most difficult positioning they find themselves in is the school landscape.

As a parent, I have been collecting an anthology of terms assigned by policy, persons, groups, and institutions to define my children's identity as Canadians. I have been compiling this anthology since I moved to Canada**.** I feel compelled to collect all these adjectives in order to understand my children's position and place, defined by other 'real Canadians' from whom they look different. As a caveat, I am not fully convinced that amidst all the racial categorization and adjectives assigned to my children's identity that it can be overlooked that my children and I are rightfully Canadians, Canadians who are paradoxically required to state their identification adjective prior to stating their national identity as Canadians. The perpetual request by 'standard Canadians,' to identify our personal 'identity adjective' first suggests that our survival is bound to retaining our dual or multicultural identity**.** Upon request and dire need, when my children refer to themselves as 'hyphenated' Canadians, they are reminded that policy calls them

multicultural Canadians. When they refer to themselves as 'multicultural' Canadians, they are considered promoters of mono-culturalism. When they refer to themselves as 'racialized Canadians,' they are considered advocates of differentialism. When they refer to themselves as 'Pakistani' Canadians, their commitment to integration and loyalty makes them questionable subjects of patriotism. And, when they refer to themselves as 'Muslim' Canadians, they jeopardize their entire identity as Canadians, becoming hallmarks of fundamentalism. Finally, when they refer to themselves simply as 'Canadians,' the prevalent question of identity speaks loudly, "Where are you from"? My children's identity as Muslim Canadians on a Canadian landscape is considered minority, being monitored and minoritized.

Felman (1995) argued that teaching and learning really take place only through entering and working through crisis, since it is this process that moves a student to a different intellectual/emotional/ political space. "We have an obligation to the students we teach never to avoid the knotty and uncomfortable issues of race, class and gender in our society" (Ladson-Billings 2003, p. 413). While the traditional view of identity is fixed and transhistorical, the prevalent view advocates for identity as being viewed as fluid and contingent (Woodward, 1997), not an essence but a positioning. "[I]dentity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (Bhabha 1994, p. 51). Two notable definitions of identity are "to be recognized as a certain kind of person by others" (Gee, 2002, p. 99) and as a "collection of stories about persons, or more specifically, those narratives about individuals that are reifying, endorsable, and significant" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 16). Thus, the role of position and positioning is significant to identity formation. It is imperative to "recognize and critique how one is positioned and how one positions others in social structures" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 37). Shin (2012) suggested that "it is important to situate this identity work

within the context of White racism and the alterity of Asians as forever foreigners" (p. 189). As "forever foreigners," our color and race remain so front line that, with an event like 9/11 in the United States, it took only one day for my husband, a specialist physician or so called "uncertified" doctor who was working at a Canadian International Airport as a porter, to receive a call and be told not to come to work anymore as his services were no longer needed. My husband's journey from racial to religious discrimination was faster than the unfolding story of September 9/11. He was no longer an immigrant, a Pakistani, a doctor or a porter but only a "Muslim" in Canada. "Therefore, those who experience racial bias or differential treatment are seen to be somehow responsible for their state of being, resulting in a 'blame it on the victim' syndrome" (Henry & Tator, 1994, p. 2).

Ever Disturbed State of Multiculturalism

Canada is the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as its official policy. Ever since its adoption in 1971, supporters and critics of multiculturalism have debated its impact in terms of civic integration and ethnic isolation (Kymlicka, 2010, p. 7). Critics argue that multiculturalism encourages members of ethnic groups to look inward and emphasizes the differences between groups rather than their shared rights or identities as Canadian citizens. Many Canadians are also concerned that immigration and citizenship policies attend too much to the concerns of special interest groups, rather than to those of average Canadians (Canada Citizenship and Immigration, 1994a, p. 10). Some Canadians are anxious about the formation of ethnic enclaves in our communities. Native born citizens with a strong sense of national pride are also worried that their country is becoming fragmented, that it is becoming a loose collection of parts, each pursuing its own agenda, rather than a cohesive entity striving for the collective good of Canada (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010). On rational grounds, is it really possible for a

multicultural person, a person tangled in multiple identities with a vulnerable voice, homeless mind, confused sense of self, living at the edge of society and always searching for home, identity, belonging, and legitimation of values and beliefs to shake the foundation and coherence of a dominant culture? Instead of opposing or supporting the multicultural ideology, I simply propose a question. Why do my Canadian children keep falling through the cracks of in betweenism, the only place where they attempt to find a balance? Why is their identity continually tossed between policy and practice, responsibility and accountability, land and home, integration and assimilation, power and politics, tolerance and acceptance, colonialism and imperialism, historical and dominant narratives and "Us and "Them" dichotomy? Let's focus on the fact that the ethnic, racial, and cultural makeup of Saskatchewan's classrooms have significantly changed. Society is not just governed by laws and policies but also by the principles of ethics, integrity, values and compassion. Kymlicka (2010) stated,

> Diversity policies in Canada operate within three 'silos,' with separate laws, constitutional provisions and government departments dealing with: multiculturalism in response to ethnic diversity arising from immigration; federalism and bilingualism in response to the French fact; and Aboriginal rights for First Nations. (p.19)

However central it is for these three dimensions to interact, it is equally critical to ensure that these three policy frameworks do not overlap. Overlapping or operating policies at cross purposes hold a strong tendency of paving a path for a contestation of the legitimation of identities, an unpleasant competition for power and privilege and a greater danger that society will be further polarized by race. Such competition has the potential to result in collateral damage to our country's national identity.

Compassion: Changing Our Perspectives Instead of Changing Others

Over the past 43 years, numerous scholars have discussed issues and approaches to multiculturalism and national identity. Very few have attended to the relationship and disconnect between belonging to Canada and belonging to Canadians:

> [I]n recognizing the value of cultural differences and racial diversity, Canada is also better positioning itself in a world that is becoming increasingly globalized in economy and culture. Canada has already committed itself to such a future when it entrenched the principles of equality and non-discrimination in the Charter. (Li, 2000)

I am starting to see my children as a fraction of a bigger picture in which I understand that the more I see, the less I know. The ownership of this land may not be my children's lawful inheritance, however, licitly, Canada is their home. It is a home where they are indeed not in a position of power and authority and are often victimized by various forms of racism and prejudices, yet have an equal right to identity, voice, and liberty.

> Thus, the challenge of cultural or racial diversity has less to do with the threat of visible minorities to Canada's 'social cohesion' than Canada's unwillingness to see itself beyond a conventionally European society, and to position itself as a global nation of many cultures and people. (Li, 2000, p. 18)

According to Delpit (1995), the culprit in these situations is not simply racism… it is the reluctance of people, especially those with power and privilege, to perceive those different from themselves except through their own culturally clouded vision (p. xiv). Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone (Dei, 2006). Frable (1997) concluded her review of research on social identities with a call for seeing people as whole referring to the need to address gender, racial, ethnic, sexual, and class identities as multiple identities of whole people. In the same vein, "seeing people as whole means

recognizing that both our everyday lives and the larger cultures in which we operate shape our senses of who we are and what we can become" (Howard, 2000, p. 387). Instead of forming a very particular and contested constellation of views and practices, together we all as "Canadians" would benefit from moving away from binary thinking to embracing a more holistic approach to the inclusion of multiple narratives, realities, perspectives, and practices in educational institutions. As Saskatchewan grows more culturally diverse, it is imperative that, as Canadian citizens, we accept and accommodate an ever changing cultural landscape. By acknowledging a multiplicity of voices and views, we will reshape a much more inclusive and balanced democratic society. "We need to make spaces in our classes for the conversations which are essential in order to tell, hear, and respond to the stories of ourselves and others" (Olson 1995, p. 132).

The growing importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in our globally connected era and rapidly changing world places enormous responsibility, primarily on the educational institutions, "to provide opportunities for youngsters and adolescents to engage in challenging kinds of conversations, and we need to help them learn how to do so" (Eisner, 2009, p. 329). Perhaps we are failing in creating these conversations and this is very reason that my son in Grade 12 securely accepted and acknowledged that Canada is the 'land' of Aboriginal people and 'home' of white people but remained insecure enough to ask his teacher simply a question, "Why do we have to learn Aboriginal history in English Language Arts and Psychology, as well as in our History class"? Why did he save this question for his parents? Adolescence is a central period in which youth begin to question and negotiate fluidity of themselves and multiplicities of their identities, situated in complicated power relationships and sociohistorical contexts of local and global spaces (Erikson, 1985). During this time, youth begin to experience tensions between

how they define themselves in relation to how they are defined and represented by their families, immediate communities, and the broader society (Ajrouch, 2004). Despite their educational and economic success, the children of racial minority immigrants are less socially integrated, have a lower sense of attachment to Canada, and higher levels of perceived discrimination and vulnerability (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). Members of ethnic minorities will be more likely to identify with a new national identity if they feel their ethnic identity is publicly respected (Banting & kymlicka, 2010, p. 61).

I am concerned about the second generation racial minorities, the children of immigrant parents born and raised in Canada, who include my own children. Second generation visible minority children are sandwiched between immigrant parents who associate more with their native homeland and a third generation who will be born and raised in Canada with English as their first language, national identity as their only pride, and the dominant culture and values as their core sense of belonging. Sirin & Fine (2007) wrote, "When one's identity is fiercely contested by the dominant discourse either through formal institutions, social relationships, and/or the media, one of the first places we can witness psychological, social and political fallout is in the lives of young people" (p. 151). Freire's words support such contestation of dominant discourse, "There are no themes or values of which one cannot speak, no areas in which one must be silent. We can talk about everything, and we can give testimony about everything" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). Creating "a storied classroom" (Wajnryb, cited in Nicholas, Rossiter & Abbott, 2011, p. 247), a space in which students feel free and safe to share their personal stories, is key to this pedagogical practice.

Creating this environment requires teachers to open up "possibilities for the telling rather than closing them down" (Simpson, 2011, p. 12). In order to stay wide-awake, "students as well

as teachers will benefit from being encouraged to learn from the unexpected and to pay attention to what they find problematic" (Olson, 1995, p. 134). Stories are experiences that give depth to and shape students' lives and narrative understandings. "Storytelling honours the historicity of the other by allowing students to share truths that are historically situated, embedded within culture, and which do not reflect the worldview of those in power" (Griffiths, 2014, p. 107). It is critical to create a safe sharing space for students so that they may unfold their stories of identities. Stories of 'who they are in relation to where they are' shift away from the hegemonic notion of identity, to raising the awareness and social consciousness of students so that they become creative subjects rather than assimilative objects in the world. For students it is important to ask, "What privileges do I enjoy? How am I less or more privileged than others and why? What are the historical conditions that contributed to these privileges? What are the implications of this for my own experiences of citizenship"? (Tupper, 2007 p. 262). Only then will students be successful in expressing their inner and silent struggle in matters of identity. It is critical to recognize that creating inclusive, respectful, and culturally responsive classrooms is an ongoing effort and that creating space for voices and dialogue is a lifelong endeavour. Exploration of differences and similarities along the dimensions of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, beliefs, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status raises the awareness level of the students about the role of multifaceted, complex, and hybrid Canadian identities. "Interaction among students of diverse ethnic backgrounds in a supportive school environment provides a context where positive attitudes towards race and ethnicities may develop" (Banks, 1995, p. 357). **S**tudents' consciousness of self and surroundings develop their critical and analytical thinking and help them learn how to unravel misconceptions and untie various threads of changed, shifted, and traumatized ideologies, notions, identities, and images.

In our ever changing classrooms, educating about the notion of diversity, liberated from the false dichotomy of "us" versus "them," is central to educational goals. Grelle and Metzger (1996) argued that social studies curriculum and teaching practices overwhelmingly support a standard socialization approach that discounts the realities of cultural pluralism (cited in Tupper, 2007, p. 263). Social studies and history curricula can potentially serve as core sources to engage and empower students, from contextual problems to social realities and from assumptions to critical analysis. These curricula can empower students by revisiting the past histories from multiple lenses, promoting understandings of interaction among different cultures, critical analysis of existing social practices, and modes of problem solving that develop civic understanding and informed social criticism. Instead of simply presenting to students what we already know, we can become catalysts for change by initiating dialogue about what it means to be a raced subject, gendered subject, and a classed subject (Dei, cited in Kelly, 1999). "By staying awake ourselves to possibilities of reconstructing our own knowing, we can provide our students with the possibility of reconstructing their own knowledge, that is, to the possibility of a lived story of educative experience" (Olson, 1995, p.133). Critical challenges currently faced by educational institutions require creative not calculated solutions which can only be accomplished by changing the ways we think and practice. Multilingual and multicultural practices can continue to evolve and be recognized and considered as sound pedagogies which provide the platform for deconstructing an assimilative approach and constructing, in its place, a justice oriented movement to multiculturalism.

Our Homeland: This Land May Not Belong To Us But We Belong To This Land

The increasingly diverse Saskatchewan demographics call for critical attention towards the Social Studies curriculum. In essence, the current curriculum and educational approaches

reflect ideological limitations by consistently reinforcing and maintaining a specific status quo and excluding the possibility for all voices and narratives to be heard. My son's unofficial story reveals the constrained choices that curriculum and/or curriculum implementation offers and the voices which become buried as a consequence. Three injustices come forth as a result of his experience with the Social Studies curriculum. Firstly, my son's identity as an ethnically diverse Canadian is suppressed and delegitimized by being presented with only two binaries, to either relate himself with oppressors or oppressed. Secondly, despite inclusion of the history of residential schooling, the curriculum and the way in which it is implemented continues to obligate 'multicultural' students to discredit historical legacies by associating with the European oppressors as opposed to assuming responsibility for historical violence as a key piece of their citizenship. Lastly multiculturalism remains in a disturbed form, since the current curriculum does little to teach ethnically diverse students ways to relate themselves with Aboriginal peoples as oppressed. This omission exists both in terms of a shared history of colonialism and current realities of neocolonialism and racism.

In a published work entitled, *Inside Memory: Pages from a Writer's Notebook*, Timothy Findley (1990) acknowledged:

> After all is said and done, I know I will have no answers. None. I don't expect to have them. What I will have, and all I have now, is questions. What I have done – what I have tried to do – is frame those questions, not with question marks but in the paragraphs of books. (p. 318)

In this paper I, too, have framed questions in the paragraphs of my writing, not to seek answers or find and match facts, as neither answers paint silhouettes of all stories nor are all facts created equally. I offer my own story by sharing my children's lived experiences and invite others to tell

their stories so we, as a culture, as communities of faith, as families, as parents, as educators and as Canadian citizens, can have more informed and robust conversations around the increased complexity of hybrid identity formation and the possibility of a more holistic approach to the inclusion of multiple narratives, realities, perspectives and practices on school and societal landscapes. My story of my son's experience as a culturally diverse Canadian challenges us all as policy makers, practitioners, educators, teachers, and community members to reimagine Social Studies curriculum in order to unfold historical and present inequalities from multiple lenses based on the contemporary structure of our relationship to Canada and Canadians. It is vital to fully recognize that what happens to our children affects us all. I believe it is critical that we continue to explore the complexity of our positioning on the Canadian landscape, the challenges of hybrid identity formation in shifting national and global spaces, the meaning of democratic citizenship and the troubling aspects of multiculturalism in order to open dialogue on identity, equity, and social justice. Only then will Canada become a "home" and a "native land" for all Canadians.

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