

The Dimensions of, and Connections between, Multicultural Social Justice Education and Education for Democracy: What are the Roles and Perspectives of Future Educators?

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Abstract: In this article we explore connections between multicultural social justice education, democracy, and education for democracy. Just as critical multicultural, social justice education does not simply involve examining the equal contributions of culture(s) to a society, *thick* education for democracy does not seek to merely educate learners about electoral processes and representative government. These projects aim to address the realities of power imbalances that directly connect to cultures, identities, experiences and realities constructed by diverse groups and individuals in society. When we interrogated future educators' perspectives we found that while the majority of respondents viewed democracy in its' hegemonic context of formal politics, voting, and elections, some also perceived these projects in alternative ways that emphasize equity and social justice. Our findings underpin the need to include critical pedagogies that focus on reflexivity, transmediation, autobiography, and self-positionality throughout the educational process. A broad, multi-pronged framework for conceptualizing a critical, engaged, transformative education for democracy is proposed, in which multicultural social justice education is inextricably interwoven.

Introduction

If teachers are the primary actors to promote multicultural social justice educationⁱ (MSJE), then attention to the opinions, beliefs, and positions of future teachers can be considered critical to better understanding how the needs and interests of students across diverse cultures, backgrounds and experiences are addressed in contemporary educational settings. Several important questions guide this inquiry into the inextricable link between education and democracy via the gateway of MSJE: Do educators perceive links between democracy and MSJE? What meanings do they ascribe to each of these concepts? Do teachers of different ethnocultural groups approach MSJE and education for democracy (EfD) similarly or differently? What do they (aspire to) implement in the classroom to address these issues? How far beyond the classroom do they envision the reach of education for democracy?

In this article we explore the nature of, the degree to which there exists, and the implications of the connection(s) and relation(s) between MSJE and EfD as perceived by teacher-education students. In doing so, we probe the perspectives, interpretations, experiences and links made by future educators who were recently teacher-education (pre-service) students at a university in Ontario, Canada. We examine the importance that these future educators place on multicultural education, the prominence of the role they ascribe

ⁱ The term/concept is covered in more detail below.

for democracy, how they understand and experience democracy, and how they envision operationalizing democracy in their classrooms. In its essence, this article explores *if* and *how* future educators' perspectives on MSJE (can) translate into democratic pedagogies, critical interpretations of the curriculum, and engaged learning and practices that cultivate a robust, meaningful and critical education for democracy.

We begin this article with a backdrop on the importance of, and the connections between, MSJE and EfD, and then introduce our 2013 study, which is part of a broader international research program that includes samples in about a dozen other countries. Next, we present the findings of this research, which include clusters of perspectives of future educators on MSJE and its relationship with enabling and supporting EfD. We then outline five themes through which future educators view democracy, and analyze these themes within the context of the aforementioned clusters. Our discussion examines the effects of hegemony on each of these projects and suggests ways forward to further articulate and enhance multicultural, democratic connections. Finally, we conclude by summarizing the research, and by suggesting proposals for enhancing MSJE in relation to EfD, and vice-versa. While this study is located in Canada, we also consider the salience of the results within international contexts.

Multicultural/Social Justice Education

Given the importance of the US socio-political context for Canadians and the Canadian state, it is relevant to underscore how multicultural education originated during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s as a quasi-revolutionary movement to address—through education—the gross infringements of rights, ongoing oppressions, and harsh stereotypes of, in particular, the African-American minority, and subsequently, other un(der)represented or marginalized groups in education. Responding to these realities, the multicultural education movement in the US sought inclusion, equality, representation and voice for these cultures/identities through curriculum reform, teacher (re-)education, and policy construction (Banks, 2004). In recent years, multicultural education remains a key initiative to reframe the individualist discourse that has enveloped the police killings of black men, such as Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Freddie Grey, Terence Crutcher, and many others, into social, historical and systemic issues of racism, segregation and inequality in the U.S. (Brooks, Knaus & Chong, 2015).

Notwithstanding the significant influence of US media, culture and economics, the trajectory in Canada has resulted in a somewhat different socio-political architecture of multicultural (and social justice) education. While in the US (and the UK to a certain degree; see Rattans, 2011) multicultural education grew fundamentally out of an academic movement, in Canada it has historically been heavily influenced by an official state policy of multiculturalism that is formalized in the constitution, and entrenched in its national identity and ideology (Lund, 2006; Stienen & James, 2013). Linked to the adoption of policy in 1971 and enshrined in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1988, multicultural education in Canada is typically connected to distinctly Canadian issues. These official positions were constructed to primarily address both a loosening of immigration policy that welcomed a large influx of non-European migrants to the country as well as the ongoing tension between the French-Québécois culture (and the then-burgeoning nationalist movement) and the Anglophone culture residing across much of the rest of Canada.

Contemporary issues of multiculturalism in Canada also centre on settler and Indigenous relations, and on debates of whether multicultural policies in Canada adequately subsume the concerns of the country's First Nations, Metis and Inuit populations. Critics of mainstream multiculturalism in Canada point out the extreme disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens in relation to school completion rates, fresh water security, and youth suicide, and, moreover, the travesty of hundreds of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in recent decades. Others point out that in international quality-of-life rankings Canada routinely ranks as a global exemplar, yet the specific social and economic conditions of Indigenous Canadians would place it much further down the list.

The critique of multiculturalism in Canada is that its' top-down policies condition the way citizens think about culture and diversity in the country, and subsequently produce a national discourse that favours harmony, tolerance, and celebration amongst racial, ethnic, and cultural groups rather than a focus on power relations, racism and social inequalities (Carr & Lund, 2008; Kymlicka, 2010; Lund & Carr, 2015). Mainstream, multicultural education largely assumes a predominantly hegemonic narrative that envisions diversity within the bounds of often superficial and essentialized cultural differences. This includes the widely-contested mantra of "food, festivals and fashion" imbued within the concept of the Canadian cultural mosaic. As Lund (2006) notes, many teachers who tend to favour this mainstream model of, multiculturalism are inclined to resist change and meaningful transformation (see also Rose & Potts, 2011). By contrast, research by Gorski (2006, 2009) and Westheimer (2006) underscore how multicultural education linked with political literacy can potentially seek to critically interrogate cultural awareness, pragmatism, and patriotism.

The more suppressed discourse within multicultural education in Canada concentrates on the experiences, realities and opportunities that exist for marginalized groups, examining how power and power relations operate within and between the dominant and oppressed "cultures," and analyzes *how* and *why* some groups are privileged within the larger Canadian society more so than others. Canada's lesser-discussed history of oppression, colonialism, and internment, for example, is a marginalized part of the cultural narrative. These latter perspectives on multicultural education fall more in line with the fundamental objectives and approaches of MSJE.

Multicultural education has taken on many forms and evolutions over the past several decades, overlapping with antiracist education, human rights education, intercultural education, inclusive education, anti- and post-colonial education, social justice education and other variants (Banks, 2004; Grant & Sleeter, 2006; Carr & Lund, 2008; Nieto, 2004; Vavrus, 2002). Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) have written about "critical multiculturalism," emphasizing critical pedagogy and the importance of placing power relations, epistemology and praxis at the centre of the analysis. In this sense, scholars such as Dei & McDermot (2014), Fleras (2014), and Lund and Carr (2015) suggest that a critical, antiracist lens is more effective than the neutrality of a "colour-blind," multicultural lens. Ultimately, the reality and recognition of multiculturalism within highly diverse societies is taking on many compatible and equally divergent forms, resonating in and through education at diverse levels, and bumping up against the hard reality of power relations, the quest for social justice, and the backdrop of seeking to reflect meaningful forms of democracy. Thus, multicultural education, at its essence, was created as, and remains, a project to privilege, to varying degrees, multiple perspectives, cultures, and knowledge(s) in the content and curricula of education. There have always been debates on how it should be conceptualized and implemented based on diverse power relationships. However, education remains, from our

perspective, the meeting-place where *bona fide* multiculturalism is concocted, cultivated and supported or, conversely, where it is undermined, rendered superficial and diminished.

Education for democracy

Research and analyses on education and/or/in/about democracy [2] has uncovered, in many ways, similar themes as MSJE. The dominant, normative perspective of EfD is one that suggests that democracy is premised on a society in which individuals have equal opportunities, realize equal rights, and can participate equally in social, economic, and political institutions (Munck, 2014). Further, it maintains that citizens have equal power and that they have equal footing to choose representatives in a mainstream, political authority (Zyngier, Traverse & Murriello, 2015). Under these assumptions, democratic education is an initiative that underscores the role that political systems play in enabling citizens to participate in formal, representative democratic processes. Teaching for democracy in this approach is seen as an objective process that assumes that social and political systems are satisfactory and static (Giroux, 2014). It focuses on the act of voting, the system of periodic elections, and the institution of representative government as the backbone of democracy. Carr (2008, 2011) has described this framework of EfD as a *thin* representation of democracy.

By contrast, a *thick* (or *thicker*) representation of democracy recognizes the role of power in society, acknowledges unequal access to formal political processes and institutions, and, instead, concentrates on issues of equity, social justice, political literacy, and transformative education (Carr, 2013; White & Cooper, 2015). It examines the role of hegemony, and how privileged positions construct society in ways that ultimately serve the privileged, and, simultaneously, disadvantage marginalized groups. Whereas *thin* approaches to EfD may envision a classroom that strives for equality, free choice or majority rule, future educators modelling a *thick* approach might concentrate more on critical thinking, equity, enacting social justice, and resisting and responding to formal, normative models of democracy. Future educators who embrace such perspectives emphasize agency, emancipation, critical engagement, activism, and contestation as curricular and extra-curricular foundations. *Thick* perspectives of democracy search for alternative models to the mainstream templates that are not generally questioned, exploring possibilities for citizens to more fully, effectively and meaningfully participate in their societies.

The research project undertaken by Carr and Thésée and their team has emphasized for the past several years six parallel and overlapping entry-points, filters or frameworks to understand and examine EfD, seeking a multi-layered interpretation of how democracy is understood, operationalized and connected to educational and societal processes and realities [3]. As outlined in Figure 1, multiple stakeholders, levels of intervention, methods of analysis, conceptual lenses or frameworks, ways of knowing, and desired outcomes are all essential components of this model, ensuring diverse interpretations of the context, power and power relations. We purport that this model could be applied equally to MSJE as a way of further teasing out the nuanced complexities of multicultural education, which, like EfD, is a dynamic, overlapping, trans-disciplinary ensemble of issues.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for education for democracy

<p><i>CONTEXT:</i> power; culture; history; globalization; neoliberalism; conflict; identity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Stakeholders:</i> students, parents, communities; academic sector; governments; labour market; civil society 2. <i>Levels of intervention:</i> individual, family, community; school; locality, city, region; nation; world 3. <i>Methods of analysis:</i> philosophical; political/policy; economic; social; educational; ideological; theoretical 4. <i>Conceptual frameworks/Domains of interest:</i> pedagogy; curriculum; institutional culture; educational policy; epistemology; leadership; informal/nonformal learning 5. <i>Ways of knowing:</i> experience; culture; encounters; education; varia 6. <i>Outcomes:</i> critical content (knowledge); critical reflection (dispositions); critical action (transformation); critical engagement (re-conceptualization)

In essence, EfD envisions a society in which all of its members freely and productively contribute to the whole, interact with each other, and share the interests of the collective experience (Dewey, 1916). In the past century, Dewey's work, along with Freire's scholarship on conscientization and the role of power in shaping social relations, has been furthered to articulate distinct dimensions of curriculum, pedagogy, policy, institutional culture, and epistemology of education for democracy (Carr, Plum & Howard, 2014). Such approaches rely not simply on a theoretical understanding of democracy but also a deep immersion into critical scholarship and activism related to social justice, political literacy, and critical multicultural education (Carr, 2013; Westheimer, 2015). The principles that are essential for a *thick* education for democracy are necessarily similar to, compatible with, and fundamental to a meaningful and critical MSJE (Banks, 1996, 2005; Carr, 2008, 2011, 2013; Sleeter, 1996). Within both spheres, a more holistic, comprehensive approach is required, power relations need to be interrogated, multiple voices/perspectives must be incorporated within a process of transformative change, and the socio-political context must be taken more broadly as well as more specifically into consideration.

The role of teachers

If formal education settings are primary sites for entrenching a critical approach to MSJE and a *thicker* sense of EfD, then teachers must be the principal actors to develop these aptitudes amongst their students. Teaching for MSJE and *thick* EfD requires a deeper understating and continuous zeal to understand the complex social dynamics that lead to inequities and injustices as well as an appreciation for the ways that power manoeuvres within society. This type of teaching also requires a degree of courage and creativity to incorporate the pedagogical tools necessary for student learning of these perspectives (Seeberg & Minick, 2012).

Given the diversity of contemporary classrooms, teachers of MSJE and *thick* EfD will necessarily need to recognize, negotiate, and address the broader structural dynamics that are at play within the microcosm of the classroom. Moreover, the teacher's identity in relation to social and structural positions plays an integral, albeit sometimes implicit or hidden, role in relation to the curriculum and pedagogy. While teacher identity has become

an emerging theme in teacher development, research suggests that the degree to which teachers, teachers-in-training, and other educators reflect on their own socio-political position varies greatly (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In reality, a teacher's sense of self has important implications for his/her awareness and insights on his/her social position, the connections s/he makes with her/his students, and how s/he navigates school board policies and curriculum as well as her/his vision as an educator (Agee, 2004).

Our research project: Interrogating future educators on their perspectives of MSJE and EfD

It is with this backdrop in mind that we locate our study that investigates the perspectives, experiences and perceptions of future educators in relation to the connection between democracy and other themes, including MSJE. The methodology involved an online questionnaire with close-ended, Likert-scale questions as well as follow-up, open-ended, narrative questions. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: section one comprising twenty demographic questions aimed at situating the participants' identities in the broader socio-cultural context; section two presenting ten questions that focused on respondents' perspectives of democracy; and section three containing ten questions that asked future educators to connect democracy with their future teaching. A condensed version of the questionnaire used for this article can be found in Appendix A.

The decision to base this research on a Likert model questionnaire was made with recognition of its benefits and limitations. On the one hand, Likert style survey methods are widely used and recognized by research participants, and their respective findings and analyses are easily communicated and commonly understood. On the other hand, Likert-style questionnaires have been critiqued for problems associated with respondent biases such as unstated tendencies either toward extremes or the middle; uncertainty in whether the researchers and respondents truly share a common understanding of the concepts described in each scale item; and respondent fatigue that develops in longer questionnaires (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). The centre response of "3" on a 1-to-5, "Disagree"—"Agree" response scale presents a particular problem for its ambiguity in meaning, taken variably to indicate (among other interpretations) "uncertain", "medium", or "neutral", depending on the question, the stage in the questionnaire, or the respondent's interpretation. Taking into careful account the benefits and limitations of the Likert scale, we ultimately committed ourselves to this method with ongoing consideration of the variable interpretations of our findings. We added the open-ended questions as a buffer to allow for further reflection and interpretation of the close-ended questions.

Data produced from our questionnaire were analyzed to understand the dynamics of the various sub-populations, and used to correlate the various responses as necessary. Other results were analyzed through an open-ended and focused coding system to generate themes based on the research participants' written responses. Responses from both their open- and close-ended questions are included in this article but we want to highlight that our study is not quantitative in nature, nor do we aim to present correlated statistical analysis. Other accounts of the methodology used in this study—as well as other related findings and analyses of these data—have been presented elsewhere, and complement the focus on MSJE in this article (Carr, 2008, 2013; Carr, Zyngier & Pryun, 2012).

The sample population for this research was a portion of a 2013 cohort of teacher education students at an Ontario, Canada, university, who we refer to as "future educators", as most will (and some already have) move(d) on to teaching and various other roles in

education. The research sites were two campuses of a public, medium-sized (roughly 10,000 students) university, which has a reputation for teaching through a variety of undergraduate and graduate level programs. Approval to proceed with this study was sought and received through the administration of the Faculty of Education at the participating university. Individual consent was assured and acquired through an online request as the preliminary question of the questionnaire. Respondents were informed prior to the study that their participation was voluntary and anonymous. A total of 286 respondents completed the questionnaire, providing rich data on the importance that future educators place on MSJE as well as their conceptualizations of democracy. The study included 118 respondents from the North Campus (of approximately 8,000 students of the whole university), and 168 were from the South Campus (of approximately 1,500 students). We attribute the higher response rate from the South Campus due to the questionnaire having been administered from the South Campus.

The two campuses of the university selected for this study are located in two distinct cities, several hundred kilometres apart. While the predominant cultural demographics of the survey respondents reflected those of education students at other Canadian universities—i.e. most students and their parents were born in Canada, are predominantly White, female, and English-speaking—there are some key factors that distinguish the two samples. For example, generally speaking, the North Campus is more diverse in relation to a variety of cultural indicators. While the university as a whole has one of the proportionately largest Indigenous student communities in Canada, Northern Ontario is home to a much larger proportion of First Nations peoples than is southern Ontario (AUCC, 2011). Further, future educators from the North Campus within our sample populations included greater numbers of students who were born outside of Canada, whose parents were born outside of Canada, who identify as Indigenous or as a racial minority, and who speak a language other than English at home. These measures of greater cultural diversity at the North Campus were reflected in the responses in our study as well, with highlights presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic data for participants (teacher-education students) in this study*

Campus	N	Born outside of Canada	Parents born outside of Canada	Self- identify as racial minority	Self-identify as Indigenous	Non- English home language
North	118	8%	29%	17%	5%	15%
South	168	5%	22%	11%	3%	7%

* percentages do not include responses that were left blank

For the purposes of this article we selected three questions from the survey that were most useful to link future educators' perspectives on MSJE with those related to democracy. The research questions presented here were based on the actual survey questions but have been adapted slightly below for the readability of this article (see Appendix A for more details). Table 2 outlines the research questions that are the focus of this article.

Table 2: Research questions used for this study

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Is multicultural education important in education for democracy? 2) Should teachers be expected to encourage democracy in the classroom? 3) What do teachers mean by democracy, and how would they promote it in the classroom?
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In what follows we present in our findings the responses to each of the above questions, and then we piece together a narrative of these findings to illustrate how the future educators from this study understand connections between MSJE and EfD, and importantly, if their perspectives on the former might translate into richer and more equity-based pedagogies for the latter.

Findings

The Likert scale data used in this study were generated on a five-point, symmetrical scale, with a range of responses for each question between very positive (5), positive (4), neutral (3), negative (2), and very negative (1). Based on the numeric value selected by the respondents, our initial analysis focused on whether future teachers felt mostly positive or negative towards MSJE and EfD.

We found that the responses generated through the Likert scale data skewed toward *positive* perceptions of MSJE and of democracy. For example, most respondents normatively agreed that “teachers should promote a sense of democracy in students”. Because most respondents tended to favour the propositions made in the questionnaire, responses were inclined towards “very positive” (5) or “positive” (4) answers. Thus, to ensure adequately sizeable yet distinct categories, we reduced our Likert scale data into three clusters.

The first cluster (Cluster #1) represents responses that associated with a “*very positive*” attitude to the question (i.e. a “5” on the Likert scale). Cluster #2 represents a “*positive*” attitude to the question (i.e. a “4” on the Likert scale). Cluster #3 is entitled “*neutral or negative*”, representing all remaining responses (i.e., a “1”, “2” or “3” on the Likert scale). Throughout this article we use these terms to characterize the respondents’ views on a topic, and then we connect these three clusters to the associated narrative data. Later in this article we elucidate important caveats that emerged in relation to these categories.

a) Do future educators believe that multicultural education is important in education for democracy?

The first question we probed was a basic gauge of the opinion of future educators on whether or not multicultural education (we used this term in the questionnaire rather than MSJE for comprehension purposes) was an important facet of an EfD. We gathered these data from the survey question that asked, “Do you believe that multicultural education is important for education for democracy?”. Of all respondents (n=199 [4]), more than half felt *very positive* about this relationship, indicating that “multicultural education is very important for education for democracy”. A further third felt *positive* about the function of multicultural

education in education for democracy, and about one-tenth were *neutral to negative*, responding with a value of 3 or lower. As noted above, the salience of the quantitative data is to merely assist in contextualizing the findings, and this is why we have avoided making statistical inferences about the overall strength of those data.

It appears, therefore, that in a normative sense, a large majority—almost four-fifths of participants—suggest that multicultural education is an important aspect of education for democracy, with the majority of those (61%) feeling *very positive* about this relationship (see Table 3). On the surface, these findings indicate that future teachers envision education for democracy as explicating and connecting culture, race and ethnicity with democracy. However, what was yet to be seen was whether future teachers view these aspects as inter-related in a harmonious mosaic, or if they underscore social inequality, unequal privileges, and systemic racism in their conception. Furthermore, these data also suggested discrepancies between perspectives from the North and South campuses on the *centrality* of multicultural education in education for democracy. To better understand these findings we proceeded to link these data with other responses from our research.

Table 3: Educators’ perspectives on multicultural education clustered according to Likert Scale ratings

<i>Is multicultural education important in education for democracy?</i>	North Campus	South Campus	Total
Cluster #1 (rating of 5) <i>Very positive</i>	58%	50%	53%
Cluster #2 (rating of 4) <i>Positive</i>	25%	41%	35%
Cluster #3 (rating of 1-3) <i>Neutral to negative</i>	17%	9%	12%

To deepen our appreciation of future educators’ perceptions on the links between MSJE and EfD, we isolated the respondents from each cluster and tracked their responses to several other items in the questionnaire. First, we followed their responses from question (a) to question (b), “Is democracy important in education”, and, second, to question (c), “How do you define democracy, and how would you integrate it in the classroom”? Our intent at this stage was to uncover first how future educators from each cluster viewed the importance of democracy, and, second, how they conceptualized this democracy.

As our data unfolded, we were able to examine whether there was consistency between each cluster’s position on incorporating MSJE in EfD, and, whether democracy should be incorporated in education at all. Following that, we traced these data one step further to determine the ways that future teachers conceptualized democracy, all-the-while juxtaposing them against the established set of clusters above.

b) Should future teachers be expected to promote democracy?

The results from this section were compiled from the results generated from the survey question, “Do you feel that teachers should promote a sense of democracy in students?”. For those who were *very positive* about embedding MSJE in EfD (Cluster #1, above), roughly half were **also** *very positive* about promoting democracy in education. Likewise, for those who felt *positive* about the importance of multicultural education in education for democracy (Cluster #2, above), 47% **also** felt *positive* that democracy is generally important for teachers to promote democracy in education (a “4” on the scale). Similarly for Cluster #3 (above), the *neutral to negative* group, 48% were **also** *neutral to negative* when asked if teachers should promote a sense of democracy at all.

These data are presented in Table 4, including boxes around figures to highlight how *very positive*, *positive*, and *neutral to negative* notions translated between MSJE and in EfD. The smaller proportions for each cluster (those figures without the surrounding box) represent responses that showed less consistency between their ratings on multicultural education and education for democracy.

Table 4: Perspectives on multicultural education in relation to perspectives on democracy in education

<i>Is multicultural education important in education for democracy?</i>	<i>Is democracy important in education?</i>		
	5 (very positive)	4 (positive)	1-3 (neutral to negative)
Cluster #1 (<i>very positive</i>)	48%	25%	35%
Cluster #2 (<i>positive</i>)	29%	47%	17%
Cluster #3 (<i>neutral to negative</i>)	23%	28%	48%

We can infer from these results that the strongest relationship for each cluster corresponded to **the same perspective** about the role of democracy in education. In other words, those future educators who felt *very positive* about the role that multicultural education played in EfD **also** tended to feel *very positive* about necessarily incorporating democracy as a component of education. Similarly, those who indicated a *positive* response to MSJE and EfD also tended to be *positive* about incorporating democracy in education. The same can be said for the *neutral to negative* cluster. Since each group of respondents had similar opinions or beliefs on the value of multicultural education as well as the value of education for democracy, it left us particularly intrigued as to how each of these clusters of future educators defined, conceptualized, and understood the notion of democracy, and, moreover, how they envisioned promoting democracy in the classroom (question c below).

c) How do future teachers define democracy?

To address the meanings that respondents ascribed to democracy, coupled with the ideas they suggested for its promotion in the classroom, this part of our study relied on the

question, “How would you define democracy?”. To derive meaning from all the responses to this question we used an open-coding method, and grouped the responses into dominant themes. For most, a clear theme emerged based on the interpretation of the response. However, in the case in which the response straddled several connotations of democracy, we coded each unit of qualitative data with the primary theme expressed in the response. If the primary theme remained unclear, then the response was coded by the first idea expressed by the future educator in his/her response.

Five themes, and three predominant clusters

Five themes emerged that corresponded to the future educators’ narrative responses. First, the majority of responses from future educators about their understanding(s) of democracy accentuated a perspective that highlights a mainstream, normative view involving the features of formal politics, the structure of elections, and the personal act of voting. For example, as one respondent from the South Campus elaborated, democracy is when:

Leaders are voted into power, and can be removed by the people. Laws and changes to the government system are executed by the elected government, but can be voted upon by the individuals within the society.

This result confirmed our expectations, as mainstream views of democracy as acts of voting, elections, and political involvement are consistent with analyses from previous studies over the past several years in varying contexts (Carr, 2011, 2013; Carr, Zyngier & Pryun, 2011).

In the second cluster, an emphasis was placed on the importance of enabling people to voice their perspectives. Future educators from this group suggested that democracy was about having input, making contributions, and being heard (roughly one-fifth of that sample described democracy as such). For example, future educators in our research described democracy as “Allowing all people a say in the political process”, or, that “Everyone has a say in the decisions made”. What particularly resonated as a theme for this group was the central focus of democracy as how individuals *participate* in a given system—as opposed to the centrality of a formal government system—in a way that authentically enables citizens to be heard. However, the responses in neither of the first two clusters have thus far failed to fully address the issue of power in democracy.

Responses within the third cluster, by contrast, implied the existence of power and privilege in relation to democracy as respondents described the need for democracy to focus on human rights, social justice, and equity (slightly less than one-fifth of this sample). Many of these responses reflect Sensoy and DiAngelo’s (2012) proposition that social justice is fundamentally about heightening awareness of racial and cultural privilege, and thus an education for democracy that centres on social justice must also highlight such issues. One respondent addressed these notions by suggesting that as a teacher, s/he would promote “Anti-poverty activism, and anti-colonialism education, as well as the integration of antiracism and Indigenous Pedagogy. [These topics] will do more for democracy than anything else.” Another suggested that s/he “would teach about my own Indigeneity and include the pedagogies of the students in my class at that moment in time.” The responses in this third cluster were most closely tied to a *thick* representation of democracy as they all, in some way, invoked social problems of power, inequality, and social injustices.

Two remaining clusters of perspectives on democracy

Two other smaller clusters of perspectives on democracy also emerged. In the fourth cluster, future educators saw democracy as a society in which individuals had a great deal of freedom and choice in their actions and behaviour (this cluster represented less than one-tenth of participants). Some of these respondents spoke about democracy as free will, and others described a democratic society as one with few obstructions and limitations. This equated with “Having the right to have opinions and a free life”, said one future educator. “Democracy is a way of life, in which all living persons have equal rights and freedom to follow their dreams in whichever direction they may choose for themselves without any discrimination of any sort”, said another. A third respondent described a democracy as:

A society in which the people have the right to choose freely, think freely and speak freely, regarding all parts of their life from government to education to family and profession or lack thereof.

Some of the future educators that fell into this cluster envisioned a classroom with great amounts of flexibility, choice, and freedom for students to learn in the ways that best suit their needs.

Finally, a fifth cluster (3%) of future educators viewed democracy as an idealistic, if not utopian, concept. “Full democracy is impossible”, proposed one student. While many responses in this cluster were critical, or perhaps even pessimistic, about any realistic prospect for democracy, others recognized its limitations but embraced its ideas: “An ideal democracy strives to care for all its citizens in the sense that ideally all individuals are of equal value or worthy even despite what in reality... may be otherwise.” The themes described above along with the proportions of future educators from this study whose responses were categorized into each of these clusters are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Meanings ascribed to democracy grouped by theme

Theme	Meaning of democracy	Perspective of democracy	Proportion of respondents
1	Relating to Political Institutions	Thin	51%
2	Voice, Input, or Participation	Thick <i>or</i> Thin	19%
3	Equity or Social Justice	Thick	17%
4	Having Free Will	Thin	9%
5	A Utopian Concept	n/a	3%

Interpretations of democracy

Clearly, the representation of democracy as a formal, political act is the most prominent of all the themes that emerged in these findings. However, even among the

alternate themes, some perspectives—such as having input or free will—can reasonably be construed to associate with an environment of relative equality and largely ignoring the predominance of power. However, it is primarily the theme of democracy as equity, rights and social justice that aligns with a *thicker* ideal of democracy, and these views were clearly in the minority of responses. In what follows we tease out even further the responses by cluster and by campus, examining trends with these responses, and how they ultimately might translate into the classroom.

What emerges as most salient for the purposes of this study is the tracing of the opinions/perspectives of future educators on MSJE to the ways that they interpret the term democracy. To make these links, we connect the three clusters formed from the opinions of whether multicultural education should be embedded in education for democracy with the five themes that surfaced when future educators were asked to define democracy (see Table 6). In this analysis, we observe that there is some variance between the clusters and their perspectives on democracy.

Table 6: Themes according to opinion on MSJE

<i>Is multicultural education important in education for democracy?</i>	<i>Theme ascribed to definition of democracy</i>				
	Political Institutions	Voice, Input	Equity, Social Justice	Free Will	Utopian Concept
Cluster #1 (<i>very positive</i>)	49%	23%	13%	8%	7%
Cluster #2 (<i>positive</i>)	52%	13%	19%	14%	3%
Cluster #3 (<i>neutral to negative</i>)	52%	19%	29%	0%	0%

Several notable observations can be made between the future educators' perspectives on MSJE and their corresponding definitions of democracy. For one, about half of the respondents in each of the three clusters view democracy as a political system. The weight of these responses might be expected, given the dominance of the mainstream definition, as discussed above. However, looking beyond this result, some differences emerge between the clusters. For one, the theme of *democracy as voice, input or participation* was most strongly embraced by respondents in Cluster #1 (23%) in comparison to those of the other clusters. Likewise, the theme of *democracy as free will* was most strongly supported by Cluster #2 respondents. That these two clusters—the future educators who most positively linked MSJE with EfD—perceived democracy through *thin* terms as described above suggests that their views on multicultural education were similarly thin. In other words, because these groups largely omitted the role of power, privilege, and social justice in their definitions of democracy, it stands to reason that they would also embrace somewhat conservative views of MSJE, those that focus on harmony, tolerance, and celebration rather than power inequities, racism, and discrimination.

If hegemony operates such that powerful groups dominate others through knowledge production, subtle and subconscious discourses, and culture that enables power to remain within the hands of the powerful (Foucault, 1972), then it might be argued that *thinner*

perspectives of education for democracy and *conservative* MSJE curricula and pedagogy represent hegemonic discourses. Based on the analysis from this study it appears that the majority perspectives in our data represented a hegemonic notion of both MSJE and EfD. This further re-enforces the idea that these terms are interpreted in a multiplicity of ways, and that many who responded negatively to these notions may actually hold *thick*, rich, critical and nuanced views on these ideas. Their negative association with terms such as “multicultural” and “democracy” suggest that they do not embrace the normative association with these terms; rather they reflect the propositions made in the questionnaire because they imply normative frameworks.

Through the contours of conscientization (Freire, 1970), many learners and educators resist hegemonic processes and view multiple centres instead of a single epistemological authority. Many future teachers in the seemingly most critical-engaged clusters (may) reject the notions of multicultural education and EfD because they assume (as is most often the case in popular discourse) that the terms “multicultural” and “democracy” are being mobilized within a hegemonic filter. Indeed, there may have been some participants who, potentially, interpreted these questions about MSJE and EfD in their hegemonic sense, and therefore, reflected these notions through a low score on the Likert scale. However, the subsequent qualitative, narrative analysis confirmed that, in almost all cases, well-argued, justified and meaningful written responses, based on the coding of each answer in a consistent manner, was rarely as compelling and robust as the numeric ranking using the Likert-scale answers.

Discussion

Given that this research was undertaken with future educators, a central implication of these findings and analyses is their application in future education settings. While the majority of respondents expressed dominant, conservative, *thin*, and mainstream views of the constructs of multiculturalism and democracy, it is of value to probe the positions and perspectives of those that reflected more critical views on these topics. One opportunity enabled by the methodology of this research presents a poignant item for discussion. By seeking to correlate our demographic data of the students from each campus with the clusters of responses, we were able to look beyond the majority perspectives to better understand *who* holds alternative views, *what* these views constitute, and *how* they might translate to hope and possibility for MSJE and EfD. What we found was that future educators from the more culturally diverse campus were more likely to hold neutral to negative views on normative interpretations of MSJE and EfD.

Tables 3 and 4 underscore that, while the majority of respondents from each campus submitted positive responses on the Likert scale, considerably more future educators from the North Campus had *neutral to negative* views about the inclusion of multicultural education in education for democracy. Rather than ascribing a *positive* response, as was largely the case for respondents from the South Campus, almost double the proportion of respondents at the North Campus (17% compared to 9% at the South) viewed the correlation between MSJE and EfD as *neutral or negative*. By contrast, a much greater proportion of students from the South (41% compared to 25% in the North) viewed as *positive* the inclusion of multicultural education in EfD, suggesting that very large numbers (91% from the Clusters 1 and 2 combined) do not treat this relationship as problematic, critical, or nuanced.

Based on data presented in Table 1, we can also see that the future educators from the North campus were more culturally diverse. Thus, if future educators from the more

culturally diverse campus expressed views on multiculturalism and democracy that are more critical, nuanced, and politically literate, such data would suggest that aspects such as experience, social position and identity may affect how individuals interpret fundamental concepts such as multiculturalism or democracy. Several of the narrative responses on these notions from the North Campus also underscored skepticism of the ways that these projects were taken up in the Canadian context. One example by a future educator from the North Campus involved an elaboration on his *neutral to negative* response to MSJE as part of EfD through offering ideas as to how to incorporate *thick* forms of democracy in education:

First, encourage students to think about these issues and discuss issues of the moment such as Idle No More. I think it is important that the teacher have a solid grounding in the issue and it is also essential that the teacher create safe spaces and be able to establish ground rules for civil engagement of differences.

This connection leads to numerous other questions about the relevance, legitimacy and impact of MSJE. Do teachers from minority racial/ethnocultural groups have more relevant experiences and knowledge on such topics, issues, concerns and practices to bring to the education setting than those deemed to be from the majority groups? Is MSJE further enhanced or legitimized when taught by teachers of groups typically studied in these topics? Whose responsibility is it to teach such topics? And is MSJE only relevant in diverse educational settings? Resistance to engagement with racism, for example, has been widely documented, and many White students are particularly troubled by this process, regardless of how it is presented (Lund & Carr, 2015), which connects directly the fibre and meaning of democracy within pluralist societies (Dei & McDermot, 2014; Fleras, 2014).

As described above and below, beyond simply generalizing from the demographics of the teachers at each of the two campuses, this research also provided data on individual teacher identities in relation to age, gender, ethnicity, religion and other personal characteristics. While the focus of this article was to demonstrate alignment between perspectives on MSJE and EfD among future educators (and to characterize, through clusters, their frameworks related to these perspectives), there is evidence from this study that suggests that the social positions of these future educators are also linked to their perspectives. For example, in our other work we have highlighted aspects of the research participant demographics, such as their age, gender, country of birth, ethnicity and education, and observed the effect of these variables on their tendencies towards perspectives of EfD, most demonstrably in their view of democracy, their opinion on the role of education, and what and how they foresee their implementation as a teacher (Carr, Pluim & Howard, 2014). These findings, supported by those from this research, emphasize the importance of teacher identity in the outcomes of MSJE and EfD pedagogies, and, in particular, an educator's awareness of his/her own self-identity.

There are several ways that teachers and future educators can deepen their own understanding of their own identity. Intense self-reflection should be a regular part of teaching, including: the use of transmediation to examine forms of power such as culture, Whiteness, and privilege (Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2014); critical reflexivity to examine power and positionality by placing one's self in a critical consciousness reflection (Boske, 2015; Carr, Pluim & Howard, 2014; Pluim, MacDonald, & Niyozov, 2014); and the use of (auto)biography-driven instruction to enlighten and address education for multiculturalism

and democracy (Hernera, Holmes & Kavimandan, 2012). One respondent in our study, for example, suggested that education for democracy might best be addressed:

Through critical autobiographical work, community and place connections, relationship building with Aboriginal communities. I would think about it in nesting circles—creating/experiencing democracy at a classroom level, at a local community level, national level, etc.

Thus, multicultural education curriculum should be enhanced by critical, alternative, divergent pedagogies and teaching approaches. Both projects of MSJE and EfD must be invested in fostering critical thinking, engaging with controversy, and understanding social constructions so that students might better appreciate the values of a socially just society. One future educator in our study articulated these ideas as such:

If being controversial and talking about the downfalls of our society and other things (democracy included) are prohibited then the next best thing is to teach children to be critical thinkers. ... teaching children to not simply accept knowledge, but filter it, will be most beneficial to their understanding of democracy.

To further apply these notions to the classroom, one respondent suggested that, as a teacher, she would “Have open and honest conversations with my class, ask them to think critically, look for multiple sources, check those sources, look through propaganda, and make personal and if possible objective observations.”

Even more so, as discussed above, MSJE profits from a comprehensive approach to democracy that considers both the pedagogical and curricular components of education, and also considers dimensions of epistemology, outcomes, stakeholders, levels of intervention, methods of analysis and conceptual frameworks as presented in Figure 1 (see also Banks et al., 2005).

As Carr (2011) and Westheimer (2006) argue, authentic democratic experiences must go beyond the electoral processes that skew public consciousness and extend to broader, alternative and diverse realities and experiences that challenge hegemonic power arrangements. In this vein, we also uncovered a significant minority of future educators that appeared to reject *both* of the formal notions of MSJE and EfD due to their presumed links to the mainstream interpretations. These respondents that appeared to most problematize the relationship between multicultural education and democracy—as well as these terms and concepts, in general—were from the more culturally diverse of the two campuses that we studied. These findings highlight how racial and other minority groups can experience MSJE and EfD democracy differently than majority groups, as well as the importance of critical pedagogies to underpin a deeper awareness of the roots and constructions of our perspectives.

We believe that these findings should be further cultivated in teacher education programs, and that schools, school boards and departments of education should provide more opportunities and critical curriculum, pedagogy, activities and processes that enhance critical linkages between MSJE and EfD. Just as critical MSJE does not simply involve examining the equal contributions of culture(s) to a society, *thicker* EfD does not seek to merely educate learners about processes of equal representation of citizens. These projects

must introduce the realities of the power imbalances in society that directly connect to the elements of cultures, identities, experiences and realities constructed by its members. Indeed, attempting to conceptualize a meaningfully vibrant, functional and socially just multicultural society without a meaningfully vibrant, functional and socially just democracy is at the base of our research, and also is infused in a transformative educational approach that could bleed over to both of these interwoven concepts, facilitating a more robust and meaningful level of citizen participation in education as well as in society.

Notes

1. We thank Lauren Howard, who played an instrumental role in the collection and analysis of the data used in this article.
2. While each of these phrases relating to democracy and education conjures up distinct (and often some overlapping) interpretations, we favour education *for* democracy in our analysis.
3. See the Democracy, Political Literacy and Transformative Education research project, which now forms part of the UNESCO Chair in Democracy, Global Citizenship and Transformative Education (DCMÉT), at uqo.ca/dcmet/.
4. Curiously, 87 respondents did not respond to this question.

Appendix A: Questionnaire used in the Democracy, Political Literacy and Transformative Education research project

Biographical Information (categories for responses to these questions were provided in drop-down menus)

- 1.2 I am (gender):
- 1.3 My age is:
- 1.4 What education degree are you studying?
- 1.5 What year of study are you in for the education program?
- 1.6 What is your main course of study?
- 1.7 Choose one content area that best describes your area of teaching:
- 1.8 *What is your racial/ethnic origin? (check more than one wherever appropriate)*
- 1.9 *My country or region of birth is:*
- 1.10 Are you an Indigenous or First Nations person?
- 1.11 *What was your main language spoken at home during your childhood?*
- 1.12 Father's highest academic qualification (please choose only one):
- 1.13 My father's main occupation during his working life (please choose only one):
- 1.14 *My father's country or region of birth is:*
- 1.15 My mother's highest academic qualification (please choose one only):
- 1.16 My mother's main occupation during his working life (please choose only one):
- 1.17 *My mother's country or region of birth is:*
- 1.18 Which religious group, if any, are you affiliated with?
- 1.19 Do you practice this religion?
- 1.20 How actively involved in politics were your parents when you were school-aged?

Democracy section

- 2.1 *How would you define democracy?*

- 2.2 Do you feel that Canada is a democratic country?
- 2.3 Do you feel that the United States of America (USA) is a democratic country?
- 2.4 Do you feel that the following are democratic countries?
- 2.5 In your opinion, how important are elections to democracy?
- 2.6 Do you vote in elections for which you have been eligible to vote?
- 2.7 Are you (or have you been) a member of a political party?
- 2.8 Do you feel that you are actively engaged in democracy?
- 2.9 What should/could be done to improve democracy in Canada?
- 2.10 Do you feel that aboriginal peoples are a full part of Canadian democracy?

Democracy and Education

- 3.1 From your perspective, is the education system in which you were educated democratic?
- 3.2 Did your school experience have an impact on your thinking about democracy?
- 3.3 When you were at school did your teachers raise issues related to democracy?
- 3.4 *Do you feel that teachers should promote a sense of democracy in students?*
- 3.5 Do you feel that teachers should teach about controversial issues?
- 3.6 What do you understand by the term Social Justice?
- 3.7 How important do you feel the issue of social justice is in relation to democracy?
- 3.8 *Do you believe that the following are important for education for democracy?*
- 3.9 From your perspective, has your university education promoted an understanding of democracy?
- 3.10 *If you are planning to teach in a school setting, how would you promote education for democracy?*

Note: Italicized questions are those that were used for this article. Questions 3.8, 3.4 and 2.1 were used for the findings presented in this article, and are slightly paraphrased in the body of this article for purposes of clarity. Question 3.8 included a list of themes relating to democracy, one of which was “multicultural education”. Data from questions 1.8, 1.9, 1.11, 1.14, 1.17 were used to describe the demographics of the research participants from this sample population in relation to multiculturalism. These demographics are presented in Table 1. Data from questions 1.8 and 3.10 were drawn upon in the discussion section.

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