A Unit Plan of One's Own: Digital Pedagogy for Critical Citizenship

by

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BA English, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2004

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

This project addresses the trend toward political disengagement prevalent in Canadian youth and posits that a new approach to citizenship curriculum could create the contexts for a renewed potential in our pluralist democracy. By adopting a framework of citizenship as shared fate, the project presents a malleable unit plan offering potential for a critical citizenship curriculum that may be supplemented by the use of digital tools on the open web. By supplementing the physical classroom space with open publishing platforms, the project presents a framework for unit planning in the service of pluralist ideals.

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Acknowledgments

This work exists because of the inspiration, support and groundwork lent to its author by a number of individuals in the last many years.

- For her support and guidance, my wife and partner Megan Jackson deserves recognition and thanks for always pushing us to do and be more so that we might live the life we have imagined and go confidently in the direction of our dreams[1].

- In listening to and reading more than her share of unfinished songs, ideas, and paper proposals, GNA Garcia has contributed in too many ways to be adequately acknowledged here. As champion and witness, she is Freire's dialogical educator "par excellence."

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[1] With thanks here to Henry David Thoreau.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the spirit of learning which drove the Coquitlam School District's Richard Dixon, a drama teacher at Gleneagle Secondary School who told me on the day that he retired: "It doesn't matter what class you teach; you're always teaching kids to practice forming communities."

Chapter 1: Introduction of the Project

Personal and Critical Approaches

"The only way back to objective reality is the following one: we can take these several individual worlds, mix them thoroughly together, scoop up a drop of that mixture, and call it objective reality." (Nabokov, 1980, p. 251)

In these the early decades of the 21st century, discussions about education are often concerned with a cultural transformation being wrought by the advent of the Internet and a plethora of revolutionary digital communications technologies. Analogous paradigm shifts observed as the digital age has impacted human relationships in economics, popular culture, and academic research have similarly challenged schools to prepare young people to lend their voice to a global dialogue. This digital age makes possible new realizations of pluralism and democracy, where the means and ability to present and communicate an individual narrative and perspective invites all citizens into a collective authorship. If the collaborative power of the World Wide Web threatens the ability of an elite minority to define shared narratives – such as the influence of corporate interests or the State itself – the development of participatory literacies presents emancipatory possibilities for each member of society to become reflected in a shared identity.

While these changes can be and often are touted as revolutionary and inspiring, this era of unprecedented communicative potential on a global scale has been accompanied by rapidly expanding trends toward political and economic alienation and fragmentation, making schools susceptible to replicating inequalities prevalent in wider society. To address this problem, this project explores the potential for citizenship curriculum in the 21st century to provide young people with experiential lessons in transforming themselves as individuals, contributing to the

continued transformation of their surrounding societies, and developing greater individual agency in the shaping of a collective identity.

Through this, the project is guided by the following questions:

- Does open discourse influence young people's sense of voice and agency in the shaping of collective identities?
- Can digital tools and open pedagogy provide a means of realizing emergent curriculum for citizenship in the 21st century?

In an attempt to honour the pluralist spirit of collective authorship, the project is framed by an approach to learning that includes personal as well as critical foundations. Although research and professional learning has inspired the process-oriented conception of citizenship learning described here, life experiences and personal pursuits dating back to my adolescence reveal a similar theme of individual transformation that is explored in the introduction to the project. Whether in an adolescence spent training and racing in competitive track and field, university years spent trying to craft the perfect sentence, or as an adult striving to embody lifelong learning, my personal and academic ambitions have consistently been oriented toward transcendence. This introduction outlines the manner in which these life experiences have come together to form the particular lens applied to my academic study of teaching and learning.

Running, writing, and living: to make the means the ends. As it is with running, so it is with writing, and so it is with life, where the joy to be found in each arises from the practice of the thing itself, rather than from whatever the activities are meant to produce. As ink collects on a page, and aerobic breathing and footsteps echo in the local woods, so too have I come to learn that love and joy accumulate in the daily living of life more than in the pursuit of them as external ends. So long as they are not being done to serve some *other* purpose, outside of

themselves, I generally enjoy and in so doing can succeed in these efforts indefinitely. So it is with running, so with writing, and so it is with life.

This approach need not, however, ignore the will to strive, to progress, or advance: to grow. It is merely that once these external motivations become the sole and primary *objective* of these practices - as opposed to merely a by-product of the experiences - it can become all too easy to lose sight of the joy at the heart of the act (however uncomfortable an encounter with a steep hill or blank page may be) that is essential if we are to continue to progress. By realizing this truth of succeeding in the struggles of running and writing throughout my youth and formative education, I have begun to glimpse how best to meet that other intensely personal, often uncomfortable, and naturally rewarding act of living (and learning) itself.

When it is the most fun, after all, I am running not so that I might gratify some purpose not in and of the run itself; I am running for the enjoyment of that time spent running, and so that I might be able to continue to run: so that the most freeing of natural joys in life is available to me, in body as well as mind. When I am enjoying it the most, I am writing not to reap the eventual fruits of the intellectual or emotional labours of reasoning and introspection; I am writing because it is the process itself which brings me into touch with my thinking about myself and my place in the world. Just as in the physical sense with running, writing is an encounter between the self and the world that cannot be predetermined or coerced into existence in advance. Rather, it is the experience that allows my boundary with the world to be defined. Only once it has been so defined does the possibility that this boundary can be transcended come into being.

While setting goals or deadlines to motivate myself from week to week or year to year can be helpful in working toward self-improvement, it is this ongoing encounter with the

unknown that can most consistently be trusted to lead the way to continued transformation and ongoing personal growth. The outcome, or *end,* being pursued, in other words, becomes the continuous realization of the *means* itself: to be able to interpret emerging contexts and plot new courses of action. In striving to achieve this congruence between ends and means, I am reminded of Foucault's notion of Enlightenment, which should "be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating," but rather, "a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" (Foucault, 1984, p. 50).

As it is in running, so it is with writing, and so it is with life. And so with life, with learning. In each of these capacities, I have challenged myself to make the means of these pursuits their ends:

- By running merely to run, asking nothing more of what amounts to tiring, challenging work, I am rewarded with better health and fitness, as well as the ability to continue to test my physical limits into the future.

- By writing only to write, and letting the words and insights arise (or not) where they may, I retain and hone the craft and habit of exploring and expressing my thoughts and reflections clearly.

- And by living and learning for its own sake, I continue to seek knowledge and experiences that become wisdom and points for further departures of curiosity into the future.

This realization and focus of my graduate education in curriculum studies has emerged from almost 10 years as an educator, but is grounded in life experience and formative passions of

both running and writing that have long-provided me with motivation and means to succeed and progress. Before I was a graduate student immersed in the philosophy of education and learning, I devoted a good deal of time and education to expressing my thoughts in words, earning an honours degree in creative writing and working for my university's newspaper while I drafted stories and poems and novels in my spare time. I had a poster of Jack Kerouac on my university-bedroom wall, and had become at the age of 20 convinced of the transformative power of the creative arts. Whether in beholding the transcendent enthusiasm of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Allen Ginsberg, or William Wordsworth, my undergraduate education nurtured a profound faith that such creative expressions could fundamentally transform not only people's individual identities, but society itself. It is this faith that has inspired me to help students develop this type of critical awareness and ability to communicate: to become the sort of person Apple founder Steve Jobs said could "put a dent in the universe" (Jobs & Sheff, 1985).

Even before I changed my major (from Biology to English), I was a scholarship athlete on my university's track and field team, competing across the southern and midwestern states against the best middle distance runners in the NCAA. I waged a 10-year battle against the 800m, sweating and grinding tenths of a second from my best times every year from the ages of 14 to 22, and lived to test the boundary of not only my body, but my will. Every race stood as a new opportunity to create a greater effort than that I had previously achieved, where I might defeat an unbeatable rival, or set a lifetime best. Or not. Even when my efforts were unsuccessful, I was discovering The Line, my boundaries, or the limits that I would be trying to surpass the next time out. Having taken the better part of my twenties away from the sport of running, recent years have found me venturing for further and further runs and races in the local

watershed, and I am again developing the taste for exploration at the edge of my physical limitations. In doing so, I have reaffirmed for myself the faith in a process that I think ought be authentically modeled for students we are encouraging to practice the "analysis of the limits that are imposed on us" and to engage in "an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" (Foucault, 1984, p. 50).

Teaching to the limit (Situation). This preoccupation with transcendence has been further nurtured by an acquaintance with critical pedagogy, and Paulo Freire (1970), who described the experimentation with what he referred to as "limit situations" as essential to the realization of human freedom, noting that "because [humans] are aware of themselves and thus of the world—because they are conscious beings— [they] exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their own freedom" (p. 99). Describing the process, he writes that

> As they separate themselves from the world, which they objectify, as they separate
> themselves from their own activity, as they locate the seat of their decisions in themselves
> and in their relations with the world and others, people overcome the situations which
> limit them: the "limit-situations." (Freire, 1970, p. 99)

If the perpetuation of such an ongoing cycle of transformation becomes the end goal, our aim in turn becomes to build the capacity to maintain this praxis. As the cycle of action and reflection continues, we are inevitably challenged to resolve the conflicts that arise between the world as we feel it *ought* to be and the world as we find it. In the critical process of learning to confront and overcome these contradictions, people realize their ability to shape their own reality, as "through their continuing praxis, men and women simultaneously create history and become historical-social beings" (Freire, 1970, p. 101). Posed with the challenge of educating

young people to develop the critical capacity to sketch out the boundary of themselves in the context of their realities such that they can be transformed, I approach (and pose) the questions in this project with the view that the means and processes at the heart of running, writing, and learning ought be viewed as ends in and of themselves. Immanuel Kant (1993) identified a similar notion in his second formulation of the categorical imperative, compelling humankind to "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means" (p. 30).

Here, I set out to present an institutional educational setting in which curricular goals and outcomes become embedded in the learning experiences intended to bring them about, revealing in the process a curriculum that emerges from expressions of teacher and student learning. As the arrival of the 21st century has introduced a communications revolution that has fundamentally altered the way individuals relate to one another within a truly global community, traditional views of cultural knowledge and citizenship, as well as the pedagogies intended to transmit these values to the next generation, have been challenged to adapt. As responses to these challenges, emergent conceptions of knowledge, citizenship, and pedagogy align to reveal that critical citizenship education must provide experiences in the rehearsal of community-forming and identity expression. Fortunately, the advent of the World Wide Web and the digital age present the possibility of cultivating just this sort of participatory meaning-making, offering rich platforms to supplement the individual learning that cohorts and communities might employ, formally and informally, to define their own contexts of schooling.

Project Overview

This project explores the intersection of citizenship and education in the digital age to produce a framework to support learning communities in process on the open web. Throughout,

the intention is to cultivate opportunities for students to document the development of their own voice and agency within democratic contexts. Building on research conducted into youth voter engagement and their (lack of) participation in democratic processes, theoretical work around the cultivation of a 'critical' citizenship, and recent scholarship in open and digital pedagogy, the unit framework described here seeks to contribute to the creation of a vision for 21st century citizenship learning in the K12 school system. The assignments presented here have been conceived to promote learning that is *of* the age of the web, not merely *on* the web. Digital pedagogies are presented as lenses through which learners (students *and* teachers) can reflect and represent individual responses to existing curriculum generated through classroom activities. Drawing on the traditions of constructivism and an emergent view of knowledge, the project explores the possibilities offered by technology to create opportunities for 21st century citizenship learning.

The project reflects my own learning as a public and networked educator as documented in five years' work online with a professional blog and social media presence, an experience which has helped form the approach guiding my use of technology to support student-learning. The unit framework shared here is intended to present a conception of teaching and learning for critical citizenship in the digital age on the open web.

Learning in public: The networked professional. Six years and several thousand posts ago, I began documenting and publishing my life and learning on a public blog and across various social media: Twitter, Flickr, Youtube, Instagram, and others. Despite an undergraduate education in creative writing, and experience with "closed" social sites such as Facebook, I quickly discovered the empowering benefit of publishing my thinking and reflections on both professional and informal learning on the public web. By engaging with a global dialogue about

matters educational (as well as political, personal, and otherwise), and gaining a familiarity with the diverse means that allow me to share my voice in these discussions, I have seen first hand the potential for open learning practices to transform one's professional autonomy, as well as to amplify questions posed in the process of student-driven classroom inquiry. This project reflects my own learning and values about the process of transformation, and presents a praxis of student learning in the unit framework which follows. Additionally, it invites educators to consider their own digital citizenship and identity alongside those of their students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In the preparation of this project, this review consults diverse sources of scholarship and literature ranging from contemporary educational philosophy and political science, to modern literature, philosophy, and the traditions of critical pedagogy and emergent epistemology. This inquiry considers educational databases, peer-reviewed journals and scholarly blogging, as well as presentations, collaborative learning and social networking to explore key themes and thinking about: citizenship, critical pedagogy, transformative learning, emergent epistemology, constructivism, connectivisim, the digital humanities, personal cyberinfrastructure, open education, networked learning, and the public sphere. Literature reviewed in these fields ranges in date depending on the topic, as digital, pedagogical, or sociological (i.e., pertaining to youth voting patterns) scholarship was limited to the last five, or occasionally 10 years, and literature focused on educational or broader philosophical traditions dates back much further (see: Kant, Foucault, Freire). Given particular prominence in the construction of the project's underlying conceptual framework have been the ERIC and PsychInfo databases, journals concerned with contemporary citizenship, critical pedagogy, and digital culture; an ongoing engagement with public academics, scholars, and colleagues on social media has also greatly shaped the nature of this study.

To establish a conceptual framework, the literature reviewed here presents a view of curriculum reform in a moment of digital shock affecting all aspects of human society, not least education. This moment of digital shock, it is supposed, asks that educational reformers carefully consider the implicit messages that schooling (as well as the wider culture) communicates to young people about the nature of their own citizenship. In so doing, it is hoped that the

educational opportunities created as a result allow for the rehearsal and experience of applying a critical lens to one's culture, and creating unique individual and collective narratives which authentically represent the participants. It is hoped, as well, that students gain an awareness and ability to broaden the base of individuals holding positions of power and influence in the construction of a shared societal narrative. The literature reviewed highlights the prominence of challenging trends toward political apathy and economic oligarchy in North American society (with data suggesting a similar trend across western Europe), and proposes a reclamation of the public sphere that seeks to restore the democratic possibility of continuously reimagining collective identities out of emerging individual perspectives.

With this foundation, the conceptual framework is completed by aligning components of emergent epistemology, critical pedagogy, and transformative learning to present a conception of citizenship as shared fate, a notion which makes possible the critical renovation of democratic society to suit an evolving populace and citizenry. This view of citizenship is supported by the advent of digital communications technology, and the world wide public web, allowing the principles of such a citizenship to be applied to a global populace, inviting the potential for pluralism on an unprecedented scale.

As the advent of the 21st century presents educational stakeholders with rapidly evolving information, economic, and political realities, society encounters a state of "shock" wherein public policy discussions around how to respond to shifting contexts can become overwhelming, and lasting reforms may be implemented without a thorough consideration of their consequences. The directions that are taken during periods of such shocks, the project supposes, hinge upon the quality of the "ideas that are lying around," and with this in mind works to present its notion of critical citizenship in the digital age such that it might be considered by

those discussing 21st century curriculum. In this view, the notion of curriculum – as with citizenship itself – cannot be considered static but rather as a responsive construction of those who are engaged with it: teachers and students, as co-investigators and creators.

A particular challenge facing those who would seek to reform curriculum in the 21st century is facilitating - as part of the institutional design of modern schooling - the realization of truly constructivist practices in making meaning in the classroom setting. By attempting to prescribe the economic, cultural, or practical skills of value to society that policymakers deem ought be included in school curricula, institutions seeking to initiate the continuous pluralist recreation of society itself are posed with the difficulty of delineating between the meanings, dispositions, or cultural practices which are acceptable, and those which are not. As schools provide young people with foundational experiences in the relationship between citizens and the state, as well as between citizens themselves, it becomes important for educators seeking to promote diversity and inclusion to provide opportunities for young people to rehearse the expression of a collective voice that takes into account community narratives and perspectives. In considering the literature, the project explores the possibility that constructivism and an emergent view of knowledge can prepare young people to contribute to an inclusive society that promotes "the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist[s] them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation" (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act, c 24 (4th Supp)*, 1985).

The notion that multiculturalism poses a direct challenge to a static national identity contributes further to the complexity of the 'shock' experienced in developing standardized curriculum in the 21st century, as educators are perpetually compelled to provide an ongoing

process of relation and feedback to individual students and unique classroom communities. However, the project works within a conception of "citizenship as shared fate," wherein individuals and groups engage in a "continuous process of designing, expressing and interpreting their membership in the nation" (Ben-Porath, 2012, p. 382), and places central importance on the praxis of critical reflection and relation to one another; as well, the unit framework strives to realize a pedagogy wherein the competencies at the heart of this learning are experienced directly and articulated by students rather than by being formally taught through a curriculum designed in advance to serve this purpose. To best impart such a mode of citizenship to young people, schools and classrooms are compelled to transform the view of the curriculum from a tradition of standardization toward one in which it is discovered - and created - by unique communities of practice in real time.

Finally, the literature review considers contemporary research into digital pedagogy and open education, and finds evidence to support the notion that the public web and infrastructure of online spaces allow for the democratic and collectivist spirit of pluralism to be practiced in a global public sphere. Literacies of participation, information, and fluency with personal cyber infrastructure are presented as learning experiences in which the meanings created through relating to the curriculum are individually and collectively forged in emergent, real time. This method of meaning-making is not only congruent with democratic principles dating back to the Enlightenment period, it is suggested, but also true to the spirit of the World Wide Web since its inception.

Citizenship Curriculum as a Response to the Digital Shock

As Clay Shirky noted now almost ten years ago, "We are living in the middle of the largest increase in expressive capacity in the history of the human race" (2008, p. 106),

prompting many educational stakeholders to encounter a digital age in which "forms of information have changed drastically" (Simsek & Simsek, 2013, p. 127), inducing what may be viewed as a state of shock. They explain:

> Information is an integral part of daily life in today's society in order for individuals to survive against information-related requirements. Production of knowledge requires different skills than those necessary for producing goods. Thus, the concept of shock could be interpreted partly as the feelings of the confusions of people, being aware of not having necessary skills for the new literacies. (p. 127)

While pervasive across the affected culture, this type of societal confusion represents an opportunity to reform collective enterprises including, but certainly not limited to, monetary policy and public schooling. Naomi Klein notes in *The Shock Doctrine* (2008) that such 'shocks' are opportunities for radical interventions in policy reform, citing the champion of neoliberal capitalism Milton Friedman's admission that "Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around" (p. 166). This holds true as schools look to encounter the shock of producing a curriculum for the digital age, as David Berry highlights "the plasticity of digital forms and the way in which they point toward a new way of working with representation and mediation [...] whereby one is able to approach culture in a radically new way" (2011, p. 1).

Educationists and those who would ensure that the educational "ideas that are lying around" in the midst of such a shock ought consider critically the role that curriculum plays in adequately equipping young people to inherit and recreate a society that reflects Canadian pluralist ideals: a skillset and disposition we might broadly encapsulate as "citizenship." This

project outlines a particular conception of citizenship curriculum for the digital age that it might be an "idea lying around" as stakeholders look to reform education in the 21st century. The citizenship proposed here intends to address inequalities inherent in democratic systems by helping bring about the "full and active participation of each member of society" promised by the *Multicultural Act of Canada* (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act, c 24 (4th Supp)*, 1985), as well as the representation of all members of Canadian society in the ongoing construction of the national identity.

> Integral to this conception of citizenship learning is the notion that
>
> "Young people learn at least as much about democracy and citizenship – including their own citizenship – through their participation in a range of different practices that make up their lives, as they learn from that which is officially prescribed and formally taught" (Biesta, Lawy, & Kelly, 2009, p. 3).

In looking to design educational opportunities in which young people can experience authentic citizenship learning, curriculum cannot be bound to a static perception of content, skills, or outcomes, but rather must emerge from an exploration of the lives of young people (see: Freire, Osberg, Biesta). As a result, the project considers forces impacting the democratic realities of youth, and looks to allow for the creation of a new narrative of citizenship learning to emerge in the process of the unit framework outlined here.

Apathy and Oligarchy in the Public Sphere

Two forces at work in North American society at the outset of the 21st century present a troubling prospect for those considering the citizenship education of Canadian youth in an era of digital shock: those of apathy and oligarchy. Research into both the perceived and actual influence of individuals on the political process reveals a body politic that is, even if motivated

to effect political change, ill-inspired to participate in the process of electoral politics (Howe, 2007). In the era of the Occupy Wall Street movement (Calhoun, 2013), carbon divestment campaigns at major North American universities (McKibben, 2013), and public demonstrations against austerity measures implemented across Europe (Della Porta, 2015), young people demonstrate signs of being politically engaged and *do* act in political ways (MacKinnon, Pitre, & Watling, 2007, p. 5). However, in North American contexts, these trends fail to affect significant political change due to downward voting trends and the rise of an influential financial and media elite.

While it acknowledges that "Participating in elections is the essential starting point of any democratic system," Elections Canada's own working paper on the Electoral Participation of Young Canadians (Howe, 2007, p. 5) cites a characterization of the nation's youth as "political dropouts," building on the dour findings of Ottilia Chareka and Alan Sears (2015) that even though "Youth understand voting as a key element of democratic governance, a hard won democratic right, and a duty of democratic citizenship […], most indicate they do not plan to vote because voting does not make a difference" (p. 521). The paper notes that despite being politically *in*active when it comes to voting habits, young Canadians are more inclined toward other forms of political engagement - political rallies, demonstrations, or public awareness campaigns and petitions - that offer encouraging signs that positive change may be possible. McKinnon, Pitre, and Watling (2007) similarly observe that "youth have tended to reframe engagement in more individual and less institutional terms" (p. iii), which may create a more engaged voting block as the millennial generation comes of age.

In the meantime however, available data presents a troubling landscape. Drawing on Election Canada Studies (1997, 2000, 2004, 2006, and 2008), Blais and Loewen (2011) note that

"[voter] turnout decline is a long-term phenomenon" and "that this trend is not unique to Canada" (p. 13). The authors observe that "At least two-thirds of new voters would cast a ballot in the 1960s; by 2004 it was about one third" (p. 12), and explore different possibilities leading to such a declining interest in voting, ranging from gender, to marital status, to socioeconomic class and religious affiliation, finding inconclusive data to support a case that any of these factors in isolation could prove the cause of the trend. Similarly, the political contexts affecting youth attitudes toward the democratic process - the tone of campaigns or partisan advertising, the competitiveness of electoral contests, or narrow interests represented by national political parties - fail to yield a singular cause of disenchantment among youth voters. However, "There is ample evidence that the attitudes and values of recent generations are different from those of their predecessors and that this change is in good part responsible for the recent turnout decline" (p. 18).

This disinterest in the franchise of voting itself threatens to amplify the trend Gilens and Page (2014) identify in the United States wherein the political economy has been transformed into (or returned to) an oligarchy, where "mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence" (p. 565). "When a majority of citizens disagrees with economic elites or with organized interests," they write, "they generally lose" (p. 576). While many are quick to champion the levelling or democratisation that digital tools have brought the global public sphere (see subsequent sections of Literature Review), recent trends in the privatisation of educational resources (Ball, Thrupp, & Forsey, 2010), the revelation of corporate cooperation with government surveillance (Lee, 2013), and the strident defense of private intellectual property that might otherwise benefit the common good (May, 2013) are less inspiring.

Habermas (1991) describes the rise of the period leading to the establishment of our modern democratic institutions as having created the bourgeois public sphere, where "for the first time in history, individuals and groups could shape public opinion, giving direct expression to their needs and interests while influencing political practice" (Kellner, 2000, p. 263). However, the course of Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1991) charts "the path from a public critically reflecting on its culture to one that merely consumes it" (p. 175), which aptly describes the findings of the previous paragraph. Kellner notes, however, that "Habermas offered tentative proposals to revitalize the public sphere by setting 'in motion a critical process of public communication through the very organizations that mediatize it (1989a, p. 232)" (p. 65), a sentiment which underlies the motivation for this project to explore the role that the experimentation with and the discovery of one's voice within digital spaces might play in the citizenship development of young people, as well as the reclamation of the public sphere.

Indeed, a 2007 synthesis report of the Canadian Policy Research Networks series of papers, entitled "Charting the Course for Youth Civic and Political Participation," cites schools, "and, more precisely, civics or citizenship education – both in content and pedagogy – as being both a significant cause of and solution for declining political knowledge and skills" (MacKinnon et al., 2007, p. 15). The authors note that "educational institutions, governments, political parties, politicians, the community sector and youth themselves" must collectively engage in the process of citizenship learning, a dynamic process which is not simply an act of "transferring knowledge from one generation to another – rather, it is about embracing youth as co-creators and partners in renewing civil and democratic life in Canada" (p. vi). In concert with the critical framework for citizenship learning outlined here, the report stresses that,

As young people reflect on their civic and political roles, it is clear that many of them

must first find their own identity as a Canadian[.] They need opportunities to practice being a citizen – through discussion and debate, at home, in schools and in their own and broader communities. (p. vi)

Toward a Critical Citizenship

Within this modern context, it is important to not conceive of curriculum - as with citizenship - as something static. Rather, as a pluralist society demands a citizenry capable of fostering greater and greater inclusivity, a primary concern of schooling and curriculum becomes the practice and realization of social constructivism. Indeed, if young people are to learn to co-create individual and collective identities across social, ethnic, economic, and geographic classes, the development of such critical capacities takes on a singular importance in educating for citizenship as diverse populations seek unity and common purpose despite deep differences. This results in a conception of citizenship that begins to bear emergent properties as the national identity is fluidly forged from an ever-changing sum of its constituent parts. Just as such a view of citizenship presents a contradiction to those looking to inculcate a national identity in its populace, Osberg and Biesta (2008) similarly challenge those looking toward curriculum development to consider that,

> If we hold that meaning is emergent, and we insist on a strict interpretation of emergence (i.e. what emerges is more than the sum of its parts and therefore not predictable from the 'ground' it emerges from) then the idea that educators can (or should) control the meanings that emerge in the classroom becomes problematic. In other words, the notion of emergent meaning is incompatible with the idea of education, traditionally conceived. Emergent meaning - if it exists - is incompatible with the idea of education as *planned enculturation.* (p. 317)

Forty years ago, Paulo Freire (1970) met with a similar contradiction in proposing an educational philosophy to supplant what he called the "banking approach" to education, wherein knowledge and meanings are transferred (or deposited) into learners' thoughts. Viewing such deposits as oppressive limitations upon the realities of the recipient-students, Freire set about describing a critical praxis through which citizens would investigate and re-create their own realities: "To investigate the generative theme," he wrote, "is to investigate the people's thinking about reality and people's action upon reality, which is their praxis," adding: "The more active an attitude men and women take in regard to the exploration of their thematics, the more they deepen their critical awareness of reality and, in spelling out those thematics, take possession of that reality" (p. 87). Freire proposed a methodology very much in line with the emergent view of knowledge described by Osberg and Biesta, where "**knowledge** is neither a representation of something more 'real' than itself, nor an 'object' that can be transferred from one place to the next" (p. 313). Rather, such a view holds that knowledge "in other words, does not exist except in our participatory actions" (p. 313). Within an epistemological framework of emergence, curriculum is created as participants engage in their individual and shared inquiries, which together bring about the emergence of knowledge. Freire described a curriculum which "constantly expands and renews itself" as students investigate their generative themes:

> The task of the dialogical teacher in an interdisciplinary team working on the thematic universe revealed by their investigation is to "re-present" that universe to the people from whom she or he received it – and "re-present" it not as a lecture, but as a problem. (p. 109)

By resolving the contradiction at the heart of such educative problems, students experience the transformation Gregory Bateson (1972) outlined in his hierarchy of learning, a

process of five stages beginning with Learning 0, characterized by "responding to stimuli but making no changes based on experience or information" (Tosey, 2006, p. 6) and leading to Learning IV, which "probably does not occur in any adult living organism on this earth" (p. 3). While Learning IV may be seen to represent the evolution of a species into a genetic descendent, the crux of Bateson's transformative learning arises in Learning III, which learners encounter "driven by contraries at level II" (p. 3). In presenting Bateson's hierarchy as a possible framework for transformative learning, Tosey frames this view of Bateson by citing Bredo (1989), observing that "The 'problem' to which third-order learning is a 'solution' consists of systematic contradictions in experience" (p. 35, as cited in Tosey, 2006, p. 3). It is here that we glimpse the limit-situation described by Freire (see: Chapter 1), and after which the critical praxis is begun again anew.

Reconciling a view of curriculum within such an emergent sense of knowledge presents a similar challenge to the "third-order learning" needed to cultivate an evolving multicultural citizenship, and it is unsurprising to find an orientation toward process-oriented, critical solutions is suggested to best resolve contradictions in each of these domains. Schools striving to prepare young citizens for participation in the democratic process ought consider the fluid state of citizenship in the national sense, and reflect on how this view is represented in the school space. In addition to crafting a curriculum suited to enabling critical and emergent learning, schools in such pluralist democracies "are expected to celebrate the diversity of the student body, but also to minimize it by developing civic capacity and a host of shared dimensions" (Ben-Porath, 2012, p. 382). Ben-Porath confronts this tension with an "alternative, national membership [...] conceptualized here as shared fate - a relational, process-oriented, dynamic affiliation that arises from the cognitive perceptions as well as from the preferences and actions of members" (p. 382).

By conceiving of citizenship as shared fate, schools are able to formulate a curricular response

consistent with principles of emergent knowledge and Freire's critical praxis. Citizenship is no

longer a vision of national unity or virtue, but exists as the assemblage of "visions, practices and

processes that make up the civic body through engaging individuals and groups in the continuous

process of designing, expressing and interpreting their membership in the nation" (p. 382).

	POLITICS / Ideology	SOCIAL / Collective	SELF / Subjectivity	PRAXIS / Engagement
Knowledge	Knowledge and understanding of histories, societies, systems, oppression and injustices, power structures and macrostructural relationships.	Knowledge of interconnections between culture, power and transformation; non-mainstream writings and ideas in addition to dominant discourses.	Knowledge of own position, cultures and context; sense of identity.	Knowledge of how collectively to effect systemic change; how knowledge itself is power; how behaviour influences society and injustice.
Skills	Skills of criticism and structure social analysis; capacity to politicise notions of culture, knowledge and power; capacity to investigate deeper causalities.	Skills in dialogue, cooperation and interaction; skills in critical interpretations of others' viewpoints; capacity to think holistically.	Capacity to reflect critically on one's 'status' within communities and society; independent critical thinking; speaking with one's own voice.	Skills of critical thinking and active participation; skills in acting collectively to challenge the status quo; ability to imagine a better world.
Values	Commitment to values against injustice and oppression.	Inclusive dialogical relationship with others' identities and values.	Concern for social justice and consideration of self-worth.	Informed, responsible and ethical action and reflection.
Dispositions	Actively questioning; critical interest in society and public affairs; seeks out and acts against injustice.	Socially aware; cooperative; responsible towards self and others; willing to learn with others.	Critical perspective; autonomous; responsible in thought, emotion and action; forward-thinking; in touch with reality.	Commitment and motivation to change society; civic courage; responsibility for decisions and actions.

Table 1. Framework for critical citizenship education. From "Towards a Framework for

Critical Citizenship Education," Johnson and Morris (2010).

Johnson and Morris (2010) suggest a framework (see table 1) for such critical citizenship

education by synthesizing literature concerned with citizenship education, critical pedagogy, and critical thinking "for analysing and comparing curricula which promote forms of critical citizenship" (p. 90). In a table highlighting distinct elements of critical pedagogy on the horizontal-axis, and "Corgan et al.'s (2002, 4) useful definition of citizenship/civics education as 'the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions of citizens'" (p. 87) across vertical categories, the authors present "a working, flexible model of critical citizenship, open to reinterpretation and adaptation" (p. 90). The authors suggest the base knowledge, skills, values and dispositions in addressing elements of critical pedagogy: the political, social, self, and praxis, creating a point of departure for the unit framework presented here.

Critical Citizenship for the Digital Age

This project builds on these notions of a process-oriented citizenship curriculum by bringing them into the digital age. As communicative technology has altered how people relate to both information and one another, humankind is forced to reimagine both knowledge and citizenship in contemporary society. "In the digital age," Simsek and Simsek (2013) write, "it is a vital requisite to fully understand and use the capacity of new information and communication technologies" (p. 128). Where prior media landscapes - print, film and radio - forced citizens to make meaning based on limited societal authorship, literacies arising in the 21st century "differ from the previous ones, mainly due to their operational, interactive, and user-based technological characteristics" (p. 129). Epistemologically, the creation of cultural narratives and realities has been urged away from a minority authorship toward what Sidorkin (2000) describes as "polyphony, the principle of engaged co-existence of multiple yet unmerged voices" (p. 5). Thus the communications revolution calls upon schools to foster the discovery and synthesis of diverse voices in the service of citizenship learning, something digital tools are well-suited to

provide, as "the free flow of information through new technologies is consistent with the requirements of deliberative democracy and corresponding citizenship practices" (Simsek & Simsek, 2013, p. 130).

In a seminal essay in the movement toward open 21st century education, Gardner Campbell (2009) builds on Marshall McLuhan to explore the message at work in the medium of the World Wide Web. "Print is not advanced calligraphy," he writes. "The web is not a more sophisticated telegraph" (p. 58). To better interpret curriculum in the digital age, Campbell suggests the idea of "personal cyberinfrastructure," where students are assigned and provided with their own web servers and domain names, and then proceed - through the course of their institutional educational experience - to "build out their digital presences in an environment made of the medium itself," allowing them to "shape their own cognition, learning, expression, and reflection in a digital age, in a digital medium" (p. 59). Citizenship education, in this view, is enabled by educators and institutions willing to exemplify the participatory culture required by democracy, and which is essential to the information landscape of the digital age:

> if what the professor truly wants is for students to discover and craft their own desires and dreams, a personal cyberinfrastructure provides the opportunity. To get there, students must be effective architects, narrators, curators, and inhabitants of their own digital lives. Students with this kind of digital fluency will be well-prepared for creative and responsible leadership in the post-Gutenberg age. Without such fluency, students cannot compete economically or intellectually, and the astonishing promise of the digital medium will never be fully realized. (Campbell, 2009, p. 59)

Stewart (2013) similarly describes an "ethos of participation" grounding many open educational experiences, as she notes that, "To be digitally literate is to be able to engage the

connections and communications possibilities of digital technologies, in their capacity to generate, remix, repurpose, and share new knowledge as well as simply deliver existing information." However, Groom and Lamb (Groom & Lamb, 2014) counter these attempts at optimism in their description of "innovation fatigue" taking over education in 2014: "As institutional demands for enterprise services such as e-mail, student information systems, and the branded website become mission-critical, the notion of building and re-imagining the open web gets lost" in a preoccupation with "what's necessary rather than what's possible," as institutional decisions are further driven by private capital and interests that fall outside those of education for the public good (para 12). If education for citizenship is to be concerned with the "analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" (Foucault, 1984, p. 50), educators must seek the promise of openness, not only in technology but society itself. Chief engineer of the World Wide Web, Tim Berniers-Lee, described the necessity of seeking an open Internet as central to the democratic project: "Unless we have an open, neutral internet […] we can't have open government, good democracy, good healthcare, connected communities and diversity of culture" (Kiss, 2014). Groom and Lamb note that "It is well within the power of educators to play a decisive role in the battle for the future of the web," even if this will "require an at-times inconvenient commitment to the fundamental principles of openness, ownership, and participation" (2014).

Chapter 3: A Unit Plan of One's Own

Overview

RSS Feeds - RSS (Rich Site Summary; originally RDF Site Summary; often called Really Simple Syndication), uses a family of standard web feed formats to publish frequently updated information: blog entries, news headlines, audio, video. [W]	(Blog) Pages - Pages are static. That means that the information displayed on a page doesn't change, or doesn't change often. A great example of a page would be the About or Contact Us section of a website. [P]
Blog - A blog (a truncation of the expression weblog) is a discussion or informational site published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete entries ("posts") typically displayed in reverse chronological order (the most recent post appears first). [W]	Subtweet - (On Twitter) a post that refers to a particular user without directly mentioning them. [O]
(Blog) Categories - Categories provide a helpful way to group related posts together, and to quickly tell readers what a post is about. Categories also make it easier for people to find your content. Categories are similar to, but broader than, tags.[P]	Google Form - Google Forms is a tool that allows collecting information from users via a personalized survey or quiz. The information is then collected and automatically connected to a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet is populated with the survey and quiz responses.[W]
(Blog) Tags - Tags provide a useful way to group related posts together and to quickly tell readers what a post is about. Tags also make it easier for people to find your content. Tags are similar to, but more specific than, categories. The use of tags is completely optional. [P]	Hashtags - A hashtag is a type of label or metadata tag used on social network and microblogging services which makes it easier for users to find messages with a specific theme or content.[W]

Figure 1. Terms of use. Introductory definitions to vocabulary in Chapter 3.

This chapter presents a unit framework to cultivate critical citizenship learning for the digital age. By introducing unit components that are adaptable to diverse subject areas and student ages, these assignments and overall structure allow teachers and learners to adapt this

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[W] Defined by Wikipedia.org.

[O] Defined by Oxforddictionaries.com.

[P] Defined by Wordpress.org.

framework to their unique purposes. Throughout the unit praxis, participants are asked to document and create artefacts of their learning for personal and collective reflection, and to serve as new points of future departure. The unit plan can follow the critical praxis of action and reflection indefinitely, allowing further and further growth and development, both on an individual and collective level for as long as one chooses to engage with it.

To facilitate this process, the project encourages educators to enact this unit's lessons within a digital context; however, the basic framework will apply without technology, and can be adapted to physical, face-to-face space. In adopting digital space, teachers may consider multiple avenues, not limited to those described here:

Personal Blogs. A classroom in which students are provided their own individual blogs can allow them to cultivate a digital footprint of their own, designing layout, themes, title and general tone of writing across categories and disciplines. As well, by using platforms which allow it, individual data can be exported and can continue to be the intellectual property of the students who created it. This provides students with ownership over their own educational data that reaches beyond the institution, while allowing control and agency over their digital identity and footprint. Beyond creating individual students' sites, teachers can foster classroom community voice by aggregating the RSS feeds from each of the blogs into a single site – i.e., Wordpress with FeedWordpress plugin. Comments posted on class blogs can be aggregated as well. With Wordpress multi-site, this may take the shape depicted in *Figure 2.*
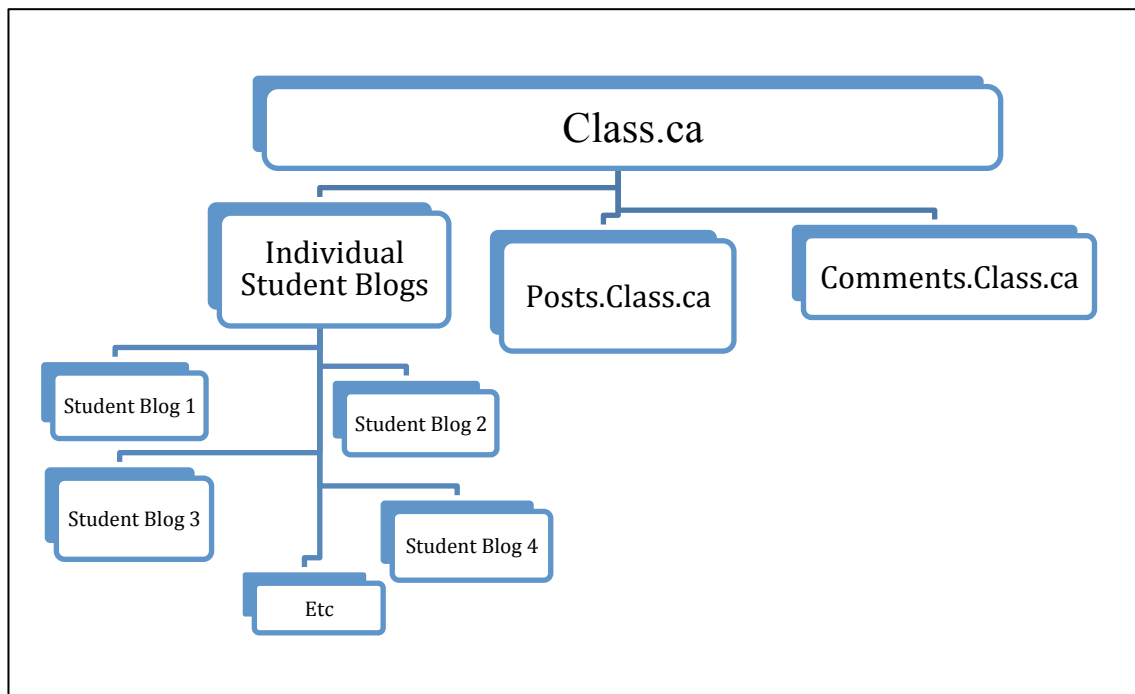
Figure 2. Class blog RSS bundle organizers**.** This figure shows the relationship between main class site, and sub-sites.

Teachers may incorporate other social media – Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, etc. – into their assignments and projects; however, it will be helpful to link, archive, and curate these learnings on individual blogs such that these disparate postings can be collected and curated in a single space.

Class Blogs. While the individual blog model may serve teachers of linear (year-long) courses, those faced with shorter semesters may seek the expediency of a single class site with multiple student authors. The use of a single class blog will make the reading and discussions arising around posts and readings more centralized and easier to follow than a distributed collection of individual blogs. However, by organizing posts with the use of tags and categories, student work can be sorted by author(s), as well as topics or corresponding units. Additionally, a

class site's pages may be devoted to the cultivation of student portfolios, where links, summaries, and reflections on work throughout the term can be collected.

Other Social Media. Many other media offer tools for curating a variety of digital publications and artefacts, whether micro-blogging platforms such as Twitter, photo-sharing sites like Flickr or Instagram, video networks such as Youtube, Vine, or a host of other networks and platforms. Students and teachers may employ a range of different tools to represent and reflect upon learning across these platforms, and archive (or not) the results for further study. Within many of these social platforms, the use of tagging, or hash-tags, can be used to collect and organize related posts. Similarly, on Twitter, sub-tweeting allows the medium's 140-character limit to be expanded into longer threads of related posts (by the original author, or others). As well, social aggregator sites such as Storify can be helpful in curating divergent social media stories across platforms and media.

Analogue. While aspects of the digital age allow empowering learning documents to be shared within the learning community, analogue means of collecting artefacts of student learning can work within this unit framework as well. Journal entries, notes collected with pen and paper, collages, dioramas, and other three-dimensional creations can each provide the opportunity to represent and reflect upon learning as a critical praxis is established throughout a course of study.

The Role of the Teacher (or Class) Blog

As it offers the full potential for cultivating critical citizenship for the digital age, the framework below works within a personal blog format to allow maximally student-owned content. Within this classroom environment, the teacher may also curate their own blog (or

contribute to a class blog collected along with the aggregated student posts). Here, the teacher can model "lead learning" and document an engagement with their own critical praxis, articulating the goals for personal or class learning within the context of the unit, reflecting on elements of pedagogy or lesson design, as well as linking to and highlighting student blogging to synthesize emergent details in the unit's "generative themes" (presented on pages 20/21 in chapter two).

Unit Components

This proposed unit plan for assessment includes opportunities to document individual learning in diverse forms and media on individual blogs. It is intended that by collecting a record of learning across various units, these documents will help contribute to a larger, summative syntheses of learning such as a midterm or final examination. In these documents, students may choose to capture learning in a variety of ways: blogged text, handwritten notes, audio or video reflections, social media updates (Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, or others). At each stage, so long as the intention and record of one's thinking can be tagged, categorized, and curated appropriately on the individual (or class) blog, the documents will serve the larger outcomes in the course of study.

At a minimal level, the first position and reflection / self-assessment assignments introduced in this chapter will continue to drive a critical praxis of individual expression and reflection, while other aspects described below (including the Midterm / Final Examination) can be added or taken away from units as time and context deem necessary.

First position.

Objective: To 'capture' ourselves at the outset of the unit / lesson / activity.

Key Questions:

- What are my first impressions of the topic?

- What do I / we know about the topic already?

- What do I wish to know about the topic?

- What questions do I have?

- How will I go about finding answers to these questions?

- Why is it important for me to find answers to these questions?

In this introductory post, base knowledge and initial questions are outlined. Following an initial encounter with the unit objectives (through a class discussion, lecture, reading or individual research), this post seeks to set goals and outline personal intentions for the learning to come, including how the achievement of these goals might be realized. As even at the outset of a unit, a student's "first" position comes as the resolution of previous learning, it is important to highlight the importance of reflection at this stage and connect emerging themes and questions to prior lessons or experiences.

Document of learning in progress.

Objective: To make a record of learning as it is unfolding.

Key Questions:

- What did I set out to find?

- What am I finding?

- What has thus far been successful / interesting / of value?

- What has thus far been challenging / disappointing / confusing?

- Has this experience revealed any new questions?

As students (and perhaps teachers) look to document learning that is in progress, it is important to look both backwards and forwards. Checking in on one's original intentions, and making plans to progress further, offers the opportunity to reflect upon and assess individual learning, as well as to recalibrate goals toward emergent inquiries and outcomes. In addition to this point of reflection on individual learning, the document of learning in progress allows for further engagement with peers' work, and the chance to synthesize collective narratives around shared themes or topics of study.

Planning for summative assessment.

Objective: To propose possible means of demonstrating and sharing one's learning at the conclusion of the unit. This stage can be utilized for individual, as well as group/class planning.

Key Questions:

- How will I/we best be able to demonstrate or represent my/our learning during this unit?

- Is there a particular medium of presentation which suits the topic, lesson, or personal/collective theme at the heart of the unit?

- What are the possibilities or challenges associated with these various forms?

It is important at this juncture of a particular unit for students to outline appropriate forms of representing their knowledge at the culmination of the unit, whether within a common set of expectations, or as individual expressions of learning. While this stage of a unit and brainstorming / goal-setting of this type may be completed through discussion, and may not ultimately demand to be archived for future reflection, it can be helpful for reflection and self-assessment of summative experiences where what emerges goes well beyond (or below) original

expectations. Charting how these expectations are met, or not, by looking back on these previously stated goals, can offer specific direction in future opportunities.

Summative capture.

Objective: To record or document one's effort in a final expression or representation – whether as an essay, dramatic, collaborative, or explanatory presentation, or experiential project – of summative learning for the unit. As the reflection and self-assessment stage of the unit plan seeks to synthesize unit learning surrounding summative exams and presentations, documenting these learning experiences in digital form is not an essential element of the unit's design. The objects which are created to represent emergent learning can often lose meaning outside of their immediate contexts, and as such it is not imperative to have these summative representations documented on an individual blog. The challenge to capture the summative experience or effort should not interfere with the quality of the examination or participation in the experience in the first place. Rather, it is important to use these objects and experiences as prompts for reflection, self-assessment, and future goal setting. If the archiving can be bent to serve unit objectives while developing digital literacies and means of expression, indeed, then so much the better. However, digital curation should not impede the central objectives of the summative assignment.

Key Questions:

- Does the summative activity, project or presentation lend itself to digital archiving?

- Can the means of digitally preserving the summative learning become part of the process of creation and supportive of the overall unit objectives?

Reflection / self-assessment.

Objective: To engage in metacognitive critical thinking about the process that has unfolded during the unit.

Key Questions:

- What have been the main learnings (personal or collective) throughout this process? What will you remember about this experience?

- During which aspect of the assignment do you feel that you did your best work? Describe the process which led to this success.

- During which aspect of the unit do you feel you did work which you feel that you could improve? Describe the process which would lead to this improvement.

- Who helped you in achieving your success in this unit? How?

This reflective aspect of the unit may or may not be published to the individual public blog. However, it is important that this stage of the unit is executed, as it provides the required impetus to synthesize both personal and collective themes into unit lessons that can provide the first positions in subsequent units and learning. In addition to publicly posted reflections and self-assessment, discussions on these topics conducted in private (on an individual or class basis) can similarly lead to powerful learning.

A digital tool that can aid in the private collection of student reflection and goal setting is Google Forms, which allows teachers to gather survey responses to a variety of questions surrounding unit outcomes in a single spreadsheet or range of data representations. The documents created through these anonymized reflections can produce useful compendiums of classroom learning which can be used to produce themes of success or struggle, and highlight the

work of peers which might otherwise go unheralded.

Midterm / final examination.

Objective: To look back on multiple units, a term of study, or an academic year, and synthesize major themes and concepts encountered during the course of learning.

Key Questions:

- Which learning outcomes – personal, curricular, or emergent – have I have learned particularly effectively?

- Which documents and evidence of my learning can be used to support these claims?

- Which aspects of the learning have been particularly challenging, or unsuccessful?

- How will I make use of the learning that has taken place here in my future schooling, employment, citizenship and life?

In this larger summative opportunity, students are invited to reflect upon and synthesize individual and collective narratives of learning that take into account successive cycles of the critical praxis. Here, there is an ability to contextualize and reframe even unsuccessful efforts into moments of beginning, where the ultimate lessons of a term or course can be identified and begin to take root. And by inviting peers to continue offering feedback – whether in posts to a public blog, comments on a physical representation, portfolio, collage of learning, or presentation to the learning community – those who have played integral parts in an interdependent journey of discovery remain included in the process.

Assessment Methods, Feedback, and Grades

Assessment methods. As students and participants in this type of unit plan are being asked to formulate personal and collective goals for study, it is important that assignment criteria and feedback are similarly placed in their hands. In attempting to instil a classroom community with an authentic critical praxis of inquiry and expression, educators must bear in mind Osberg and Biesta's (2008) advice that "if educators wish to encourage the emergence of meaning in the classroom, then the meanings that emerge in classrooms cannot and should not be pre-determined before the 'event' of their emergence" (p. 314). By enlisting students in the creation of rubrics to guide various assignments, classroom expectations and aims are owned by the students to whose academic work they will be applied, and, as the tool shapes the task, oriented toward creating more autonomy and consensus-building ability within the group.

There is a tension, if not an outright contradiction, between this approach and the reality of government prescribed outcomes, as pure constructivist emergence encounters the societally-endorsed skills and topics embedded in government curricula. The resolution of this tension requires a move toward the creation of personal connections between students and the government-prescribed outcomes, with teachers transparent in their role as conduits and guides in revealing a unique encounter between each student (and cohort) and their schooling. By giving government curricula over to the students, and having individuals and classes generate criteria based on both existing and emergent outcomes, expectations can be determined around the best use of each assignment in a unit. A daily 'pop quiz,' developed by Gardner Campbell, stresses the daily engagement that cannot help but generate content and reflection in the unit assignments (see Figure 2: *Philosophy Pop Quiz*). While the quiz's subjective self-assessment makes it unsuitable for generating marks, it remains a reflective and motivational means of

directing student attention and energy toward authentic inquiries into the curriculum. By regularly beginning class meetings with the quiz, students engage with prescribed outcomes and readings, as well as their own emergent inquiries and understanding of these topics. Their respective score on the quiz highlights the value of habitual engagement with course materials, and personal learning.

To develop a useful and flexible rubric for the types of assignments outlined here, teachers can facilitate discussion to generate criteria divided into three areas:

- Unit Content: What are the prescribed outcomes to be learned, represented, demonstrated?

- Personal Inquiry: How is the learning of personal value or interest? Are there connections to prior learning or ongoing inquiries?

- Aesthetic Presentation: How ought the learning object at hand be created? Is there a potential form that might best suit the assignment's content?

Philosophy Pop Quiz

1. Did you read the assigned material for today's class carefully? (No – 0, Yes, once – 1, Yes more than once – 2)

2. Did you come to class today with questions or with items you're eager to discuss? (No – 0, Yes, one – 1, Yes, more than one – 2)

3. Since we last met, did you talk at length to a classmate, or classmates about either the last class meeting or today's meeting? (No – 0, Yes, one person – 1, Yes, more than one person – 2)

4. Since our last meeting, did you read any unassigned material related to this course of study? (No – 0, Yes, one item – 1, Yes, more than one item – 2)

5. Since our last meeting, how much time have you spent reflecting on this course of study and recent class meetings? (None to 29 minutes – 0, 30 minutes to one hour – 1, Over an hour – 2)

Figure 3. Philosophy Pop Quiz. Questions to guide daily inquiries.

Feedback. The process surrounding feedback is generated by having students share and engage in dialogue around various documents of learning, whether introductory posts, plans for summative pieces or presentations, or those summative experiences themselves. At each stage, students are asked to highlight areas of success and possibilities for future growth, and as a habitual process of commenting on, questioning, and discussing peers' work emerges, so too does an organic feedback loop arise between classmates, propelling inquiries further.

During summative efforts, these comments and feedback can become points of reflection and self-assessment; however, for introductory or in-progress documents of learning, such comments and questions can optimally contribute to the improvement of student work in real time. Having come to agreement about assignment criteria and expectations for a particular document of learning, classmates can be assigned a small group of peers with whom they can share commentary and feedback. The focus of these comments and questions is to raise –

through dialogue – opportunities for the original author to improve their level of achievement relative to the agreed-upon assignment criteria.

For example, an introductory assignment in a biographical study of a historic figure may ask that students briefly introduce the person's life and historical period, as well as any initial questions they hope the study may resolve. In this model, a rubric can be developed with student input to target content areas, personal inquiry, and aesthetic expectations. By grouping students into 'comment groups,' the class can move forward with feedback by recognizing areas where peers have failed to meet, met, or exceeded various assignment expectations, and engage in dialogue – asking questions, drawing connections, and furthering discussion – via face-to-face or blogged commentary such that the post's author might (through that dialogue with their peers) progress toward better meeting the assignment criteria.

Through this process of regular, community-generated feedback, students work toward a proficiency to engage in constructive dialogue oriented toward heightened and critical self-discovery and expression. Working together to build their own – as well as their peers' – understanding, collective narratives of learning are generated.

Grades.   This unit framework places high importance on a process-oriented, personalized learning that presents a challenge when looking to assess student learning relative to government-mandated curriculum, and grading standards. However, such institutional 'reports' can be framed as regular opportunities to assess progress in developing an individual critical praxis corresponding to a given curriculum, rather than the demonstration or retention of a given set of skills or facts. As such, the unit framework resists the tradition that compels us to assign each piece of academic work a numerical grade, and emphasizes more holistic

achievement indicators, according to student-generated rubric criteria: not yet meeting, meeting, fully meeting, or exceeding expectations.
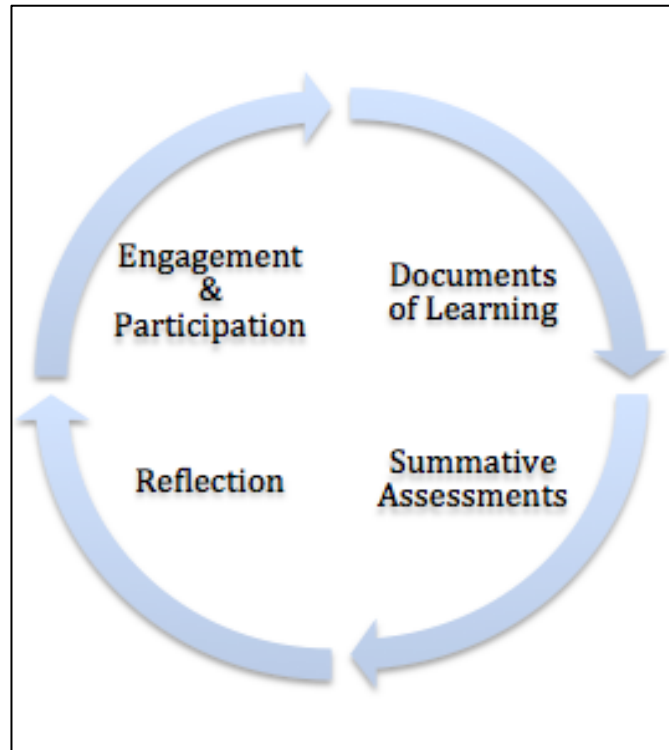

Figure 4. Critical praxis for assessment. Categories
to be considered in attributing marks to student

As daily engagement and participation create documents of learning, and lead to summative assessments that can become points of reflection and further goal setting, teacher and student are gathering data which can be used in the furthering of educational ends – those which are handed down from institutional documents and government curricula, as well as that which is generated within the learning community itself.

Chapter 4: Discussion of the Project

Summary

This project presents a unit framework for critical citizenship for the digital age. It addresses youth apathy in democracy, cultivates student voice and engagement in collective affairs, prepares critical thinking to produce emergent knowledge, and uses digital tools to leverage individual publishing and global communication. Building on sociological research and educational philosophy concerned with democracy and postmodern conceptions of citizenship and critical pedagogy, the unit framework presented here contains a series of assignments that can be employed in the development of critical skills such as self-expression and community building.

The assignment sequence can be used within a variety of units and lessons, with any age of student(s); while the metacognitive challenge of many of the assignments may need to be adapted to the younger grades, establishing a cycle of inquiry, action, and reflection at an early age may create lasting habits of mind that will be useful in later years of development. Beginning with an 'establishing snapshot' of the learner's existing knowledge and thoughts about a topic at hand, emerging questions and goals for study in the coming unit, the plan presented here includes optional elements leading toward a variety of summative opportunities to represent learning. Following this summative effort, a self-assessing and reflective assignment provides the turn to extend an individual unit's learning toward future work and the continuation of a critical praxis.

The unit plan is arranged to provide individual students opportunities in documenting and reflecting upon their individual growth, as well as nurturing collective insights and meaning-making among a community of peers. This process of developing individual voice and in

shaping that of one's community is central to the democratic ideals of critical ontology and the Enlightenment values described in chapter one.

Professional Beliefs and Educational Philosophy

As a result of conducting this project, I have seen my professional beliefs and educational philosophy evolve and develop more nuance in their aims and objectives. I still feel that our institutions have lagged behind the progression of society's social, political, epistemological and technological orders, and that individual teachers' work to transgress institutional limitations and boundaries can be of great value in creating worthy schools for the 21st century. However, I have also come to realize that our institutions *are* able to address these challenges if communities of willing teachers, administrators, students, and parents take ownership over and engage meaningfully in their own communities of practice. My own role in this institutional response has also become more clearly organized, cogent, and grounded in theory as a result of conducting this project.

Within any system, the progressive inclination can often become compelled toward anarchy as the paradoxical value of freedom comes into conflict with the necessity of uniformity in implementation. Just as this presents a challenge in our modern democracies, so too does it challenge our schools. The progressive citizen or educator confronts a system (of government or schooling) which itself is resistant to change as a matter of necessity, but which is still founded upon principles of renovation and revolution. As more and more participants in the system are drawn to apathy as a result of the complexity of these machinations, it is easy to feel that nothing short of a baby-with-the-bathwater sea change in course will create the conditions for sustainable growth and progress. In the years prior to my engagement with these graduate studies and this project, I often felt the urge of this anarchic sentiment as an undercurrent in my educational

philosophy. This tension, I have come to realize through an analysis of pedagogy, transformative learning, and critical ontology, is symptomatic of what Gregory Bateson (1972) referred to as the "double bind," or the "contraries" which drive an organism toward transformation. Paulo Freire (1970) referred to these moments as "limit acts," by which we are compelled to achieve "the permanent transformation of reality in favour of the liberation of the people" (p. 102). This ultimate transformation, I have come to understand, is not a singular goal toward which we might strive so that our work is complete, but rather the ongoing goal of our own work as educators, both in the development pedagogy, as well as the habits of mind in the young people with whom we work. The traditions of democracy, born in European revolutions of politics, economics, and technology at the dawn of the Enlightenment period, were not established such that these paradigms could shift just once; rather, they were established such that the shift, once begun, might never stop.

To this end, I have come to see myself more capable of achieving change from within than I had previously. My reading into the history and potential of our democratic systems, from the public school level on through to our Canadian constitutional law, has made me more confident that the seeds for systemic change need not arise through a complete overhaul of the system itself. From the time of Immanuel Kant, to Pierre Elliot Trudeau, and still today, an ongoing process of renewal is foundational to the system we have inherited, and this has been no small thing to realize. For such ongoing transformation to be realized, I feel that my objective has been more clearly trained on cultivating my own ability, along with my local communities' capacities, to engage in discussions which bring about a more inclusive representation of assembled interests.

Professional Implications

This project has had several impacts on my own life and study that will have further implications on my future practice, as well as those with whom I work. By forcing me to delve deeper into these ideas, and execute a prolonged defense and examination of the foundations of my recent years' of practice, this graduate study has given me numerous ideas and inspiration for future academic study, informal inquiries, and professional collaboration. I have taken steps to improve the clarity and argumentative strength in my writing, and am further able by way of this theoretical familiarity with work in my field to articulate the *why* of my practice to others, traversing diverse content areas within the vastness of teaching and learning.

At numerous points in this course of study, I have contemplated taking these efforts further: working toward an M.A. thesis, Ph.D. dissertation, or other forms of publication – books, presentations, or keynotes. In many ways, this learning experience has been an exercise in narrowing my focus toward the tangible such that it can be expressed across these various public platforms. This work - developing research methods, exploring research ethics in working with human subjects, and synthesizing the results of more than a year's study - has provided me the ability and opportunity to share my perspective with a wider audience of practitioners and academics, educational leaders and policy-makers in my community as well as online. The experience has impacted my general practice of writing and reflection and will doubtless leave me approaching many aspects of my professional growth into the future with a critical eye shaped throughout this process.

In the years prior to embarking on my graduate studies, I curated and contextualized my work with young people on my professional blog and with a range of colleagues in my building and online. These informal inquiries have shaped my own and my colleagues' practice, and have

been informed by the willing collaboration of countless students in the process. In addition to being free to engage in more of these spontaneous or extra-curricular endeavours as they arise, I am looking forward to the chance beyond these graduate studies to apply the framework and knowledge I have developed in recent years to nurturing my various communities of practice and inquiry. Whether these experiences become the fodder for future academic study or not, they will most certainly have been shaped by the challenge to articulate a vision for learning about citizenship in the 21st century and a burgeoning digital age.

These new endeavours will naturally include collaboration with my colleagues and peers at my own school, as well as in my learning networks beyond – in my district, the province, and around the world through online spaces and social media. Through much of my academic reading and consideration of my own citizenship, I have come to a new awareness of the ability of my voice to influence not only my local community, but the world beyond, as well. Having gained this experience and ability to make my own perspective heard and to shape discourse and dialogue around areas of school policy, professional development, and as our local union representative, I have acquired an outsized opportunity to help shape the reality and identity of my local learning communities. But I also have come to realize that to follow Freire is not merely to present students with the opportunities to rehearse personal and collective transformation. Indeed, to follow Freire, educators are called upon to enact an ongoing critical praxes of our own, in our own communities alongside those of our students.

Taken together, the skills and experiences attained through my graduate studies have provided me with the impetus to continue on in an engagement with the generative theme of public schooling in British Columbia in the hope that it may be transcended. In doing so, my hope is to allow that more full and active participation in the ongoing creation of our various

local, national, and global communities, as well as the eventual elimination of the barriers others may meet in realizing their own participation. The process of Enlightenment demands that I do.

Recommendations

This project has allowed me to make the following recommendations to others who might consider conducting a similar course of study or practice. In each, the common thread is an emphasis on striving to better realize our collective democratic potential in our own learning as teachers, and looking to provide the same experiences for our students.

Structure with space. In striving to create emergent possibilities, it is important to cultivate space wherein the unexpected can occur. Democracy itself is a framework to produce outcomes much more than it is an outcome itself; and once it becomes concerned with replication and the preservation of stasis, the ends it is intended to produce slip out of grasp. In the pursuit of emergence, both in democracy and in our classrooms, it is important to create the opportunity – and in doing so the habits of mind in young people – for grassroots expression and experience in collective meaning-making. In considering the adoption of the unit framework provided here, or work conceived in a similar spirit, look to present students with the opportunity to populate the educational space with their own expressions and explorations.

Everything is a prototype. To engage in authentic learning of this kind, teachers and students must work toward viewing potential setbacks and failures as opportunities to reflect and move forward in their work as individuals and in groups. Central to the notion of learning as an

ongoing process is that nothing is a final iteration, and that "everything is a prototype,"[2] and as such is an opportunity to learn from and integrate into future growth and success. While educators may be quick to encourage our students toward this realization, we can be less forgiving of our own struggles toward an integration of our theory and practice in pedagogy, and it is important for us to model this willingness to adapt, act, and reflect if we wish for these attributes to be acquired by the young people in our classrooms.

In all things, be open. Wherever teaching and learning takes you, one recommendation above all else is to compel those who are interested in this and other similar learning to work diligently and vigilantly to *share it all.* Make your process and learning transparent, both in your own emergent view of pedagogy and curriculum, as well as your life as a citizen and educator. Seek out practices which make the act of *opening,* and allowing others to view, engage, and participate with your investigations a part of your daily work. Delivering upon the promise of the digital age relies on this ability to share and construct our shared spaces, physically as well as online, and educators are central in this struggle to reclaim innovation, as well as the public sphere.

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[2] Zack Dowell used this expression in an interview with some of my students in 2011.

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