

Socializing Civility: Empathy in the Contemporary Citizenship Education Project

by

Siobhan Welsh, B.Eth.

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Department of Sociology and Anthropology
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Abstract

This thesis advances the project of citizenship education in Ontario by articulating empathy as a social skill that produces civility in Canadian society. With an examination of children's social agency, emotions, and Ontario's character development initiative and citizenship education, this thesis explores how public education promotes the practice of taking account of others. The central analysis uses Durkheim's theory of education; Stein's conception of empathy; perceptions of children and constructions of childhood; emotional literacy; and examples from public education in Ontario both past and present. The thesis concludes that the educational areas of character development and citizenship education are not comprehensive, resulting in students graduating from public education lacking fully developed capacities and skill sets to participate in social life as civilized citizens. The recommendation is for Ontario's Ministry of Education to develop a new field of study called "Citizenship, Community, and Social Relations."

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1 Introduction to Civility

1.1 Introduction

Canada's 21st century social context with dynamics of global economic relationships and fast-paced communications poses a much different set of problems for children and youth to address than have been encountered by generations of the past. Debate abounds about what essential skills and capacities will be needed by young people in the new millennium to be prepared to deal with a milieu of social differences and, ideally, to promote social harmony. Not only do fast-paced communications, locally, nationally, and internationally make contemporary social relations more complex, but also the diversity of cultures and values that comprise Canada's growing population pronouncing the need to develop ways to deal with social differences. This results in, I argue, a need for a more developed social skill set allowing the perspectives of others to be taken into consideration. The capacity to consider various perspectives can be captured in the notion of *empathy and empathic thinking*, and this is what I identify as a significant part of a developed social skill set.

The questions posed in this thesis stem from an interest in understanding social order and techniques of social control. The discussion is centered on children because I view them as representative of the future of social order. The questions of central interest to me, focus on human connectedness and social relations, and how children are taught and learn to think and act with empathy, in other words to consider others as subjects to engage with and not as objects to rule over, dismiss, or avoid altogether. Therefore, the work in this thesis, framed on the notion of civility, is an in-depth examination of ideas about human connectedness, children as a social group, along with analysis of whether or

not, and in what form, public education promotes taking account of others in public spaces and gives opportunity to develop empathy and empathic thinking skills. This is accomplished by examining the ways in which public education teaches the relational aspects of social life, with specific focus on citizenship education and character development.

My interest in using the notion of civility is because of its rich history of explanation and critique about people's behaviour in relation to their social world. Because in Canada the majority of children attend public education I chose this element as the place to examine how children and youth are taught and learn to behave in relation to their social world, as opposed to another element such as the family. I view an examination of public education as the best way to understand how children and youth are taught and learn to behave in the communities they inhabit because public education in Canada continues its tradition of preparing students for success in life as adult citizens.

Canada as a nation also has a continuing tradition of welcoming high numbers of immigrants, which feed the nation's need for economic resources for the systems of government and industry. In *Who We Are: A Citizen's Manifesto*, Rudyard Griffiths writes about Canada's future as a nation and points to the lack of social solidarity as one of the main issues that will challenge the well-being of Canada's future, which he also argues is the reason that immigrants do not remain in Canada after trying to create a new life in this country.

...the problem with our immigration and settlement systems lies not in attracting desirable immigrants; it is in keeping them. In my view, our failure to retain newcomers has as much to do with our society's low levels of social solidarity and civic engagement as it does with economic considerations...Newcomer or native-born, all Canadians will have to cope with the stresses of rapid social, ecological and economic changes. Responding to a host of new social threats while maintaining a sense of social solidarity will not be easy for a society as divided as Canada's (Griffiths, 2008: 162, 165).

Thus, if Canada loses its immigrants, then opportunities are lost for expansion and wealth, and with a divided sense of social life Canadian citizenry overall is negatively affected. This should be convincing of the need for a fully developed set of social skills for the future well-being of Canada as a nation, and the individuals and the communities that comprise it.

The importance of social solidarity,¹ in this case referring to a common basis of understanding of social behaviours and values, is pinpointed by what is presented in the curriculum of public education. In this thesis, it is the significance of social cohesion as promoting social solidarity that is explored. The process of reproduction of knowledge is how social order is maintained and producing knowledge is one technique of social control, these are both activated through public education.

Emerging from this research is not a dire warning for the future, but it is my hope that my findings provide an understanding of what empathy and empathic thinking can manifest for positive outcomes that produce civility in social relations within Canada. Therefore, this thesis explores the production of civility using the approach of empathy and empathic thinking as delivered through the contemporary citizenship education project.

1.2 Methodology, Research Question, and Argument

Since public education in Canada is administered at the provincial level, this research uses Ontario as the system of public education for examination. I fully acknowledge that each province and territory in Canada is different and Ontario's system does not represent the whole of Canada.

¹ There are multiple definitions for different types of solidarity. For example, see (Bauman, 2002; Dean, 1996; Mohanty, 2003; Taylor, 2004; Wilde, 2004).

Part of the following statement from Ontario's Ministry of Education is used as a hypothesis: "Publicly funded education is the cornerstone of a fair, productive and socially cohesive society" (2004: 1). Using the hypothesis, the methods of theoretical analysis and interpretive sociological argument the following research question is posed in this thesis: *In the interest of producing civilized citizens, does the contemporary citizenship education project in Ontario's public education system recognize the agency of its students and deliver opportunities to learn about and explore emotions and develop empathy and practice empathic thinking skills?*

The central analysis uses Durkheim's theory of education; Stein's conception of empathy; perceptions of children and constructions of childhood; emotional literacy and social relationships; and examples from public education in Ontario both past and present. Examples from early Ontario are used to head-up interesting and significant changes in how children and their emotions are regarded in relation to their education.

The thesis concludes that the educational areas of character development and citizenship education are not comprehensive, resulting in students graduating from public education lacking fully developed social skills to participate in social life as civilized citizens. The recommendation is for Ontario's Ministry of Education to consider the development of a new field of study for K-12, called "Citizenship, Community, and Social Relations."

Because I view children and youth as the future of social order, the discussion in this thesis is made more complex with the use of the social group of children and childhood. Issues of, for example, adult control and dependency create complexity in details, but I view the complexity as adding intrigue to the discussion. In sum, the whole

discussion in this thesis turns on the distinction of children as ‘citizens of the present’ or adult ‘citizens of the future’ and this has implications for the questions posed.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The motivation to investigate the final choices of questions about human connectedness, identified as ‘intersubjectivity’ in the discussion, stems from my interest in understanding the social consequences from the many symptoms of negative social relations commonly found in our daily news items of: abuse in relationships, bullying, social isolation, racism, and other kinds of violence. In basic terms, I am captivated to understand why and how people choose to be ‘civil’ or ‘uncivil’? My study and interest in the actions of people and the consequent effects in the social realm eventually unearthed my deeper desire to more fully understand the tradition and literature of civility.

1.3.1 Introduction to Civility

The word ‘civility’ and its conceptualization are rooted in the concepts of ‘civil,’ ‘civilization,’ (White, 2002: 131; 2006: 447) and ‘citizen’ (Sacks, 2007: 185). The etymology of the word ‘civility’ is the Latin word ‘civis,’ which means town (Sacks, 2007: 185). Melanie White identifies two chains of historical semantics that promote the understanding of civility from the conduct manuals of the 1600s and 1700s (2002: 131). One chain links civility being associated “with conduct practiced in citizenship spheres such as the ‘city’ and ‘civil society’...initially deployed as a contrast to notions of despotism and barbarism” (White, 2002: 131). The other chain links civility, or civilité, to “concepts that designate social virtues such as honnêté, bienséance...” (White, 2002: 132). Though I will not fully explore how these two semantic chains can be concisely

distinguished from one another, I do propose that the first chain situates the individual in the larger social context of social life as a ‘collective space’; whereas, the second chain situates the individual by his or her individual virtuous behaviour. Also, I suggest that the former deems the individual as an object within the sphere of the city, and the latter deems the individual as a subject in himself or herself.

Norbert Elias’ seminal text on civility, *The Civilizing Process*, has made a significant contribution to understanding not only the traditions that form the basis of civility as a concept, but also civility as a process. That is, civility is not only viewed as a capacity to behave, but also as an acquired and learned skill – a mode of behaviour (Elias, 1994: xi). Elias attributes the ‘process to civility’ to acquiring modes of behaviour as habits of controlling one’s freedom of expression, or in other words to have conscious control of one’s self in the social landscape. The consciousness to control one’s self is the ‘civilizing process’ that Elias describes from the emergence of “the self-consciousness of the West” (1994: 3). One can also see this movement as creation and awareness of ‘manners,’ ‘courtesy,’ and ‘conduct’.

In Erasmus of Rotterdam’s work *De civilitate morum peurilium* (On civility in children) originating in 1530, Elias identifies changes in behaviour because of “social regrouping...the expression of the fruitful period after the loosening of the medieval social hierarchy and before the stabilizing of the modern one” (1994: 58). He writes:

The increased tendency of people to observe themselves and others is one sign of how the whole question of behavior is now taking on a different character...People forced to live with one another in a new way, become more sensitive to the impulses of others. Not abruptly but very gradually the code of behavior becomes stricter and the degree of consideration expected of others becomes greater (Elias, 1994: 63-64).

In the context of childhood, Elias writes that children’s civility develops because people instill fear in the child and he or she “learns to act in accord with the prevailing

standard of behaviour” (1994: 520). The civility, in the children and youth of central focus in this work, is the stage in the process after self-restraint² has been learned, with specific focus on civility as the capacity to recognize and consider the ‘intersubjective nature of civility’ within the overall context of Canadian society.

The definition of *civility* for this thesis is found in White’s presentation of civility as civic competence with three factors for citizens: (1) to exercise self-constraint;³ (2) to express concern for others; and (3) to engage in rational dialogue through commitment to civil discourse (2006: 446). This definition of civility is of interest because of the particular focus on the expression of concern for others that is supportive for my argument of the importance of *empathy* and *empathic thinking* in social contexts. In White’s piece on the ambivalence of civility, she proposes that civility has changed from a pre-modern concept that pointed to the ability to distinguish, to a contemporary concept that points to the process of creating social and political tolerance for one another (2006: 447). Particularly interesting for this work is White’s argument that the transformation of civility stems from the state’s increasing control over the means of violence, with ‘concern for others’ emerging as the “mechanism of distinction between classes where increasing thresholds of shame and embarrassment engender new ways of seeing and being” (2006: 448). In the Western context, attention has moved from appeal of distinctions in upper classes to appeal for positive social relationships and identification of fellow human beings, and thus, the notion of *empathy* emerges as a significant social lubricant.

White’s argument demonstrates the ‘ambivalence’ of civility because it:

² Examples of this stage are toilet training and control of drooling.

³ For the purposes of this thesis ‘self- constraint’ and ‘self-restraint’ will be equated.

...serves as a technique of pacification that orients all citizens in society toward cultivating a common good through the messy and conflictual process of political negotiation...[it] requires that all citizens attempt to cultivate “reciprocal empathy and mutual respect” so as to ameliorate differences between individuals (White, 2006: 457).

With the nature of ‘ambivalence’ civility is claimed to be “at once both good and bad or, true and false” (White, 2006: 458). Hence, empathy also takes on the characteristic of ambivalence and subsequently dilutes the potential to claim being an entirely ‘good thing.’

1.3.2 Conceptualizing Civility

In addition to Norbert Elias and Melanie White other scholars have written about civility. A selection of ideas by four of them are presented: Edward Shils, Mark Kingwell, Cheshire Calhoun, and Spencer Cahill who specifically writes about children’s socialization to civility. These four scholars are chosen because their ideas align well with the elements for analysis in this thesis of public education, empathy, and citizenship. First, in this section is a focus on: (1) establishing civility as learned, to connect with public education; (2) the intersubjective characteristics of civility, to connect with empathy; and (3) how civility relates to notions of citizenship.

Shils’ discussion of civility as civil society connects to all three points. For Shils, civility is cultivated and makes the common good a possibility in civil society (1997: 4). Since civility is cultivated through the development of self-restraint, then it is a virtuous behaviour. Shils writes: “Civility is a virtue because it permits a variety of substantive interests and ideals or virtues to be cultivated and because it attempts to keep a balance among parties to the conflicts by an example and insistence on self-restraint” (1997: 4). Thus, this establishes civility as a learned behaviour and its inherent characteristic of establishing intersubjectivity because of the requirement for self-restraint. Individuals

need to recognize and consider others as ‘subjects’ in the social landscape and adjust their behaviour as a result.

In regards to the relationship to a notion of citizenship, Shils argues that civility is grounded in civil society and it is broader than citizenship in the state (1997: 73). He writes:

Each participant in the civil collective self-consciousness sees his fellow participants as fellow-citizens, not as fellow-kinsmen. Participation in a common civil collective self-consciousness engenders a sense of obligation to the other participants simply by virtue of their quality as members – mainly autonomous members – of the same civil society (1997: 71).

Therefore, civility engenders intersubjectivity, and citizenship is the vehicle in which civility plays itself out. Emerging from the civil quality in citizenship is the collective self-conscious, and again this points to the intersubjective nature of civility.

Though civility is a virtue, it does comprise more than good manners and includes a necessary base of collective self-consciousness (Shils, 1997: 340). It is individual virtuous behaviour framed within the collective self-conscious that culminates into the perpetuation of the process to civility. Shils expresses this: “Civility is a phenomenon of collective self-consciousness, is a mode of attachment of the individual or the sub-collectivity to the society as a whole” (1997: 341).

The characteristic of intersubjectivity in civility is most strongly supported in Kingwell’s work. Kingwell argues that civility is based on justice-oriented dialogue. He writes: “Dialogic models of justice defend not principles of justice but rather conversational spaces in which such principles can be assessed by real citizens” (1995: viii). Kingwell equates justice as civility and argues that civility is a basic civic virtue (1995: 26), writing: “...I have in mind the idea of a vibrant and politically engaged set of conversational practices, all of them governed by a commitment to self-restraint and

sensitivity” (Kingwell, 1995: 26). Once again ‘self-restraint’ is claimed as a characteristic of civility and a cultivated behaviour. The constraints of civility in Kingwell’s ideas are the two sides of social debate; there needs to be willingness for individuals to show self-restraint in not committing to be morally righteous and to being open to the ideas of others (Kingwell, 1995: 44).

Intersubjectivity is established with Kingwell’s conception of civility, but his notion of empathy is problematic. First, he conceives of the need for individuals to do nothing more “than treat political interlocutors as if they were worthy of respect and understanding, keeping their private thoughts to themselves” (Kingwell, 1995: 247). Second, he bases his position on MacIntyre’s argument of reconciling tradition and conflicts through translation using a “rare gift of empathy” (1995: 120). However, I suggest that Kingwell is mistakenly interpreting ‘empathy’ to be what is understood as ‘sympathy.’⁴ What is needed for civility is not the capacity to experience and express the same feelings as another (i.e. to sympathize), but to recognize that there is an ‘other.’ (i.e. emerging from empathy). Simply put, this uses Kingwell’s own idea of recognition of ‘others’ as those “worthy of respect and understanding” (1995: 247). As explained further on, the concept of empathy I use is in alignment with Kingwell’s conception to recognize these ‘others’ “worthy of respect and understanding” (1995: 247), and therefore, the ‘rare gift of empathy’ is not problematic for this thesis.

Kingwell’s connection to a notion of citizenship is by identification of the ‘citizen’ as having “encumbered traits we associate with real people...She has a deep moral vision, which she pursues with some like-minded others. She has likewise a place in real society, one that happens to accommodate, however uneasily, other kinds of moral

⁴ A concise distinction of these two concepts will be provided further in this chapter.

vision” (Kingwell, 1995: 45-46). Hence, citizens are recognized as having the potential for different value systems, but also having the capacity to consider the ‘other’ as a fellow citizen as well.

Next, is Calhoun, who casts civility as a virtue of social life (2000: 251). Calhoun argues that civility is more about abiding by the law than, as Kingwell suggests, about justice (2000: 252). Calhoun defines civility as understanding three factors: “(1) a set of class-demarkating behaviors; (2) a morally uncritical conformity to socially established rules of respect, tolerance, etc.; (3) an equivalent to one or more items on the familiar philosophical list of moral virtues” (2000: 254). Calhoun goes on to support civility as one or more virtues and consideration of deeming civility as a moral virtue. She argues that civility should be considered a moral virtue because it requires individuals to conform to social rules (Calhoun, 2000: 255). When socially accepted rules are complied with “basic moral attitudes of respect, tolerance, and considerateness are communicated” distinguishing civility as a moral virtue from notions such as honesty and kindness (Calhoun, 2000: 255).

Calhoun supports the moral function of civility as “to communicate basic moral attitudes of respect, tolerance, and considerateness” (2000: 255). From this, I suggest that Calhoun’s argument supports my claim of the intersubjective nature of civility. It is only through adherence to socially understood rules that civility is then active and available as a capacity to consider the other.

Civility is defined by Calhoun as “an essentially communicative form of moral conduct” (2000: 260), which follows established and understood social norms, and thus, makes it *communicative*. Through this characteristic a space for considering the feelings

of others is established, and thus the space is opened up for *empathy* to be active. That is, individuals show a willingness to consider the feelings of others by displaying virtues such as respect and tolerance (Calhoun, 2000: 260). Not only will individuals be civil by ‘treating’ others with tolerance and respect, but also be ‘displaying’ tolerance and respect for others, hence the existence of two active subjects is supported. At the end of the day, Calhoun suggests, it is ‘the social practice of morality’ that we all do together (2000: 275). Civility becomes significant when we are collectively (1) revising moral norms, (2) communicating attitudes, and (3) sustaining morally significant activities, such as funerals and friendships (Calhoun, 2000: 275).

Lastly to Cahill, who writes on children’s socialization to civility and suggests that children are socialized to public settings by mechanisms of: instruction, coaching, and ceremonial probation (1987: 312). Children are socialized through instruction, coaching, and ceremonial probation to grow to become members of civilized society. This training entails such things as table manners, toilet training, and hygiene. Cahill writes about the need for children to learn ‘ritual competence’ for acquiring membership in social settings (Cahill, 1987: 314). Ritual competence is described as the set of activities that displays the behaviour deemed proper for that particular social context, and since children are most often in the company of adults, then they will have the opportunity to observe expertise in the ‘ritual competence’ of interpersonal rituals (Cahill, 1987: 315). Children will also be corrected for any disruptive or offensive acts that do not conform to the display of ritual competence in public settings, much more often than being praised for upholding “the code of ceremonial conduct” (Cahill, 1987: 315, 316). Cahill’s argument addresses how children’s deviant behaviour contributes to

their learning of civility in public settings, and how this behaviour consequently reproduces the moral boundary of what is, and is not, acceptable in civil society.

Cahill's presentation supports my conceptions of civility, as presented in the preceding pages, as conducive to how children are socialized to become civilized members of society. The aspects of 'intersubjectivity' and 'citizenship' are considered because children learn from adults, thus two active subjects are recognized, and the child is considered to be a citizen-in-training. Additionally, civility is acquired, or learned, through training of 'competence' in public settings.

This section, on conceptualizing civility, has established how I want to consider what is meant by *civility*, and identified three characteristics to use as focal points – its intersubjective nature, as learned virtuous behaviour, and some of the ways it has been related to notions of 'collective spaces,' and identified as 'citizenship.' Returning to the definition of civility chosen for this thesis, the ideas of Shils, Kingwell, Calhoun, and Cahill, are all echoed in White's conceptualization of civility - individuals are recognized as intersubjective and express concern for others; engage in rational dialogue as part of living in communities with one another; and are to learn and develop self-constraint. In conclusion, I suggest children acquire *civility* by learning self-constraint, to empathize with others, and to engage in rational dialogue as the means to produce civility and perpetuate the civil communities in which they inhabit. I further suggest it is the social institution of public education that has traditionally been, and remains as, one of the prime locations where this process takes place.

1.4 Making Connections to Civility and Chapter Outlines

This section explains the elements connecting to civility that are present in the discussion.

1.4.1 Children and Citizenship

This thesis focuses on children and youth hence the notion of citizenship, as connected to citizenship education, will not be centered on the civic duties, such as voting in political elections, but instead the interest is in the relational aspects of citizenship. To help shape the discussion the following paragraphs provide some more definition of and contentions with the notion of children and citizenship.

Kymlicka and Norman distinguish two concepts of citizenship that are sometimes mistakenly conflated and subsequently inaccurately discussed; they are “citizenship-as-legal-status” and “citizenship-as-desirable-activity” (1994: 353). It is “citizenship-as-desirable-activity” that accurately captures the notion of citizenship that I am interested in focusing on. The description of this type of citizenship is: “the extent and quality of one’s citizenship is a function of one’s participation in that community” (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 353).

The idea of civic virtues is commonly used in citizenship literature as one of the ways to conceptualize citizenship, the other ways being “as legal status or membership in a nation-state,” and “as political, civil, social and other rights and obligations” (Chen, 2008: 165). Kymlicka and Norman also discuss civic virtue in citizenship as entailing “a balance of rights and responsibilities” (1994: 360). Liberal virtue theorists, William A. Galston being one of them, discuss civic virtues as part of “responsible citizenship” and Galston identifies *social virtues* as one group of civic virtues (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 365). Galston calls one of these social virtues ‘tolerance’ (1991: 222), but

Kymlicka and Norman call it ‘open-mindedness’ (1994: 365). I prefer the term open-mindedness as I think this aligns more precisely with the notion of empathy and empathic thinking. So, where do people learn these civic virtues? Liberal virtue theorists promote the system of education as the means to “teach children how to engage in the kind of critical reasoning and moral perspectives that defines public reasonableness (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 366).

Some would argue that citizenship, as a concept, does not lend itself to accurate discussion of the social contexts of children and youth. Chen acknowledges that the notion of child-citizens has inherent contradictions “...because children are not in fact full citizens. They are not accepted as full citizens. Adults can and must participate in the aims and activities of the society, but children cannot...” (2008: 170). However, the intention of this thesis is to in fact, in part, examine the dilemma of social exclusion and community membership faced by youth by exploring how their agency is considered, and the consequent issue of their rights to “welfare, protection, provision or participation” (James and James, 2008: 33). The contentious nature of the status of children and citizenship reinforces children’s dependence on adults, “because children’s rights as currently constructed are not rooted in the social and legal status of citizenship, they serve to reinforce children’s dependence on adults” (James and James, 2008: 33). This factor makes it more challenging to recognize where and how children are to be placed when conceptualizing citizenship.

In sum, I want to consider that citizenship is an idea transmitted to children in public education as reflective of collective spaces, but at the same time I question how children are considered as a ‘citizens of the present’ while attending public education.

Chen actually points to this dilemma as part of the ongoing discussions in contemporary citizenship literature that explores children as citizens:

There is a point to be made, however, about being analytically and politically alert to the increasing currency of child-focused discourses, because child-citizenship is not merely a redistributive child welfare issue, it is also about a rearticulation of social relations through citizenship practices and reformulation of citizen subjectivities” (Chen, 2008: 170).

Thus, *citizenship*, used as an element for analysis, will include the understanding of it entailing a balance of rights and responsibilities, that the social virtue of open-mindedness is inherent, and that the ability to assign a status to the idea of children as citizens remains contentious.

In the context of Durkheim’s work, a concept of citizenship is not prominent, however membership and participation in the collective society is. The notion of society as the moral authority and source creating a ‘conscience collective’ (described in Chapter 2) is what is included in the discussion. In addition, though citizenship as a conceptual and legal framework existed in Durkheim’s lifetime, contemporary legislations have forwarded alternate perspectives on the construction of citizenship in a nation state, for example the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that designates multiple sets of rights to individuals within Canada.

1.4.2 Public Education and the Agency of Students

Early in this chapter, I asserted that social cohesion is one of the intended consequences of contemporary public education in Ontario. Thus, for this thesis public education is both the network of schools and administration currently governed by the Ontario Ministry of Education, and social cohesion as an intended consequence from the process of education. Social cohesion is defined by Ontario’s Ministry of Education as:

“an inclusive society where diversity is the hallmark, and where all cultures are embraced within a common set of values” (2008b: 8).

The central theoretical source used to frame the examination of public education is the work of French intellectual Émile Durkheim (1858-1917). Durkheim is known, not only as one of the founders of the discipline of sociology, but specifically the founder of the sociology of education (Pickering, 1979: 99). For Durkheim the function of education is to socialize children to membership in the collective society that develops both the ‘social being’ and the ‘individual being’ as constituting every human being, with the ‘social being’ as the end goal of education (Durkheim, 1956: 72). Thus, for the child to meet the goal of civility and membership in society, he or she not only is accepted as an individual, with a psychological capacity, but also has the need for an education that instills the discipline that leads to success in social life.

To address the thesis research question, Chapter 2 uses examples from public education in both early and contemporary Ontario and explores the question: *In the delivery of public education what form of children’s agency is connected to the educational project of shaping the ideal civilized citizen?* This question arises from the interest to understand how the ‘subjectivities,’ captured in the concept of agency, are considered in learning students. This question is significant to understanding the possibilities for empathy and empathic thinking because they inherently constitute the need for ‘subjectivities’ to be acknowledged to warrant activation themselves. In addition, I want to investigate how education in early Ontario taught citizenship and civility, and examine current citizenship educational concerns when it comes to teaching children about citizenship. The connection to civility in Chapter 2 is through exploration

of the contribution of public education in shaping children as ‘civil,’ and whether citizenship is active in the children’s current context or for the future context of their lives.

1.4.3 Empathy as Emotional Capacity and Thinking Skills

Ethical concepts involving emotions commonly linked with ideas of ‘caring about other people’ include: compassion, empathy, pity, and sympathy. Compassion can be found in Kantian ethics as part of the duty to pursue morality through consideration of others. The consideration of others is Kant’s ‘kingdom of ends’⁵ with treatment of other people as ‘ends in themselves,’ not just ‘means to ends,’⁶ and thus, creating the ideal society. Sympathy and empathy are often equated, however, sympathy often involves an added layer of emotional investment in feeling with another, and sometimes with the arousal of compassion and pity. Sympathy is often distinguished from empathy by referring to the danger of over-investment or over-involvement in feeling with another (Griffin, 1986: 612). On the other hand, empathy in general terms “involves a sharing in quality rather than in quantity, in kind rather than in degree” (Griffin, 1986: 191), this means there is a sense of remaining in control of one’s own emotions and rationality to make decisions that are not motivated by emotions.

Sympathy and empathy are often mistakenly conflated because sympathy has a longer tradition in Western history. Lynn Hunt argues that sympathy captures “the active will to identify with others...and often signifies pity, which can imply condescension, a feeling incompatible with a true feeling of equality” (2007: 65). For Hunt, the use of the

⁵ See (Ewing, 1986) for explanation.

⁶ Reconciliation of ‘ends and means’ involves consideration of the choices made to induce specific consequences vs. the end goal itself. The saying “the end justifies the means” is used when the consequences of the choice are considered less important than the end result. See (Whyte, 1986: 191-2).

term sympathy instead of empathy emerges because of the popularity of the ideas presented in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, first published in 1759. Smith uses torture as an example to investigate what motivates people to take account of the suffering of others (Hunt, 2007: 65). Smith writes:

Humanity consists merely in the exquisite fellow-feeling which the spectator entertains with the sentiments of the persons principally concerned, so as to grieve for their sufferings, to resent their injuries, and to rejoice their good fortune. The most humane actions require no self-denial, no self-command, no great exertion of the sense of propriety. They consist only in doing what this exquisite sympathy would of its own accord prompt us to do (1976: 190-91).

It is with “imaginative identification” in sympathizing that allows the observer to share the feelings with the one being tortured (Hunt, 2007: 65). Hunt explains that for Smith, autonomy and sympathy act in symbiosis, because: “The observer is able to become a truly moral being, however, only when he takes the next step and understands that he too is the subject of such imaginative identification” (2007: 65). When the observer has used autonomy to situate himself as an observer making choices, and as “the object of others’ feelings, he is able to develop within himself an “impartial spectator”” (Hunt, 2007: 65). Hunt argues that learning to empathize (as sympathy for Smith) was the beginnings of the pathway to human rights, however “it did not ensure that everyone would be able to take that path right away” (Hunt, 2007: 68).

The understanding and reconciliation of the roles rationality and emotion play in one’s individual identity can be categorized as character development. The notion of character has a long history having been defined in both classical and contemporary philosophy, as well as modern psychology, and community is understood to play an integral role in its development.⁷ In *The Mantle of Maturity*, Christie W. Kiefer presents a history of the ideas about character development by examination of the notions of the

⁷ For explanation, see (Bondi, 1986).

basic nature of humans as aggressive and altruistic. To be aggressive or altruistic is to have emotion in reaction to a situation, hence, this implies social relationships (Kiefer, 1988: 175). Kiefer explains that social relationships are part of being human, with the only solitary primate known to us being the orangutan (1988: 176). Through the history of humanity people have lived in social groups, with the need to share with others, most notably sharing food (Kiefer, 1988: 176). We can now understand and accept that reconciliation of emotions of aggression vs. sharing (i.e. being altruistic) is necessary for well-being and survival. Kiefer argues: “While some forms of aggression are valued in all human societies...all societies also place a high value on adult personalities that are, in balance, altruistic. The problem, for the society and for the individual, becomes how to regulate emotions associated with aggression, and how to link altruistic behavior with feelings of satisfaction, so that group life can proceed smoothly” (1988: 177). Though Kiefer does not specifically discuss the notion of empathy, I have chosen his work as important to mention to understand how character development is considered in social relations. I suggest that the notion of empathy can be considered, at least for the scope of this thesis, to be the same as altruism by recognizing that they both require the capacity to consider the ‘other,’ and hence the development of empathy and empathic thinking is part of character development and part of learning to live in social relations.

A sociological definition of empathy⁸ does not exist, thus a choice was made for a philosophical perspective over a psychological one. The motivation behind the choice was not to avoid the negotiation of the psychological aspects of empathy but to find the notion of empathy in a less encumbered form found in philosophy’s ‘problem of other

⁸ The word *empathy* was translated from the German ‘*emfühlung*’ into English by psychologist E. G. Titchener (see Gordon, Robert M., 1999).

minds.’ As well, the philosophical perspective allows for empathy in support of civility in the intersubjectivity of social relationships, which would have required multi-layered considerations if the psychological perspective⁹ had ultimately been chosen.

The philosophical work *On the Problem of Empathy*, by Edith Stein, is used for the definition of empathy. Edmund Husserl used the concept of ‘*emföhlung*’ to account for the recognition of an ‘other’ as distinct from one’s ‘self’ (Makkreel, 1999: 255). Stein, a student of Husserl’s, furthered the concept by arguing that ‘*emföhlung*’ is “a blind mode of knowledge that reaches the experience of the other without possessing it” (Makkreel, 1999: 255-6).

In defining empathy, Stein writes: “...empathy is a kind of act of perceiving...the experience of foreign consciousness in general, irrespective of the kind of the experiencing subject or of the subject whose consciousness is experienced” (1989: 11). Hence, the object of consciousness outside of one’s own consciousness found in all social settings creates the opportunity for empathy. The interest in altruistic behaviour, as explained earlier, endorses the need for empathy and empathy supports development of the self through knowledge of the existence, and experience, of others. Though arguably altruistic behaviour is rooted in self-interest, my argument is for the recognition of others as significant to social relationships and ultimately one’s own well-being, and not in the moral value of the motivation to be with and in relation to others.

The decision to use Stein’s work is because of her choice to distinguish the ‘problem’ of empathy as the challenge to define exactly what constitutes one’s ‘self’ as “I” when we live in social relations. Stein writes: “By empathy with differently

⁹ Different psychological perspectives include: psychoanalytic, behavioural, humanistic, and cognitive (Myers: 1986: 7-8).

composed personal structures we become clear on what we are not, what we are more or less than others. Thus, together with self knowledge, we also have an important aid to self evaluation” (1989: 116). Self-evaluation becomes significant to the definition of civility because it supports self-constraint and engagement in rational dialogue.

However, while self-evaluation is not fully supported as expressing concern for others, there is recognition that there is a need to understand and relate to the experiences of others, and thus a need to have a capacity to care about their existence and well-being. Ultimately, Stein’s work best articulates the characteristic of intersubjectivity that is an integral part of this discussion.

With the decision to use Stein’s conception of empathy the challenge to locate the notion of empathy in contemporary discussions and discourse arises. Stein’s empathy is a philosophical point, however, contemporary society places empathy in the psychological realm. Framing empathy as a psychological representation means understanding the cognitive aspect of empathy as perspective taking and the affective aspect as emotional response. Because any discussion of perspective taking and emotional response would be problematized by the dilemma of distinguishing subjective and objective positions, the philosophical conception of empathy is reinforced as more suitable because this dilemma can be put aside for the discussion. Therefore, the philosophical representation of empathy has the term “empathy” representing the perspective taking as the individual’s capacity for thought, and the term “empathic thinking” representing the individual’s response as a thinking skill. In order to have contemporary references on empathy for some points of the discussion the work of Mary Gordon, Dolores Gallo, Megan Boler, as well as Nel Noddings for a notion of care, and

Paul Mussen and Nancy Eisenberg-Berg for a notion of pro-social behaviour are utilized. In addition, contemporary discussion of empathy as part of education and emotions is done through the emotional literacy movement. Thus, empathy is discussed as encompassed within the notion of emotional literacy as part of the public education regime. Emotional literacy is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

To address the thesis research question, Chapter 3 explores: *What ways is empathy taught and how is it problematized in the contemporary citizenship education project?* This question arises from the interest to understand how children's capacity to consider others through empathy is considered in the citizenship education and character development of learning students. This question is significant to understanding the element of public education because it investigates whether emotions are considered in the teaching of character and citizenship in Ontario schools. The connection to civility in Chapter 3 is through exploration of empathy and empathic thinking as part of Ontario's character development initiative and citizenship education programs.

Finally, in the last and concluding chapter, I will draw points from the overall discussion together and make connections that point to the limitations and weaknesses of the contemporary citizenship education project that formulate a recommendation for the Ontario Ministry of Education to consider a new field of study called "Citizenship, Community, and Social Relations."

1.5 Defining Children and Youth

This thesis considers the social contexts of children and youth in Canadian public education. These two groups of individuals are defined in *Key Concepts in Childhood*

Studies: (1) the child is considered as: “in the early stages of its life-course, biologically, psychologically and socially; it is a member of a generation referred to collectively by adults as children, who together temporarily occupy the social space that is created for them by adults and referred to as childhood” (James and James, 2008: 14); and (2) the youth is considered as: “too old to be regarded socially as just a child – usually but not necessarily a teenager – but who is not yet legally an adult; also a period in the life-course that is situated between childhood and adulthood” (James and James, 2008: 149). The term ‘children’ is used most often and the terms may also be used interchangeably, except when it is necessary to be definitive of the younger child in contrast to the older youth.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

In the search for contemporary research on civility in children and youth, I found a gap in the sociological investigation of the intersections of notions of civility, agency, and citizenship involving children and youth with a focal point of analysis on empathy. One could argue that the area of emotional development is one of psychology not sociology, however, I suggest that because empathy implicitly involves relational aspects of social life, identified as the characteristic of intersubjectivity, that sociology is the best location to explore the dynamics of empathy and the intersections with positive social relations with others and citizenship education in Ontario’s public schools. Ultimately, it is children’s capabilities of self-restraint that promote or inhibit their social location in their communities and, I will argue, in their interest in participating as ‘civil citizens.’¹⁰

¹⁰ Healthy socialization and positive relations with others is promoted in schools as learned skills through learning emotion regulation (Macklem, 2008: 8-12).

The questions that arise in this thesis are not focused on whether *civility* is learned, acquired, taught, and/or naturally develops, but rather the overarching question is: how, and to what extent, civility is fostered in Ontario's children and youth in the time they spend in public education and more specifically when they participate in character development and citizenship education?

One final clarification is needed to help in understanding both the intention and discussion in this thesis. The notion of social capital is commonly used to identify the outcome from the connectivity of social networks. An explanation by Putnam, who writes about social capital, does make a link to civic virtue, and this of course relates to civility:

...social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called “civic virtue.” The difference is that “social capital” calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital (2000: 19).

The argument for this thesis is not for the outcome commonly defined as social capital, but for the educational process that has an intention of creating what could be defined as social capital. Hence, this is the reason why social capital is not part of this thesis.

1.7 Aim and Purpose of the Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to advance the notion of citizenship education in Ontario by exposing the significance of empathy and empathic thinking as part of producing civility in both present-day and future Canadian society. With examination of Ontario's character education initiative and citizenship education programs the significance of empathy and empathic thinking emerge in relation to the production of civility. Overall, the examination and analysis offered in this thesis will contribute to understanding how,

and where, learning to be a 'civil child citizen' takes place and what the necessary resources are to support the process of civility in the interest of producing students with a social skill set that generates and supports positive social relations in contemporary Canadian society.

1.8 Significance of the Thesis

I interpret my research to be associated with the contemporary debates about individual development and membership in collective spaces; the potentialities manifested from education in relation to social order and social control; and the emerging area of sociology of emotions, which explores the role of emotions in the social world. The changes in education I discuss, and conclude with, recommend addition of opportunities for young people to learn, practice, and develop a social skill set that is currently not comprehensively delivered in the contemporary public education curricula in Ontario.

From the broad perspective, parents, caregivers, and teachers will be interested in understanding how the notion of civility fits with the process of socializing children to communities in the 21st century. From the narrower perspective, this research provides an examination of the relational aspects of social life with regards to emotions and an understanding that taking account of others is a honed skill that can be taught to and developed by students. By examining some of the skills promoted in public education there is further understanding of the process of educating for citizenship and civility with empathy and empathic thinking as significant contributing factors.

Scholarship exists in the areas of civil society, civility in society, educating for democratic citizenship, children's social development, administration of public

education, and children's rights, but there remains a gap in investigation of how notions of empathy contribute to the process of civility and educating for citizenship in young children in Canada. What remains compelling is through the process of researching for this thesis I was not able to find a common or popular link made between emotional literacy as the way to account for others and citizenship education, and I am mesmerized with why this project has not fully arrived on a substantial number of nation-wide planning agendas, especially when social cohesion is one of the objectives of public education in Ontario.

1.9 Limitations

The thesis does not examine dynamics that result from birth order, number of children in a family, number of marriages in a family, age of parents, non-traditional parental or custodial arrangements, or differences based on socio-economic factors. Also, not considered are issues of gender, physical or mental capacities, or intellectual capabilities. Also, this thesis does not extensively examine the process of socialization from the perspective of the birth of a child growing to young adulthood; nor does it discuss the significance and circumstances of socializing agents and the fulfillment of the various roles of parents and teachers, or relationships (social or otherwise) between parents and children, or teachers and students. This discussion is not a history of the notions of public education and philosophical examinations of free will and autonomy, or of progressive education¹¹ or educational progressivism in public schooling. Additionally, though class is mentioned in descriptive senses from the references cited,

¹¹ Identifying 'progressive education' and its development is problematic since an accepted definition of 'progressive' is untenable, see (Davies, 2002).

the discussion does not use 'class' as a point of overall analysis. Religious affiliations and faith structures are presented in the educational context of early Ontario, but otherwise are not discussed as part of the analysis presented. As well, the research does not involve any analysis of criminality as a consequence to being uncivilized, uneducated, or some lack in development of empathy. Lastly, this thesis will examine only in part one of Canada's most significant characteristics, its diverse population in ethnic identities and, thus, potential for value differences and moral relativisms. The scope of this thesis does not allow the details of Canada's thirty year legislative history of multiculturalism and immigration policies, policies to combat racism, and 'freedom of difference' to be fully explored and included for analysis.¹²

1.10 Assumptions

1.10.1 The thesis is written with the assumption that the children and youth being discussed live with caregivers who welcome them, and accept and act on the responsibility to create and support the perpetuation of resources required for them to live and thrive in a healthy manner.

1.10.2 The thesis is written with the assumption that 'children' and 'youth' as broad categories do have a developed consciousness. This thesis assumes there is no question of whether or not a consciousness exists, for example it is assumed that people do have free will. This thesis assumes there are no limitations to the development of a consciousness, for example possibilities of psychoses or behavioural disorders.

1.10.3 The thesis is written with the assumption that children and youth are included and in a position to participate and learn in public education.

¹² For an excellent summary of the Canadian legislative history of multiculturalism see (Dewing and Leman, 2006).

1.10.4 The thesis assumes not only the political and social contexts of self consciousness of life in a democracy, but also the presupposition that we all have the capacity to care for one another as individuals and groups of individuals living with one another from the perspective of consciousness.

1.11 Conclusion

This first chapter has established a framework for understanding *civility* and has introduced and discussed the elements of *public education and the agency of student's, empathy, and children and citizenship*. The analysis that entails examines and comments on the dynamics at play in public education and the contemporary citizenship education project in considerations of children's agency and emotional capacities and the intersections of the three factors comprising the civilized citizen - (1) to exercise self-constraint; (2) to express concern for others; and (3) to engage in rational dialogue through commitment to civil discourse (White, 2006: 446). Hence, the forthcoming chapters provide analysis in support of empathy and empathic thinking skills to sustain these three factors.

The challenge in public education is to reconcile the balance between the development of individual skills and the skills needed to live happily and successfully as a member of a democratic collective. Of particular interest, is the need for a healthy set of social skills in light of the context of Canada's present day social world as an increasing mixture of diversity and multiculturalism. In the lives of children and youth a passage must be made through a multi-stage process to understand the reconciliation of their 'self' as an individual and themselves as members of communities, with the most prominent being citizenship. What makes the discussion intriguing is the contentiousness

in the reconciliation of children as individuals with agency and how children's capacity for empathy is considered in learning about human connectedness. Public education reproduces knowledge as a technique of social control, which is motivated toward social cohesion in Ontario. Empathy as both an emotional capacity and responsive behaviour is part of everyone's social development and how these dynamics appear in the public education regime of citizenship education is explored further in the forthcoming chapters. These elements unfold the discussion of how public education promotes the practice of taking account of others in the interest of producing civil citizens.

2 Agency, Perceptions of Children, and Relational Aspects in Public Education

2.1 Introduction

The consideration of the student as a learning subject in public education has changed as public education in Canada has transformed and developed over the last century. The main objective of public education at the end of the 1800s was for students to acquire the discipline needed to become successful adult citizens in the overall interest of nation-building. This objective, along with learning to read and do arithmetic, was to instill the discipline needed to reach the stage of adulthood to live with independence, well-being, and success. Through Ontario's history, education has changed in many ways and this chapter will explore some changes in relation to how children's agency was, and is, perceived.

Along with an examination of children's agency, the discussion in this chapter is an exploration of public education's attempt to "mould children into subjects of civility" (Chen, 2005: 34). Initially, steering children toward citizenry was done through the anti-cruelty movement administered by the Toronto Humane Society, which looked after both animals and children. As part of learning civility children were taught to consider animals as worthy of respect and mercy (Chen, 2005: 34). The connection between children and animals is explored further in Chapter 3.

In this chapter the question of focus is: *In the delivery of public education what form of children's agency is connected to the educational project of shaping the ideal civilized citizen?* This chapter will examine and discuss the shaping of children as 'civil' and how their agency is considered in regards to citizenship. This question is significant to the overall thesis because it explores the notion of agency, which is inherently linked

to the workings of empathy and empathic thinking. The notion of agency is linked to empathy and empathic thinking by way of agency being necessary for empathy and empathic thinking to be tenable. Thus, empathy and empathic thinking is dependant on agency being acknowledged and activated.

Using Durkheim's theory of education, I will argue that public education was used in Upper Canada as the mechanism to shape children and youth into the future ideal citizen, yet despite the increased recognition of children and youth as individuals with needs and rights, as evidenced in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, contemporary public education in Ontario has not transformed itself to fully recognize children and youth as 'citizens of the present.'¹³

Durkheim's theory of education is of special interest because it captures the significance of social relations in the process of education, which supports the characteristic of intersubjectivity in my argument. For Durkheim, education is social, in synchronization it both socializes and individualizes in the image of the collective. He writes:

...each society...has a system of education which exercises an irresistible influence on individuals. It is idle to think that we can rear our children as we wish. There are customs to which we are bound to conform; if we flout them too severely, they take their vengeance on our children. The children, when they are adults, are unable to live with their peers, with whom they are not in accord (Durkheim, 1956: 65).

There is specific focus on Durkheim's presentation of the notion that children learn and thus acquire civility through public education.

The discussion in this chapter will focus on two ideas: (1) the notion of children as 'subjects' and how this recognition presents itself in the delivery of public education,

¹³ Some scholars have suggested that the turn of the 21st century is witnessing an emerging way of thinking that posits children as model citizens with the most political and moral claims, even though paradoxically children are rarely accepted as full citizens with political and civil rights.

and (2) children and youth as citizens. Additionally, I will explore the implications from the challenge to reconcile the agency of children and youth, manifested from their needs and rights, to be considered as ‘citizens of the present.’ Most important to note is how children and youth are, and have been, considered as people within a civil society, specifically in Western social democracy.

2.2 Definitions

For the discussion in Chapter 2, the following notions are defined and explained: *constructing childhood; agency, autonomy, and subjectivity; and children’s rights and children’s rights education.*

2.2.1 Constructing Childhood

The beginnings of scholarship on the various historical concepts of childhood concentrated on how adults view children, as opposed to how children view themselves in the context of their lives and their relations with others. Emerging from contemporary scholarship is “the new history of childhood” that claims to represent the voices of children as social actors influencing their own lives and the lives of those in relationship to them (Corsaro, 2005: 67).

In Durkheim’s work he suggests two stages of childhood. The first is the newborn and toddler stage, where primary caregivers, play groups, and nursery schools are the major sources of social interaction for the child. The second is the child attending elementary school, which is commonly referred to now as primary school in Canadian education. It is the second stage that Durkheim deems critical for the teaching of morality and for children to form their moral character (1961: 17).

In *Theorizing Childhood*, James, Jenks and Prout present models framing construction of childhood as the *presociological* and *sociological child* in childhood. The distinguishing feature is that the presociological models “are unimpressed by any concept of social structure” (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998: 10). I understand this to mean that society as a social structure exists in the real sense, but that the intellectual consideration of society as a social structure had not yet emerged in relation to defining the first category of models.

The various models of the presociological child are: the evil child, the innocent child, the immanent child, the naturally developing child (emerging from Piaget’s theory), and the unconscious child (emerging from Freudian theory) (James, et al., 1998: 10-21). The models of the sociological child are: the socially constructed child (based on social constructionism), the tribal child, the minority group child, and the social structural child. The social structural child is defined as the constancy of children in all social worlds as being acknowledged as a universal category and acceptance that “as a component of all societies children are typical, tangible, persistent and normal” (James, et al., 1998: 26-33).

The models of childhood that add an interesting dimension to thesis are: the *immanent child* as the child in Upper Canada, and the *social structural child* as the student in contemporary education in Ontario. I suggest the immanent child frames the student in early Ontario because the model frames children to: “...always be reasoned with, and parents, like pedagogues, have knowledge and experience and are in a position to exercise responsible control over them. Through education children will become rational, virtuous, contracting members of society, and exercisers of self-control. They

will not threaten social order” (James et al., 1998: 16). Alternately, I suggest the social structural child is perceived in contemporary Ontario because children are viewed as emerging “from the constraint of their particular social structure...[and]...are a body of subjects but their subjectivity is neither willful nor capricious. It is determined by their society and thus childhood is instanced as a social phenomenon” (James et al., 1998: 32). This aligns with Durkheim’s focus on the structure of society as the foundation of children in their education into collective society.

Also worth mentioning is the transformation of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century child, at the age of fourteen and younger, from an object of economic value to an object of sentimental value (Zelizer, 1985: 3). For example, new parents in the 1930s who lost children to accidental death would be awarded compensation by courts, and childless couples were willing to pay immensely large amounts of money for a baby from the black market (Zelizer, 1985: 6). Some patterns accounted to this transformation include the changing nature of the family “as the increasing differentiation between economic production and the home transformed the basis of family cohesion” (Zelizer, 1985: 8). As well, there was interest from women for recognition of the valuable domestic role they performed, “Exalting the child went hand in hand with exalting the domestic role of women; each reinforced the other while they raised domesticity within the family to a new and higher level of respectability” (Zelizer, 1985: 9).

The significance of the constructions of childhood and the suggestion of the models to the overall discussion is to make more familiar the various ways that children are characterized and the ways the life phase of childhood has been regarded and theoretically constructed. “This simple point – that the concept of childhood constitutes a

referential frame of and for children's lives – and has wide ramifications for the understanding of childhood and for the study of children" (James, 1993: 72). The models lend themselves to the discussion by framing an informal comparison of childhood in early Canada and contemporary Ontario. Although I acknowledge models such as these are most likely not taken into consideration when education in Canada is designed and delivered, I do think they are helpful as food for thought in the overall discussion of children as a social group in this thesis. The ideas also bear witness to the emergence of a political focus on children as a social group and the implications that entail for techniques of social control.

2.2.2 Agency, Autonomy, and Subjectivity

First, I will define the notion of *subjectivity*, then *autonomy*, and finally *agency*. They are presented in this order because the notion of subjectivity is necessary to build on to define the other two notions. The subject is explained by Adkins as: "beings capable of consciousness and self-consciousness, or reflection and reflexivity, including the ability to relate to other beings and the capacity of differentiation from others...within sociological discourse, capacities towards consciousness and self-consciousness are broadly (either explicitly or implicitly) understood to be peculiarly human capacities" (2006: 611). Hence, subjectivity is the individual's capacity for these things, and the recognition by others of this active capacity. Thus, children are recognized as subjects when they are recognized as having the capacity for consciousness, self-consciousness, and reflection.

Resulting from the recognition of subjectivity is that the notion of *autonomy* then becomes possible. The word autonomy derives from ‘autos’ for self, and ‘nomos’ for rule (Childress, 1986: 52). Childress explains that an autonomous person:

...is one who, with the requisite mental capacity, reflects on and chooses his or her own moral framework...Autonomy does not necessarily imply that an individual’s life plan is created by that person *de novo*, but it does suggest that the individual has adopted, usually reflectively and critically, a life plan as his or her own, even if it was drawn from a community and a tradition (1986: 52).

The notion of subjectivity represents a capacity of thought, and the notion of autonomy represents the action associated with the capacity of subjectivity. Hence, the subject is recognized as an individual with the capacity of subjectivity and the space to utilize this capacity as his or her autonomy.

Lastly, James’ and James’ define *agency* as: “The capacity of individuals to act independently” (2008: 9). They explain that the paradigm of considering children as *social actors* changed with sociology in the 1970s. This change “underscores children and young people’s capacities to make choices about the things they do and to express their own ideas. Through this, it emphasizes children’s ability not only to have some control over the direction their own lives take but also, importantly, to play some part in the changes that take place in society more widely” (James and James, 2008: 9).

The tension between agency and structure is particularly compelling in discussing children and childhood because theorizing the education of children is all about the space in between the two poles. James and James explain that the structure-agency debate is:

...a struggle to evaluate the competing claims made about the extent to which individuals act independent of the social structures, institutions and value systems that make up societies in which they live. For both Durkheim and Marx, for example, society was seen as overarching, as determining what people do through the various constraints that collective moral ideas and social institutions place upon their actions. For Durkheim, the ‘conscience collective’ framed a people’s way of thinking about the world (2008: 9-10).

In regards to children, reconciliation of the structure-agency debate is found through examining the needs, responsibilities, rights, and competencies of children, as well as attempts to establish society as the component of 'structure' and children as the component of 'agency.'

In contemporary debates, structure and agency are said to be dialectical and operate with awareness of the other.¹⁴ The debates over time about individuals involved in creating their own life has moved from Durkheim's morally educated collective members, to include a self-awareness that emerged from the traditions of the Enlightenment. It is not that Durkheim's position is incorrect or weak, but that contemporary debate has made reconciling the two concepts of structure and agency in need of more sophistication.

Autonomy, for Durkheim, is related in part to Kant's view of moral goodness coming from the rational will, and *agency* is a compelling concept in relation to Durkheim's theory of education because it brings in a sociological dichotomy between agency and structure. For Durkheim, the structure of society is what makes education possible, and vice versa - education backs up the structure of society. But he also acknowledges agency as active and important. Durkheim does not reconcile the dichotomy of structure and agency in his theory of education. However, his theory does explain society as a collective, hence a structure since there is a set of objective rules that children learn, and behaviours that children practice in education, and hence, in determination of their conduct.

To conclude, it seems best to regard the notions of *agency* and *autonomy* with similarity as 'a capacity to make choices' that the two terms will be used interchangeably

¹⁴ To explore these ideas further, see (Giddens, 1979: 49-88).

for the remainder of the thesis, with *agency* as the prominent term in the discussion.

However, please note that Durkheim only uses the term autonomy, and use of the words agency and agency is solely mine.

2.2.3 Children's Rights and Children's Rights Education

In moral philosophy, rights: "...can be characterized as powers or privileges to which an individual has a just claim such that he or she can demand that they not be infringed or suspended. Rights involved a mutual recognition on the part of each individual of the claims or rights of others; rights are thus correlative with duties" (Smith, 1986: 556). In this thesis the duties are presupposed as those of the state in the administration of public education.

To understand children's rights, it is important to present some more on the notion of human rights and why and how they emerged. In Chapter 1, Lynn Hunt's *Inventing Human Rights* was cited for the notion of human rights emerging from the beginnings of the consideration of others through empathy (Hunt, 2007: 68). Citing the American Declaration of Independence from 1776, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen from 1789, Hunt argues that these documents "incarnated the promise of universal human rights (2007: 17). Though both these documents present the ideas as applying to "all men," in fact some of the ones not included in the idea for universal rights were: women and children, those imprisoned or insane, blacks not enslaved, foreigners, and those that did not own property (Hunt, 2007: 18). In unraveling the ideas to understand and justify who and who was not included, much scholarship has arisen to question whether any real meaning can be claimed from the historical documents (Hunt, 2007: 18). Nevertheless, Hunt goes on to argue that the authors of the documents, 18th

century men living in societies with slavery and apparently accepted subservience, can be viewed in a positive light because they advanced the idea of thinking of “men” unknown to them as equals (Hunt, 2007: 19).

Defining human rights requires understanding “three interlocking qualities: rights must be *natural* (inherent in human beings); *equal* (the same for everyone); and *universal* (applicable everywhere)” (Hunt, 2007: 20). However, human rights are only meaningful in a political context. “They are not the rights of humans in a state of nature; they are the rights of humans in society...vis-à-vis each other” (Hunt, 2007: 21). Interesting for this thesis is Hunt’s link of human rights to emotions: “Human rights are difficult to pin down because their definition, indeed their very existence, depends on emotions as much as on reason” (2007: 26). Because the claim to human rights is elicited as “self-evident” the idea of rights is reliant on emotional appeal and are convincing if they strike a cord in people (Hunt, 2007: 26). This incites the idea that human rights require “a certain widely shared “interior feeling”” (Hunt, 2007: 27). This in turn brings forward the notion of ‘liberty’ being:

...proved by each man’s inner feelings...Underpinning these notions of liberty and rights was a set of assumptions about individual autonomy. To have human rights, people had to be perceived as separate individuals who were capable of exercising independent moral judgment...But for these autonomous individuals to become members of a political community based on those independent moral judgments, they had to be able to empathize with others. Everyone would have rights only if everyone could be seen as in some fundamental way alike. Equality was not just an abstract concept or political slogan. It had to be internalized in some fashion (Hunt, 2007: 27).

In the context of children and childhood, the notion of rights becomes problematic because it is argued that children do not have the competence to make fully informed choices, let alone political ones, and thus should not have the responsibility to hold rights (James and James, 2008: 109). However, James and James support *children’s rights*, arguing:

...it is not morally defensible, in the context of any organised society or social group, to argue that children as an entire social category not only *do* not but *can* not and *should* not have any rights, for to do so would be to undermine the very nature of social responsibility and relationships. Consequently, it can be argued that a child should and *does* have rights, both legal and moral, but that these need not necessarily be the same as those of adults (2008: 109-10).

It is from this context that the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) emerged in 1989 (James and James, 2008: 110). I have chosen two specific Articles of the UNCRC to focus on for my argument: (Article 28) “All State parties recognize the right of the child to education”; and (Article 7) “The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality” (1989: 14, 4). In this discussion, Article 28 pertains to public education, and Article 7 pertains to citizenship by way of nationality. The UNCRC supports a set of rights to be applied to all children regardless of location of birth or habitation (James and James, 2008: 110). As discussed further in section 2.5.2 of this chapter, the existence of the UNCRC supports construction of children as ‘citizens with rights.’

Howe and Covell (2005: 5) describe *children’s rights education* as based on international law, and thus, necessary because the UNCRC has been ratified in Canada and creates the obligation to educate both children and adults on children’s rights. The authors write: “Children’s rights education is a key to promoting citizenship. As they learn their rights under the Convention, children also learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. They learn about the values, virtues, and practices of good citizenship” (Howe and Covell, 2005: 5-6). Further in the chapter, the significance of children’s rights and children’s rights education with children’s agency will be discussed.

2.3 Durkheim on Educating Children

Durkheim strived for an alternate to religion as the foundation of morality in modern society, supporting the school to teach an alternative to ‘blind acceptance of religion.’ The school was to teach children, as preparation for adult life, an understanding of civic duty and morality, and appreciation of, and respect for, the individual (Fenton, 1984: 145). In *Moral Education*, Durkheim conceptualizes morality as secular and as comprised of three elements: (1) a spirit of discipline, (2) attachment to social groups, and (3) autonomy or self-determination. He writes: “But if we methodically reject the notion of the sacred without systematically replacing it by another, the quasi-religious character of morality is without foundation, (since we are rejecting the traditional conception that provided that foundation without providing another)” (Durkheim, 1961: 10). Thus, Durkheim uses the three elements to characterize secular morality as rational, as opposed to using a religious basis of faith.

The school environment is viewed by Durkheim as acting as intermediary between the family (and its limitations to teach morality) and the society at large because it has “little societies of friends” (1961: 231). Education is the foundation of society, and its members must learn the norms and behaviours of social life in order to survive and thrive. Durkheim states:

Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands. But on the other hand, without a certain diversity all co-operation would be impossible; education assures the persistence of this necessary diversity by being itself diversified and specialized (1956: 70-1).

Here Durkheim points to the flexibility of education to address the child as individual in the process of receiving an education promoting eventual full membership in society.

This also provides support for education as an element for social cohesion.

(A) The Spirit of Discipline

Durkheim posits that children learn morality by learning in, and interacting with, the social world. Morality in children emerges from the context in which children live. It is accepted that children have natural abilities and their nature (Durkheim, 1961: 129). The 'spirit of discipline' is comprised of two parts: (1) "the preference for regularity of existence," and (2) "the moderation of desires and self-mastery" (Durkheim, 1961: 130, 132). One can judge that these two parts appear as characteristics based on maturity and experience, but children's limited maturity and experience make it necessary for these parts to be taught, developed, and modeled by adults, most often by teachers themselves. Children are open to being taught because they are creatures of habit, and are open to imperative suggestion - they can be molded intellectually and emotionally (Durkheim, 1961: 134).

Durkheim draws similarities between children and primitives, he views them both as uncivilized and undeveloped, with children being open to becoming civilized and intellectually and emotionally developed. For education to be effective, discipline must be inherent in the process: "Discipline is in itself a factor, *sui generis*, of education" (Durkheim, 1961: 43). This means desires are managed and this creates the condition of happiness and moral health (Durkheim, 1961: 43-4). In education, the classroom provides the environment for discipline, according to Durkheim: "...the class is a small society. It is therefore both natural and necessary that it have its own morality corresponding to its size, the character of its elements, and its function. Discipline is this morality" (1961: 148-9).

(B) Attachment to Social Groups

Society is viewed as existing in a unitary form. Society is not a collection of individuals, but “a being *sui generis*, which has its own special character distinct from that of its members and its own individuality different from that of its constituent individuals...there must exist...a social being” (Durkheim, 1961: 60). Hence, one’s moral being is linked to one’s social being (Durkheim, 1961: 64). Thus, the school provides an adult modeled ‘social being’ as the environment for children to learn morality and be prepared for adult duties and responsibilities.

Morality once developed in children will regulate their social relationships in their present and future interactions. Foundational for their moral life, then, is the faculty of empathy (Durkheim, 1961: 207). This of course is counterbalance to children’s tendency for selfishness. Durkheim posits that altruism needs to be developed for children to be attached to things outside of themselves (1961: 221). Thus, forming attachment to social groups develops social being, and in turn moral being. Durkheim argues that altruism is present in children in the early years of their lives, it:

...is neither very extensive nor very complicated...Beyond what touches him immediately, the unknown begins for him...the circle of beings with whom he sympathizes is more extensive than that of the adult; for as the child endows even inanimate things with sensibility, he participates in their lives, he suffers their imaginary sufferings and exults in their pleasures: he commiserates with his wounded doll, the paper that is torn and crumpled, the stones that cannot move from a given spot (1961: 222).

(C) Autonomy or Self-Determination

Durkheim uses Kant’s moral framework of practical reason and pure reason as ‘heteronomous’ (rule from external sources) and ‘autonomous’ (rule from internal rational will), though he contradicts Kant in that one’s ‘rational will’ can still be moral but not necessarily autonomous (Durkheim, 1961: 109). For Durkheim, autonomy (or self-determination) exists in the individual taking responsibility to use one’s rational

mind to become disciplined and to form social attachments; one creates one's own obligation to participate by living as a social being. "Our whole nature has the need to be limited, contained, restricted – our reason as well as our senses. For our reason is not a transcendent faculty; it is implicated in society and consequently conforms to the laws of society" (Durkheim, 1961: 110).

To conclude the three elements, Durkheim posits that collective life has to be something that adults and children want to be a part of:

There is a pleasure in saying "we" rather than "I," because anyone in a position to say "we" feels behind him a support, a force on which he can count, a force that is much more intense than that upon which isolated individuals can rely. The pleasure grows in proportion as we can say "we" with more assurance and conviction (1961: 240).

The goal is to become a full social being, through discipline and ongoing autonomy, with social attachments. Society is itself a system of moral forces and both adults and children feel inferior to it if they are exercising their autonomy and taking a position of learning to understand choosing their conduct. "This consciousness confers on our behavior the autonomy that the public conscience from now on requires of every genuinely and completely moral being...the rule prescribing such behavior must be freely desired, that is to say, freely accepted; and this willing acceptance is nothing less than an enlightened assent" (Durkheim, 1961: 120). A child is autonomous when his or her individual goal is membership in the collective society, namely to become a citizen. Education both appeals to the homogeneity of the collectivity (e.g. morality), and the diversity of individuals (e.g. occupational aptitude), in cooperation with one another, and thus, supporting discipline, attachment, and autonomy.

2.4 Education and Social Transformations

Thus far, this chapter has presented the fundamental distinction of whether children ‘are’ (they exist as social actors – they are being) or ‘are becoming’ (they will be social actors – they are becoming). This distinction identifies the dichotomous existence of children as being defined as having a set of needs and rights, or dismissed as incomplete beings or not-yet complete adults, and this is significant to the examination of educating for civility and citizenship.

Though Durkheim’s perspective of society as a unified entity has been critiqued (for example, see Hunt, 1999: 215), it does best support the notion of an overarching moral framework as the basis of collective goals, intentions, and actions, and of the notion of intersubjectivity that is the basis of my argument. A notion of social cohesion, as part of intersubjectivity, supports the motivation behind public education as a ‘citizen-in-training’ in the context of the late nineteenth century, but does present some problems when looking at contemporary education. Contemporary public education does operate by standardized systems of measuring performance and learning, but it also does this from a pluralist standpoint. The focus of contemporary education operates from the perspective of the student with rights as a citizen in the collective, as opposed to the interests of the collective being of foremost importance. Focus used to be on individuals ‘being,’ or in the case of children ‘becoming,’ citizens first and unique individuals second; I suggest this order has become reversed in contemporary social and educational contexts.

Durkheim recognizes the agency of the child as being generated from individuality but flexible to reformulation resulting from education founded on the

societal collective as moral authority and source. He writes that teachers must foster the development of any “germ of individuality that is in each child...by all possible means” (Durkheim, 1956: 105). Education itself also evolves with the changing times, being transformed to adapt to changing social contexts, and not be repressive or leveling (Durkheim, 1956: 105). Not only are children to be properly cultivated but so to is the pedagogy of education. Pedagogy changes as social contexts and society change.

To situate the agency of the child in education a connection will be drawn to the process of choice in pedagogy that Durkheim suggests occurs as society is transformed over time.

Is it a matter...of arousing either patriotism or the sense of humanity? We shall know all the better how to shape the moral sensibility of the pupils in one or the other direction when we shall have more complete and more precise notions about the totality of phenomena that are called tendencies, habits, desires, emotions, etc., of the divers conditions on which they depend, and of the form that they take in the child (1956: 111).

For Durkheim, finding balance between ‘liberty’ and ‘authority’ is the goal in education. “In reality these two terms imply, rather than exclude each other. Liberty is the daughter of authority properly understood. For to be free is not to do what one pleases; it is to be master of oneself, it is to know how to act with reason and to do one’s duty. Now it is precisely to endow the child with this self-mastery that the authority of the teacher should be employed” (Durkheim, 1956: 89-90). Once again, the child’s agency is accepted as real and active, with space to make moral choices while participating in education to become the civil citizen.

But, what is at issue is not that children do not have autonomy or agency, but rather: under what conditions is a child’s capacity for these things recognized and given credit? Until the age of about eighteen, the majority of children are under adult control to some degree. Thus, the key for understanding children’s autonomy is the level of

influence (or perhaps coercion) needed to guide and teach children through their growth and development. Again, the issue is not that children's autonomy is in question, but to what degree they need to be influenced and controlled in order to become successful, independent, responsible, and moral adult citizens, and these issues are certainly charged politically.

Durkheim's theory of education promotes society as having control over individuals. This is coercive power, the power that society has as a collective over its members operating as a public conscience that checks the conduct of the citizens of society (Durkheim, 1938: 2). Individuals in society do often not feel coercive power until it is resisted; however, no individual can live with complete autonomy from the coercive nature of the collective society.

Historically, modernity and the industrial age presented a shift in social consciousness. A definitive characteristic of humanitarianism emerged in social thought with: "...a clear index of modernity: relations between persons, or between state and persons, becomes marked by a greater humanitarianism" (James et al. 1998: 43). Hence, the well-being of children, in regards to health, education, and welfare, became a concern for policy makers, social reformers, and educators.

With compulsory education, there was an avenue for the governing bodies to have access to children circumventing the more complex avenue of having to interact with family units on an individual basis. For example, health reforms were administered through schools, not through families, hence, children were considered as separate entities from their families (Sutherland, 2000: 16). Therefore, children came to be considered as 'subjects' outside of their kinship relations.

This transformation in thought did not occur suddenly, there was no ‘discovery of the child,’ but perceptions of practical problems, such as health and well-being, emerged with the growing population and emerging industrial economy. Childhood began to be defined with ‘phases’ that needed particular attention, guidance, and resources. Four distinct spheres were distinguishable: “improving conditions for good family life, establishing systems of child and family welfare, transforming the educational system, and organizing a pattern of child and family health care” (Sutherland, 2000: 20). With regards to transforming the educational system, new campaigns and initiatives were focused on such things as: compulsory attendance laws, physical education, domestic science, technical education, and the introduction of kindergartens (Sutherland, 2000: 21).

In sum, with the transformation in social consciousness and the growth in industrial society, the societal perspectives on children changed to some degree, though arguably not with consistency, to improve the consideration of children as individual autonomous subjects in need of care, education, and good health.

2.4.1 Durkheim’s Theory in the Contemporary Context

What can be learned from Durkheim’s theory of education for the contemporary context? Created in the time of revolution in France, Durkheim’s theory of education was intended to support social cohesion because of its basis on a collective consensus of morality. The social being was founded on the conscience collective and with society as the moral authority in replacement of God (Dill, 2007: 227). What, then, are the moral sources for the contemporary context? And does the objective of social cohesion address contemporary social disharmony, as pointed to in the beginnings of this thesis?

Durkheim's theory articulates an option for a non-theistic source and authority for morality, which is useful in the contemporary context of pluralism and diversity (Dill, 2007: 232). Dill recommends situating the context of the contemporary education to combat the problem of educational contexts with varied degrees of secularization, by doing this "we learn the importance of articulating the sources of morality and the moral authority embodied in them" (2007: 234).

The most significant challenge to Durkheim's theory in the contemporary context, and especially in Ontario and Canada, is the diversity of individuals that now comprise the student body found in classrooms. Durkheim's theory works on a basis of cultural homogeneity (Wesselingh, 1998: 42), and, again as presented in the introductory pages, this is not part of Canada's current make-up. Hence, this only adds to my argument of the need in public education for promoting the intention to connect with others. Unfortunately, it is commonly held view that cultural homogeneity, for example a national identity, is elusive in Canada. Though perhaps it is easier to pinpoint on the provincial and territorial level, which then holds promise for education administered at those levels.

Promise for contemporary Ontario education from a social-centered intention, as with citizenship, is promoted through "new ways of learning, and new forms of education built around new learning styles...[and]...to strengthen the personal autonomy and self-confidence necessary to be a contemporary citizen. That citizen has to be well informed, competent, willing to participate, able to make his own decisions and ready to defend his choices" (Wesselingh, 1998: 43). This again is supportive of my suggestions for human connectedness as part of public education, and citizenship education in particular.

2.5 Exploring Education in the Past and Present

2.5.1 Early Ontario – Shaping the Civil Citizen

In Canada, the earliest formal schooling was administered by missionaries and religious orders and “was oriented primarily to the replacement of indigenous lifestyles and knowledge with European concepts of morality and consciousness” (Wotherspoon, 1998: 48). Upper Canada’s earliest schools, called common schools, for example dating at 1785 in Kingston and 1789 in York (now Toronto), were run by anyone who desired to teach (Johnson, 1968: 23). Government run public schools were initiated by the *District Public Schools Act of 1807*, and in 1822 the General Board of Education was created to supervise the schools in the colony of Upper Canada (Johnson, 1968: 25). By 1838, there were 651 common schools with a total of 14, 776 pupils, housed in crude log buildings heated by open fire (Johnson, 1968: 27). In 1885, kindergarten became an integral part of the Ontario public school system with the youngest of the population in attendance (Johnson, 1968: 84). With the *Ontario Act of 1871*, public schooling was transformed from being a voluntary activity to compulsory for children of seven to twelve years of age, for four months of the year (Johnson, 1968: 85).

Social improvement was the main goal in early nineteenth century education in Upper Canada (Prentice, 1999: 183). Social improvement included such things as good health, opportunities for earning a wage, and free public education available for all children, that is, education planned, administered, and delivered by the state. Prentice tells us: “The response of school reformers in Upper Canada to the social dislocations of their times was, in sum, to promote an essentially inegalitarian view of society and an equally inegalitarian approach to schooling. Control of the uncivilized poor, on the one

hand, and the promotion of middle class respectability and achievement on the other, were clearly their fundamental aims” (1999: 184). Thus, ‘inequalities’ in society between individuals was accepted and acceptable.

Public schooling was the avenue for children to transition from childhood to adolescence, under the control of the state and its educational agenda, and eventually move to adulthood. The process was one meant to protect in the interim, and to prepare to meet the complexities in the troubled society of Upper Canada (Prentice, 1999: 40-1). Education in Upper Canada was established as the way to minimize ignorance of its future generations, directed by compulsory attendance of its children. Education itself was not a project of humanitarianism (Prentice, 1999: 14). In 1837-8: “...Canadians were typically uneducated and uncivilized – or to use their own favourite word – they were “ignorant.”” (Prentice, 1999: 49). In the minds of political leaders and promoters of education, wealth in the nation was a direct result of good schooling (Prentice, 1999: 53). Hence, the state was involved in schooling in the interest of improving its economic position in relation to the United States, which had developed exponentially in comparison to Upper Canada. “If Upper Canadians didn’t advance quickly...they were doomed to remain “hewers of wood and drawers of water” for their richer and stronger neighbours...the education of future citizens therefore required the parental interference of the state” (Prentice, 1999: 171).

Along with economic opportunity, “Economic progress required civil order...Schools should cultivate the students’ sense of citizenship, loyalty, respect for property, and deference to authority...Education should prepare youth...as members of the civil community in which they live...Unguided individualism – of students and

teachers – posed great social risks, as the rebellions had proven” (Axelrod, 1997: 25). The poor, adults and children, were viewed as a threat to the civil and moral order of communities (Axelrod, 1997: 28). Education was viewed as the best investment against social, moral, and economic decline. Children who were educated were then able to become part of the ‘respectable classes’ (Prentice, 1999: 66). All children were sent to school in an attempt to improve social order (Prentice, 1999: 25). They were viewed as ‘adults in the making’ and as future adult citizens in their own communities.

With Upper Canada being populated by a majority of British colonists with educator’s using Victorian values to understand human nature, children were viewed as ‘savage’ needing to be ‘civilized.’ Being labeled as ‘savage’ or ‘civilized’ was in alignment with social class (Prentice, 1999: 67). Education was the way out of savagery and into civility with the positive consequences promoting social harmony. The school system was viewed as the means to bring people together through a common cause in local affairs and to share values in the school system to “help bridge the gulfs of nationality, religions, occupation – and class – that divided Upper Canadians” (Houston and Prentice, 1988: 273). Thus, education was also viewed as an investment in future survival and support of peace to stave off potential conflict (or war) between social classes. The societal view became to divide people into groups of ‘educated’ and ‘uneducated,’ with potential conflict diminished when the lower classes had taken on the values of the civilized classes (Prentice, 1999: 37, 124).

Public education was free to encourage all children of different classes to attend and participate in refining their intellect and skills. R. S. Henderson, the 1852 Kingston superintendent, was distressed by the gap between rich and poor. “Education is to be the

lever...that will elevate the social state of the poor – assimilating them in habits, thoughts and feelings to the rich and educated – giving them the same intellectual tastes and pleasure; and endowing them with the same sentiments and feelings” (Houston and Prentice, 1988: 274-5). Despite the interest in creating education to minimize gaps between classes, the educators did agree that different education programs should be given to children based on their class identity (Prentice, 1999: 139). The opinions of these educators then perpetuated the worldview of distinctive abilities based on socio-economic position. Predictably, children from poor families were not granted the same opportunities for improving themselves, and the majority did not move on to higher levels of education, in what would now be identified as secondary and post-secondary education.

By 1871, education in Upper Canada had been formidably shaped by the views of Egerton Ryerson, known as the patriarch of common schools, who retired as chief superintendent in 1876 (Child, 1978: 279; Lazerson, 1978: 4). Ryerson’s idea of education was to transmit a moral theory to produce moral conduct. He viewed moral conduct as emerging from norms based on moral theory “integrated in and grounded on the all encompassing truths of Christianity” (Fiorino, 1978: 62). Children were taught that their “ultimate end consists of the enjoyment of God – the adorable and only source of all excellence and happiness” (Fiorino, 1978: 63). It was Christian values that formed the basis of the approaches for individuals to “engage in social relations through ‘willing’ or ‘cheerful obedience’” based on the church providing the inspiration for the formality of an education system (Wotherspoon, 1998: 140, 139).

Education as the way to maintain and support social order made especially noticeable the issue of child labour because children were to use the daytime to attend school. In rural settings boys were often put to work on farms by the age of eight (Houston and Prentice, 1988: 15). In urban settings children would help their families with a market garden, or boys would find paid jobs such as messengers and shopkeepers' helpers though the work held no long term security, or by 1870 employed in factories of tobacco and cotton (Houston and Prentice, 1988: 219-20). The education that public schooling provided was the way to teach children about character and morality and to stave off the pitfalls of juvenile delinquency, a favourite topic of social reformers in the late nineteenth century.¹⁵

In relation to the model of the child as 'immanent,' education in Upper Canada was primarily about promoting the moral development of the child to become a moral and responsible adult who conforms to Durkheim's "coercive forces" meeting expectations and social roles as deemed fit for individuals based on age, gender, and class. Children in Upper Canada were accepted as having individual personalities and psychologies but were expected to bend to authority and cooperate with the discipline needed to hone rationality and acquire self-control in the proper education for civil society. The nature of the child as impressionable and a creature of habit (Durkheim, 1961: 134) also supports the process of molding the child into the civilized future citizen. Thus, respect for the individual is sustained and at the same time moral and social order is produced and maintained.

¹⁵ See Chen, for discussion of how juvenile delinquency has been treated in a dual manner, in some cases delinquency resulting from 'innocent children' who need empathy and forgiveness; or delinquency as the lead into crime with the child turning "from a defective seedling into an evil plant" (2005: 43-44).

Children's cultivation of good habits is viewed as foundational to their proper development. Education in support of good habits, found in discipline, also help the 'immanent child' reach full development. One of the notable things about a focus on 'habits' is they steer the child's identity, and perception by others, away from 'heredity' and also support the idea that the child is impressionable and can develop and reach the end goal of morality and civility (Chen, 2005: 54).

2.5.2 Contemporary Ontario – Child Citizen with Rights

The transition to education in the industrial age, prior to the current technological age, involved changes from rigid discipline and rote types of learning to encouraging children's imagination and individual expression. Schooling needed to respond to the changing world and children's needs for subjects that "more closely related to their personal experiences and social environment" (Axelrod, 1997: 105). Hence, with the industrial age, the child student had become an interactive subject in the planning of a modernized education. Children are not simply 'blank slates' to be programmed to behave through processes of memorization, but they will subjectively engage with what they are learning.

Also in the transition toward the industrial age, came a change in ideas of how people were regarded as citizens of nations. The industrial age brought a social movement, referred to as 'the social' as part of the transition to a welfare state where citizens' well-being was overseen by their nation state. Welfare programs were put in place, for provision of such things as housing and wages for people who were economically challenged to provide for themselves and their families. The Great Depression of the 1930s provided a significant economic blow to many, bringing about

the idea that the state needed to intervene in order to help people survive through rough economic times. People were questioning their experiences of poverty in relation to social institutions, and in relation to heightened expectations based on being educated and being moral. Lives were not going as planned. This resulted in social movements that focused on the importance of democracy and individual rights (Wotherspoon, 1998: 4).

If Durkheim's theory of education stipulates the goal as education of the child for the good of society, then is contemporary public education also to uphold a framework of civility in society? Or, from the oppositional perspective, is contemporary education wholly focused on the individual rights of children? Contemporary theory, in the sociology of education, states that education is part of the development of personality through social interaction in schooling. One's individual identity is formed through the process of *individuation*, defined as: "how our identity is constructed through notions of ourselves as distinct subjects," of which schooling is a major contributor (Wotherspoon, 1998: 83). "Formal education, by its nature, shares the general objective to transform individual character and consciousness" (Wotherspoon, 1998: 85).

Reva Joshee asserts that Canada's contemporary citizenship education is focused on social cohesion as most current, with five distinct phases in Canada's overall history of public education. She asserts that citizenship education is also combined with multicultural education since Canada's cultural diversity along with citizenship has always been included in its educational agenda as part of nation building (2004: 127). Joshee's five phases consist of (1) 1867-1940 with an ideal of assimilation; (2) 1940-1963 as developing a sense of 'Canadianism' emerging from post-war sentimentalities; (3) 1963-1970s with identity issues emerging from Canada's Royal Commission on

Bilingualism and Biculturalism; (4) 1980s-mid 1990s with the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms taking centre stage with social justice; and (5) late 1990s to present with prominent focus on the notion of social cohesion (2004: 135-50).

In response to the questions posed on the previous page about contemporary education, we have established that there has been transition in the recognition of children's agency, though inconsistently, and Charter rights do appear, but not 'children's rights' since the UNCRC emerged in 1989, to have been a prominent concept in citizenship education in the 80s and 90s. However, the question remains as to whether civility is still part of contemporary public education.

What is understood in contemporary education is that children have "evolving capacities" (Howe and Covell, 2005: 59). The understanding, and reconciliation, of the larger scope of the process of education and social life has taken place in contemporary contexts; children are understood to be evolving.¹⁶ "These evolving capacities are related not only to intellectual development but also to social interaction, emotional development, and the development of empathy" (Howe and Covell, 2005: 59). It is understood that there are sets of skills to acquire and develop, thus educating for citizenship should "facilitate the development of values, reasoning skills, perspective taking, and empathy" (Howe and Covell, 2005: 104).

Public education remains linked to educating for citizenship. The disciplines of Social Studies remain foundational in teaching about citizenship and its goals (Sears and Hughes, 1996), even though a definition of 'citizenship' beyond an understanding of the workings of government remains substantially undefined for planning curricula. The

¹⁶ Use of the word "evolve" is to follow with the argument of the authors. I understand the use of this word to mean "gradual development" and not to invoke connection to "biological evolution."

challenge arises because citizenship is taught as a normative concept and the liberalization of education does not lend itself well to normative definitions of socially contextualized topics because definitions are in a state of flux trying to pinpoint the meaning of the individual within the collective. The challenge to define citizenship is more complex when debates about aspects of children's agency are involved. For example, if children are not allowed to vote in their nation, will they ever be considered full citizens beyond the level of consideration they are given in the present, and hence, how do you define citizenship in a way that shows appreciation of the existence of children? I suggest that the child gains a substantive position to be considered a child-citizen or citizen of the present when each of them is aware of the 'rights of the child,' such as those stipulated in the UNCRC.

In addition, in the delivery of the education of the new millennium I suggest that the teaching of civility has been refined to now include the terminologies of pluralism, multiculturalism, political education, and global citizenship. When the individual child has the freedom and the 'right' (away from rigid discipline) to express himself or herself as per his or her own value system, and have the legal structure that exists as part of their existing citizenship by rights, these lend authenticity, validity, and power to the position of each child. The goal for students may not be civility, per se, but learning to be a citizen often framed as a global citizen. Nevertheless, civility is still being taught in the prescriptive sense since children still learn what they are allowed to do, and not do, and what are the current politically correct views to hold. Again, Canada's diversity of culture is supported, however, Joshee points to the nation's so called acceptance of cultural diversity as a foundational myth (2004: 129).

So, how does the teaching of children's rights fit into contemporary public education? Canada has ratified the UNCRC, thus children's rights are to be acknowledged and communicated to Canadians. The promotion of Canadian citizenship can be directly connected to children's rights education, so that when children learn about their rights they are also learning about the rights and obligations of citizenship (Howe and Covell, 2005: 6). The goal of children's rights education is explained as being: "...to provide the knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills that people need if they are going to build, sustain, or rebuild a society that is democratic and respects human rights. A concomitant goal is to promote a society characterized by an appreciation for cultural diversity and the values of tolerance, social equality, peace, and global citizenship" (Howe and Covell, 2005: 7). I suggest that it is through the process of educating children about their rights, in connection to the UNCRC, that children's agency is recognized and this makes children both 'citizens of the present' and 'citizens of the future.' Therefore, the dilemma of reconciling children as social actors in the present or the future is mitigated because educating children about their rights necessitates the recognition of their agency.

Interestingly, the dynamics of the global scope of citizenship bring out problems in the teaching of citizenship. The term 'citizenship education' has become a catchall term for many forms of education, such as: peace education, anti-racist education, moral education, human rights education, and predominant in current news - environmental education (Howe and Covell, 2005: 84). Hence, we can see that there are many ways that 'citizenship' can be described in normative terms through interests and behaviours of children, and of schools and teachers. I suggest that in the contemporary context the

objects of empathy have been broadened from personal contact, including members in nearby communities, to include taking account of others who are distant and will most likely be from different cultures and have different values and moral beliefs. This is a significant change from being “a Christian citizen” who engages with others with “cheerful obedience” because the distance creates a disengaged way to take account of others. The objects of empathy will most likely not be encountered in person, and thus the learning opportunity for skill development in empathic thinking and problem solving is minimal.

The apparent key that makes the difference in children becoming engaged with their citizenship is to have connection to contemporary issues in which teaching and learning can take place. Community service projects that some schools promote as citizenship training, such as helping in food banks or hospitals, are strongly connected to the adult world and make it difficult for children to understand how they connect to them as ‘citizens of the present’ because the projects “are lacking in the provision of socio-political or civic knowledge” (Howe and Covell, 2005: 104). Children are more invested in learning when there is a perception that their work is not charity, but making a real difference (Howe and Covell, 2005, 104).

In the Ontario Ministry of Education’s report *Shaping our Schools, Shaping our Future: Environmental Education in Ontario Schools*, the link to civic values is for the focus to be on the environment. The Ministry’s report reads: “Identify and support opportunities to engage students in environmental action projects within the current Civics course” (2007: 15).¹⁷ Hence, civic values have taken on another form, one that the

¹⁷ The civics course will be discussed further in Chapter 3 and 4.

individual student can connect to and participate in with a level of commitment that is of his or her choosing, and not just through coercion because of societal membership.¹⁸ The programs implemented to address issues have made educating for citizenship difficult in contemporary education. They have culminated into a pattern creating three recurring themes: (1) the programs are fragmented and teaching is done in discrete units, (2) specific areas are chosen and specific skills linked to these areas, and (3) the programs to address issues are negatively oriented (Howe and Covell, 2005: 108).

When programs are fragmented and taught in discrete units it becomes difficult for children to make connections to their existence as ‘citizen of the present.’ In making a connection back to the ‘social structural child’ model, the fragmented programming does not lend itself to the child reconciling their place in the larger context of the society as structure. Children will understand that they are subjects, but will be challenged to reconcile the meaning of their own personal experience within the larger social structure. Howe and Covell give examples:

Environmental education is taught as a separate subject from civic education, and anti-racist education is most likely taught as a short-term separate unit. A character education lesson may discuss tensions between loyalty and honesty; an environmental education lesson may discuss tensions between the needs of employees or industry and environmental protection. But there will be no extrapolation to the political tensions that these issues have provoked. Cross-referencing the issues, underlying values, associated problems, or behavioural solutions, is rare (2005: 108).

Secondly, with a focus on teaching specific skills for specific areas come programs chosen for emphasis on a social issue, for example ‘anti-racism.’ Accompanying the specific social issue will be specific sets of issue-related information and problem-solving strategies. Thus, missing, are the underlying concepts and principles from which children pull abstraction and then generalize for their own process

¹⁸ I have chosen not to fully explore the possible argument of ‘environmentalism’ as a social movement having ‘coercive power’ in contemporary societies, which admittedly would diminish support in the argument for the significance of individual contribution.

of education, leading to a process of learning overarching decision-making skills (Howe and Covell, 2005: 108-9). General public service messages, for example “Don’t litter,” do not provide learning opportunity on their own for children to develop decision-making skills in reconciling values in the larger context of community and citizenship, it simply becomes an exercise in following rules but not forming an opinion as to why certain choices are to be made.

To make connection with Durkheim’s theories of education, it appears that the teaching of discipline and habits has left contemporary education, leaving the moral framework of a child weakened, or perhaps not even built in the first place. Though, empathy and altruism (see Durkheim, 1961: 207, 221) will be activated with participation in focused programs, what is missing is full recognition of the student as an individual. There is focus on acquiring sets of skills, instead of cultivating habits. I suggest that it is the culmination of a set of habits along with skills that fully define and shape individuals, as opposed to only acquiring skills. For example, when teaching anti-racism, are children introduced to individuals who are real targets of racism, perhaps some of them are even fellow classmates?

Thirdly, and lastly, messages have to be delivered in a way that teaches children how to behave as good citizens on a daily basis, something beyond a negatively oriented message, such as “don’t kill whales.” Messages need to be constructed that provide positive connections to good habits and decision-making skills that children can cultivate instead of focus on how to prevent or control bad behaviour. “Negatively oriented proscriptions for behaviour cannot provide the motivation needed to form the values and goals that promote democratic behaviours” (Howe and Covell, 2005: 109). Thus,

negatively oriented messages are simply demoralizing and disempowering without a learning opportunity for children to understand and to learn how their own identity fits in with one as a citizen.

In moving towards a conclusion, I will return to the main theme of this chapter – the *agency* of young students. Contemporary citizenship education does not provide opportunities for students to connect their sense of self and the contribution they make, or can make. This is a result of the “social reproduction of a form of subjectivity” (Kennedy, 2006: 153) that remains in the institution of public education. Hence, a task remains in the need to create integral connection between children’s personal identities, as a revised sense of ‘subjectivity,’ and of a notion of citizenship as ‘democratic.’ What is promising as a solution is, generally speaking, children’s development of a sense of self and thus an understanding of their ‘self-interest’ is foundational to linking with helping others. So, creation of space for the self-interest of students is foundational to a revised sense of citizenship education. Howe and Covell explain: “...support and action for democratic ideals are motivated jointly by values, empathy, and self-interest” (2005: 111). Self- interest is often understood as ‘selfishness’ but that is not what is intended here, “...self-interest is not a zero sum game...[it] can be inclusive and involve consideration of others – particularly those with whom one can empathize” (Howe and Covell, 2005: 111).

To conclude section 2.5, when comparing the teaching of citizenship in early Ontario to the current time frame, I suggest the normative conception of citizenship has transformed to a notion of citizenship on the global scale. Educating for civility and citizenship has moved from a focus on the cultivation of discipline and habits in a daily

routine, to understanding and reconciling social issues that may occur in a student's own home, school, or community. Children have become 'citizens of the present' in a symbolic sense by the delivery of children's rights education; however, they are not fully considered 'citizens of the present' in a sense much different from early Ontario. The challenge is the acceptance of the *agency* of the child in the classroom to link to a normative framework posited as goals. This is a result of the liberalization movement of the welfare state and the emergence of individual rights. The normative frameworks that created the social structure of Upper Canada have become secondary to the framework of rights of individuals found in Ontario schools. There is still an interest in maintaining civility within the collective society; however, this is done through the enforcement of rules and regulations, and less through a normative framework of morality in society. Individuals, including children, are encouraged to create their own sense of self by using social connections of their own making. I think this plainly suggests a need for developed skills in social relations, especially when, as suggested earlier, the cultivation of habits is not part of the contemporary education regime.

2.6 Connections and Conclusions

This chapter has explored Ontario public education both past and present and examined the question: *In the delivery of public education what form of children's agency is connected to the educational project of shaping the ideal civilized citizen?* According to Wyness (1999: 354), despite the recognition of children as social actors in contemporary communities and society in general there is little movement toward practical changes in the way education is administered in order to treat children as competent social actors. In Ontario schools, students participate in consuming education

but adults remain in control and as the significant influencing agents. And of course young people, especially before the teenage years, are not socially mature and equipped to make decisions for communities overall.

What would be manageable, however, are student-governed bodies in contemporary school settings. Children could be consulted for ideas, opinions, planning and delivery of programs, at the school level, in which all students can participate. Challenges that schools would need to reconcile are mechanisms available for the student's voice to be heard, in support of what is being taught, learned, and delivered back to communities, or in critique of what is missing. For example, 'peer support networks' so that children can collectively regulate their behaviour through peer mediation and peer counseling (Wyness, 1999: 363). Also supportive and helpful, would be to introduce, for example, two types of 'peer group learning' as in (1) role-play and (2) discussion of controversial social issues that are of interest to the students, into the curricula (Howe and Covell, 2005: 127).

In linking this chapter to the definition of civility, how does civility appear in Upper Canadian and contemporary education? Again, civility is defined in this thesis to be that conceived by White: (1) to exercise self-constraint; (2) to express concern for others; and (3) to engage in rational dialogue through commitment to civil discourse (2006: 446). In Upper Canada's public education there was a concentration on exercising self-constraint through learning discipline and children's development as Durkheim's 'social beings' supports some movement to awareness of others in relation to the students themselves as individuals. However, in terms of engagement in rational dialogue, children were not given opportunity in public education to develop this capacity and skill.

In contemporary educational settings learning to exercise self-constraint is not of prominent importance in academic agenda. It is expected that all students in attendance have conformed to contemporary norms of social behaviour. As well, children are encouraged to pursue interests and hobbies passionately as ways of fulfilling their potential as unique individuals. The notion of expressing concern for others is addressed, at least partially, through various programs that teach about social challenges such as racism, yet is enough being done to advance the conception of the importance of intersubjectivity as part of living in Canadian democratic society? Most interestingly, Durkheim's theory of education, as witnessed in the education in Upper Canada, also supports children's rights education, and thus could be applied in contemporary settings. His theory supports both UNCRC's Article 28 (education) and Article 7 (nationality, which implies citizenship) by his explanation that education's function is two-fold (formation of the individual being and the social being) and the 'beings' emerge from a defined framework of collective values that represent a nationality. Based on the context of Durkheim's writing, his ideas are forward thinking because they support acceptance of the individual psychology of each child though his ideas come before many works in psychology that ponder individual development. The significance of social relations is transformed in the context of Durkheim's theory as relations from the moral authority of adults, as parents and teachers, to within contemporary setting to include relations with peers and fellow students in other age groups. And, Durkheim's theory does not support the exploration of emotional capacities, expressions, and experiences as part of the development of 'beings.'

Public education has changed over time, but what has not changed is the function of education as the tool to develop the child in his or her social position within the larger collective. Thus, children go to school to learn in multi-dimensional ways how ‘to be’ in the communities they live in. This chapter has established: the role of public education in civil society; public education as representative of collective space and the formation of civility; and an understanding of the agency of the student in public education. Chapter 3 will explore how empathy and emotional literacy are integral to the formation of civility in the young in their learning of how ‘to be,’ with examination of specific activities and programs delivered through the Ontario public school system.

3 Using Emotions to Take Account of Others

3.1 Introduction

Returning to the notion of human rights and the connection to emotions, Hunt suggests:

...autonomy and empathy are cultural practices, not just ideas, and they are therefore quite literally embodied, that is, they have physical as well as emotional dimensions. Individual autonomy hinges on an increasing sense of the separation and sacredness of human bodies...Empathy depends on the recognition that others feel and think as we do, that our inner feelings are alike in some fundamental fashion. To be autonomous, a person has to be legitimately separate and protected in his or her separation; but to have rights along with that bodily separation a person's selfhood must be appreciated in some more emotional fashion. Human rights depend on both self-possession and on the recognition that all others are equally self-possessed. It is the incomplete development of the latter that gives rise to all the inequalities of rights that have preoccupied us throughout all history (2007: 29).

Hence, since children are not "legitimately separate" from adults there is an understanding of how the inequality emerges for children's rights and the consideration of children as social agents with independent emotions. Yet, as established in Chapter 2, children are characterized as having evolving capacities over the passage of time with no definitive point of the child transformed into the adult, however, in the process of educating for children's rights the agency of children is acknowledged and activated.

The stage in children's social development that is significant to this part of the discussion is that of the emergence of the self. "Self-concept development begins in early childhood and continues through adolescence and adulthood. This self-concept consists of both a personal self (a sense of self as different from the other) and a social self (a sense of self as connected to the other)" (Ruble et al., 2004: 29). Thus, the self-concept is needed for the capacity and expression of the care of others and subsequently expressed in the capacity to empathize. Children have developed themselves as individual subjects when they are able to recognize other children (and babies and adults) as separate individual subjects. It is the capacity to consider others that creates the

dynamic of intersubjectivity, which also includes the forms of interconnectivity and interdependence. This is especially relevant in public education with fellow students in the classroom environment inducing the need for the capacity to empathize with others.

As established in Chapter 2, there have been some shifts, though admittedly they are minor and inconsistent, in educational thought of children being shaped to become the ideal citizen for life as an adult, to more consideration of children as individuals with rights and in some sense to shape children as ideal citizens for the present though engagement is encouraged with distant others. Hence, I suggest the development of empathy for the contemporary setting does have a perspective of prominence as an immediate need, as opposed to delaying or ignoring its development. The question of whether or not, and how, children are given opportunities to develop empathy and practice empathic thinking in the interest of developing it as a social skill is the discussion of this chapter.

The chapter focuses on exploring the question: *What ways is empathy taught and how is it problematized in the contemporary citizenship education project?* The need to explore these questions arises from the interest to understand how children's capacity to consider others through emotional literacy is considered in the citizenship education of learning students. In other words, how are students taught to consider and experience the subjectivity of another person using empathy? This question is significant to understanding the element of public education because it investigates how emotions are considered in the teaching of character and citizenship in Ontario schools.

The question is posed in this chapter because I think empathy is integral to debates about defining citizenship in multicultural contemporary social contexts, and thus

I am interested in exploring how empathy presents itself as part of the contemporary citizenship education project and to the notion of civility overall within Canadian society. I am also interested in exploring any shifts in how children's emotions have been, and are considered as part of public education, notably in consideration of children's knowledge of emotional literacy and training for emotion regulation. The chapter connects to *civility* by exploring the significance of the topic of empathy in public education's curricula with examples from both early and contemporary Ontario schools.

Some of the discussion in this chapter perches on the edge of the discipline of cognitive science and because the area of the sociology of emotions, and particular focus on empathy from a sociological perspective, is quite new I acknowledge there may be instances where this discussion could be argued to stray into other disciplines.

To understand *empathy* as a component of social relations it is helpful to associate it with understanding the development of *prosocial behaviour* in children. Defining behaviour as prosocial "refers to actions that are intended to aid or benefit another person or group of people without the actor's anticipation of external rewards. Such actions often entail some cost, self-sacrifice, or risk on the part of the actor" (Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg, 1977: 3-4). Previous research has supported findings that prosocial behaviour is learned (Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg, 1977: 7). Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg state that learning empathy is believed by many theorists to be the prerequisite for learning prosocial behaviour (1977: 126). However, it has not been shown that empathy is necessary for prosocial behaviour to exist (Alcock, Carment and Sadava, 2005: 251). There are some theoretical considerations worth examining to understand the development of prosocial behaviour in children, they include: psychoanalytic, social

learning, and cognitive development (Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg, 1977: 24, 28, 32). In summarizing the findings of multiple studies, Mussen and Eisenberg-Berg state:

...children are likely to develop high levels of prosocial behavior if they are raised in cultures characterized by (1) stress (from parents, peers, and other agents of socialization) on consideration of others, sharing, and orientation toward the group; (2) simple social organization or a traditional, rural setting; (3) assignment to women of important economic functions; (4) members of the extended family living together; and (5) early assignment of tasks and responsibility to children (1977:63).

Thus, for children's lives, and the development of prosocial behaviour, empathy is implied in the characteristic of raising children with a stress on consideration of others. Yet, as I will present later, defining and understanding 'empathizing' as a capacity and 'empathic thinking' as a skill also becomes problematic.

3.1.1 Durkheim and Emotional Capacities

Durkheim acknowledges that children have emotions and emotional capacities but they are to be overcome and transformed through the spirit of discipline.

The frequency of anger in the child and the violence it often has, prove better than words the natural intemperance of the child... We can see what a gulf there is between the child's point of departure and the goal toward which he must be led: on the one hand, a mind endlessly moving, a veritable kaleidoscope that changes from one moment to the next, emotional behavior that drives straight ahead to the point of exhaustion; and, on the other hand, the preference for regular and moderate behavior. It has taken centuries for man to travel this distance. Education must enable the child to cover it in a few years" (Durkheim, 1961: 133-34).

Durkheim argues that the child's mental life is something that needs power exerted over it by the influence of adults in their moral authority. "It is not enough that the child be accustomed to repeat the same behaviors under the same conditions. He must have the feeling that beyond him there are moral forces that set bounds for him, forces that he must take into account and to which he must yield" (Durkheim, 1961: 139). A morally developed individual has a "taste for regularity in life" which includes desires restrained and under control, an idea of normal limits, and a preference for moderation (Durkheim, 1961: 139). In accompaniment to Durkheim's theory of education, then, is that emotions

and the consequent behaviours driven by emotions are part of a child's education, however, they are to be quelled and disciplined as opposed to explored and expanded on.

3.2 Education and Emotions

Education is the means for the state to exercise social control and there has been a long, but largely uncharted, history of education and emotions (Boler, 1999: 30). Educators have long recognized that “emotions are slippery and unpredictable” (Boler, 1999: 3). In *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*, Megan Boler suggests that there have been two movements in education with the objective of controlling emotions: character education and the mental-hygiene movement (Boler, 1999: 48). The notion of character education remains today, even when reports from the new movement at the time showed “moral lessons taught in school largely dissipated under the ambiguities and demands of real life situations” (Boler, 1999: 48). Social scientists then shifted terms to shape explicit discourse of emotions, invoking the term “mental-hygiene” (Boler, 1999: 48). In 1909, formation of a National Committee for Mental-Hygiene was established in the United States (Boler, 1999: 48). The movement, described as “almost evangelical” was “motivated by an optimism and unbridled faith in the new social scientific conception of the personality” (Cohen in Boler, 1999: 48). Emotions were not framed as religious sins, but as pathological symptoms, and “to cure students, education emphasized not academic curricula but child-centered pedagogies aimed to reduce “stress” on the child” (Boler, 1999: 49). The problems of Western nations were seen to be “those of the individual personality” (Boler, 1999: 49). In being aware of some history of education and emotions, I suggest that these historical notions remain in ideas of public education

in thinking of emotions as “slippery and unpredictable” which leads to evasion and exclusion of the subject in curricula.

3.2.1 Understanding Empathy and Emotional Literacy

Empathy is both an emotion and a capacity for thought, and as an emotion it can be considered to be part of the broad topic of emotional literacy. Emotions are part of everyday life and thus, it is important for children to learn how to handle them appropriately for their overall development and growth. Within classrooms and public school settings in general, it is not possible for students to completely avoid having to deal with, or miss dealing with, the dynamics of their emotions. Some discussion of the topic of emotions, through the technique of teaching emotional literacy, is important in order to understand how empathy is handled in public education curricula. “In the United States, in what is being called an emotional literacy movement, school-based programs are being touted not only as essential to learning, but also as preventive measures against social problems such as youth violence, substance abuse and depression” (McCloskey, 2000: 13). Emotional literacy has also been called: “social and emotional learning (a common term in the United States), social competence, emotional intelligence, soul-friendly learning, learning by heart, heart skills, heart smarts, and even emotional regulation” (Glossop and Mitchell, 2005-06). The notion of one having an emotional intelligence was presented to the public at large in 1995, in a book by Daniel Goleman titled *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Goleman describes “EQ” as prescribed characteristics that some might call character and includes: “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from

swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (in McCloskey, 2000: 13). It is interesting to note that this definition had more focus of one having a relationship with one’s self, instead of with one’s self and with others in tandem. Boler suggests that for the contemporary context emotional intelligence provides a “site in which to explore discourses of social control and the “postindustrial” moral person...rooted in the scientific authority of cognitive science and behavioral psychology, emotional intelligence justifies a new conception of the moral person” (1999: 58, 59).

Emotional literacy has been slow to be fully accepted by educators and educational authorities and administrators to be integrated into Canadian education programs, however there are a few programs in place, such as: Tribes, Roots of Empathy, conflict resolution, and peer mediation” (Glossop and Mitchell, 2005-06). The program called Roots of Empathy (ROE) runs in numerous schools in Toronto and other locations in Canada. The program is described as:

“an evidence-based classroom program that has shown dramatic effect in reducing levels of aggression among schoolchildren by raising social/emotional competence and increasing empathy. The cognitive aspect of empathy is perspective taking and the affective aspect is emotion. ROE educates both the mind and the heart.”¹⁹ The statistics of the program are impressive, with the circulation of the program having now reached nine provinces with approximately 56 000 children participating;²⁰ and programs have also been initiated in Isle of Man, New Zealand, and Seattle, Washington.²¹

¹⁹ See website at: www.rootsofempathy.org

²⁰ These and additional statistics can be found at: ww.rootsofempathy.org/NationalProgram.html.

²¹ This and additional information can be found at: www.rootsofempathy.org/Intl.html.

The creator of the ROE program is Mary Gordon, who in her own book explains the value of public education. She says: “The goal of education is broader than creating job-ready youth – it involves nurturing individuals who can be publicly useful and personally fulfilled. Education has a responsibility to develop citizens. Students who have good job skills but poor social and emotional skills may get a job, but will have trouble keeping it or getting promoted” (Gordon, 2005: xv). Gordon makes strong links with citizenship because the program gives children:

...an understanding of empathic parenting and to inspire in them a vision of citizenship that can change the world. The program puts relationships at the centre of what creates a civil society...The relationship story is made real for children as they connect with a baby and parent who are regular visitors to their classroom during the first year of the baby’s life. The relationship between the parent and child is a template for positive, empathic human relationships. What children learn here has universal far-reaching implications: it shapes how they deal with each other today, and it lays a foundation for their future as parents and citizens...The seeding of citizenship in the classroom is aimed at creating a level of civility in the community and building the foundation for breaking intergenerational cycles of indifference and apathy (2005: 6-7, 9).

Because the capacity to feel empathy is universal, every society, regardless of culture, will consist of individuals with the ability to recognize the feelings of other people, including those who are different from themselves. When photographs are shown to people of human expressions, they are universally recognized as fear, happiness, anxiety, and sadness (Gordon, 2005: 32). Gordon also indicates that empathy is an integral part of interdependence (2005: 39). The suggestion of interdependence shows that empathy is integral to understanding the intersubjective characteristic of citizenship in school communities, and eventually the larger societal settings of citizenship in adulthood. This interdependence also reinforces the notion of social solidarity (Gordon, 2005: 159), which can be similarly linked with social cohesion.

3.2.2 Empathy for Effective Response

Delores Gallo presents an argument in support of empathy as the means for fostering both creative and critical thinking through reason and imagination (1989: 99). For public education, this means that the development of empathy in children is important for participation in civility as defined in this thesis. I have chosen Gallo's piece in support of educating for empathy because her argument toward the development of imaginative and critical thinking consequently promotes children's development in social relations and citizenship, which in turn promotes civility.

Gallo argues for empathy as the way for children to increase their capacity for emotional response, "Empathy does not intensify emotional response; it broadens it" (1989: 101). The broadening of children's emotional response develops a capacity for open-mindedness, which fosters resilience in social situations. Although, Gallo's choice of definition of empathy is not the same as mine, it does lend itself in part to the epistemological capacity that my definition is based on. In defining empathy, Gallo acknowledges from the psychological perspective both the cognitive and affective dimensions of experiencing emotion. Her choice is Rogers' definition, as: "the state of empathy or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the 'as if' condition" (Gallo, 1989: 100-1).

The purpose of education for Gallo is "the development of essential human competencies: a facility for dealing meaningfully with complexity and a capacity for effective personal response. The manifestation of these competencies rests upon possession of a broad knowledge base, clear and resourceful thinking, and the will to act"

(1989: 98). She suggests that it is through “the practice of empathic role taking from multiple perspectives followed by evaluative reflection on the experience” that promotes critical and creative thinking, which subsequently develops abilities in reasoning and imagination (Gallo, 1989: 111).

Overall, I suggest that the barrier to making emotional literacy and empathy as an element of it, along with care as an educational theme, as prominent and consistent parts of contemporary education curricula is that they are not easily measured, whereas individual testing is. Also required are teaching skills that may not currently be part of teacher training. But, I ask, how are children to learn to reconcile their individual identity from that as a community member if the concentration in public school is on individual achievement through test results? Instead, I suggest the ‘self developing in symbiosis with others,’ as empathy and empathic thinking offers, be instilled in children as the foundational stage in a two-stage process of learning to take account of, and care about, others.

3.2.3 Educating Emotions in the Past and Present

(A) Early Ontario

As previously mentioned, in the social context of Durkheim’s work children’s behaviour resulting from irrationality of emotions was to be replaced by discipline and habits from the moral authority of adults. The Council of Public Instruction of Ontario, located in Toronto, authored the *Rules for the Government and Discipline of the Model Grammar School for Upper Canada, and the Course of Instruction*, published in 1858. The regular curriculum over five years included: “Latin, Greek, Mathematics, French, German, English Grammar, Literature and Composition, History and Geography, both ancient and modern, Logic, Rhetoric, and Mental Science, Natural History and Physical

Science, Evidences of Revealed Religion, the usual Commercial Branches, Drawing, Music, Gymnastic and Drill Exercises” (1858: 11).²²

The Minister of Education approved publishing of *The Golden Rule Books*, used by students in 1915 Upper Canadian schools. This book describes the school as a social circle outside of the family but with the same moral obligations as those found within family life. The syllabus of moral instruction lists the ‘golden rules’ as virtuous goals for pupils, distinguished by age level for each ‘Form’ from one to four. The ‘golden rules’ for ‘The Social Life’ for Form 1 is for pupils to cultivate: manners and tidiness, obedience to parents and teachers, and truthfulness (1915: v), in comparison to Form 4’s ‘golden rules’ as: “Courtesy and respect to all in speech and act; truthfulness, kindness and sympathy; justice and generosity; public spirit as shown by an interest in schools, libraries, hospitals, parks, clean streets” (1915: vii).

In Winnipeg, just prior to 1919, a memo was generated announcing the intention for a National Conference on Moral Education in the Schools in Relation to Canadian Citizenship. In part it reads:

In common with the rest of the civilized world, Canadian communities have been profoundly impressed, through revelations of the great war, with the necessity of empathizing in the strongest possible way the educational activities that make for the formation of character and that tend to promote a high standard of individual and national life...It was recognized that any movement of the kind to be effective should be national in its scope and should command the interest and sympathy of all the people in every part of the Dominion without distinction of race or creed...The purpose of the conference is to stimulate public interest so as to accentuate character training in the schools and other institutions (1919: 1-2).

The organizers of the conference were very interested in public schooling being the way to transmit knowledge and training to children in relation to Canadian citizenship.

²² As explained in Chapter 2, it was not until 1871 that children’s attendance in public education changed from voluntary to compulsory, thus this information is understood to be relevant to the context of pre-compulsory attendance.

In large part, children's emotional lives were intended to be disciplined through the learning structure of public education. Moral education, as Christian morality, was covertly delivered to children to learn management and regulation of their emotions and to develop habits to relate well with others by virtuous acts of courtesy and kindness for example. Hence, character development and morality were ruled by "the will of God...because [He] is...holy, just and good...He is the Creator and Upholder of the universe, and must, therefore, be the Supreme Governor...[and be the]... rule of conduct to the highest orders of intelligent beings" (Fiorino, 1978: 63).

Relations with others, and attention to others as fellow citizens, was done through Christian values to "love God with all their hearts, and their fellow creatures of mankind as themselves" (Fiorino, 1978: 65-6). Children were to recognize happiness as: "moderation and reasonableness in life-expectations, the exercise of the social and benevolent affections, the exercise of both mental and bodily faculties, the formation and maintenance of good habits, good health, and a life lived in relation to God himself" and the acknowledgment that education was part of the means to this end (Fiorino, 1978: 64).

(B) Contemporary Ontario

The Ontario Ministry of Education's kindergarten curriculum lists the interrelated areas of children's development as: "physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic" (2006: 2). Teachers are to create a learning environment that: "encourages empathy, interest in trying new things, and the development of self-confidence" (2006: 22). Specifically identified, as an expectation in the child's development through kindergarten, is that he or she: "develop empathy for others, and acknowledge and respond to each other's feelings" (2006: 31).

Upon examining the curriculum for Grade 1 to 8, it is quite interesting to find that there is no specific mention of the same expectation for a pupil's capacity of empathy for others and acknowledgment and response to feelings of another person, in any of the various subjects taught, and is notably missing from Arts and Social Sciences. However, as is discussed further on, work toward creating effective human relationships is approached through the initiative of character development.

Comprising the secondary school level are Grades 9 to 12, which have a core set of requirements, along with a list of particular subjects usually chosen based on interest. It is only in the curricula for Social Studies and Humanities that there is any mention of understanding various roles of emotions in such things as caring for children, and self and others in relationships (Ministry of Education, 2000).

Keeping in mind the notion of citizenship in this discussion as supporting engagement in social relations with others, at the Grade 10 level, as a portion of the Ontario curriculum, "Canadian and World Studies" a course called "Civics" is designed to allow students "to explore what it means to be a "responsible citizen" in the local, national, and global arenas" (Ministry of Education, 2005: 63). Civics introduces three strands of citizenship: informed, purposeful, and active. Informed citizenship is: "An understanding of key civics questions, concepts, structures, and processes is fundamental to informed citizenship. In a diverse and rapidly changing society that invites political participation, the informed citizen should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the reasons for and dimensions for democracy" (2005: 63). Purposeful citizenship is to: "...understand the role of the citizen, and the personal values and perspectives that guide citizen thinking and actions...to reflect upon [their] sense of civic identity, moral purpose,

and legal responsibility – and to compare their views with those of others...examine important civic questions and consider the challenges...in which contrasting values, multiple perspectives, and differing purposes coexist” (2005: 63). Lastly, is active citizenship to fulfill student’s needs: “...to learn basic civic literacy skills and have opportunities to apply those skills meaningfully by participating actively in the civic affairs of their community...Full participatory citizenship requires an understanding of practices used in civic affairs to influence public decision making” (2005: 63).

Separate from the curricula in Ontario schools, is the Ministry’s initiative of character development initially implemented in all schools in delivery of the academic year of 2007/08. In the 2006 policy document *Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12*, character development is defined, in part, as “a cornerstone of civil, just and democratic society” (Ministry of Education, 2006: iii). One of the principles listed states: “Ontario’s population is becoming increasingly diverse. There is a growing need to find common ground on the values we hold in common” (Ministry of Education, 2006: iii). The document also makes a connection to citizenship: “Our citizens are our province’s best resource...As Ontario strives to provide the best possible education, there is a need to re-commit ourselves to the central mission of schooling – namely, to transmit from one generation to the next the habits of mind and heart that are necessary for good citizenship to thrive. To this end, we recognize that character development...is a natural extension of these efforts” (Ministry of Education, 2006: 2). In support of my argument, empathy also plays a role in Ontario’s initiative for character development, “We want our schools to continue to be safe and to be models of

effective human relationships, where students learn about and put into practice attributes such as respect, responsibility, fairness and empathy” (Ministry of Education, 2006: 2).

The question is, is both the civics course and character development initiative comprehensive for learning empathy as part of the contemporary citizenship education project? First, I will examine the civics course, then the character development initiative. The three strands of citizenship delivered in the course present citizenship intend to create a student who learns what constitutes a “responsible citizen” whose thinking is mostly supported by their position in society as an individual, and less on understanding and reconciling their position as a member in the collective citizenry. I suggest that this is inadequate preparation for students to learn about community and the myriad of social relationships they encounter, and this is especially surprising given the Ministry’s acknowledgement of Ontario’s increasingly diverse population.

The strand of purposeful citizenship comes closest to acknowledging diversity in values and culture that students will encounter, but it does not appear to provide avenues for understanding how to resolve any forms of conflict that will arise from these differences. The students are to compare varied beliefs and values, explain definitions of citizenship, analyze issues that involve contrasting opinions, and describe “how their own and others’ beliefs and values can be connected to a sense of civic purpose” (Ministry of Education, 2005: 67).

The strand of active citizenship aligns well to describing delivery of opportunity for students to learn how to apply skills to actively engage in community through “resolution of public issues and citizenship participation,” however the participation to resolve conflicts is explained as: “through the judicial process; through negotiation,

mediation, arbitration, conciliation” (Ministry of Education, 2005: 69). This leaves little room to explore differences and what learning from difference can create using the skill of empathic thinking.

Questions posed in the civics course overview include: “How do we ensure that all voices are heard?” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005; 63), which does acknowledge the intersubjectivity present in the implications of the notion of citizenship and social relations. Yet there appears to be no follow-through mechanism to reconcile the emotions that may arise in students as a result of the questions being posed and considered and especially in response to the differing views and perspectives based on different personal values and cultural, spiritual, and material interests. Hence, how are students to learn how to deal with conflict and resolve it within the given framework of what it means to be “responsible,” and how are they to develop empathic thinking skills?

The course in civics, designed especially as the prime delivery of the contemporary citizenship education project does not teach mechanisms for addressing diversity of values and opinions in any meaningful way. Nor does it appear to teach about children’s rights, which implies that the agency of students is not supported with full recognition of what it means to be a young person as a ‘citizen of the present,’ thus the development of the skill of empathic thinking is not addressed in a way that allows students opportunities for practice. I suggest that the transmission of knowledge manifested from emotional literacy and a set of skills to use in how to create positive social relations is distinctively absent from the Ontario education system. Missing for students, as well, is training in methods for cooperation, collaboration, and collective consensus beyond the rigid democratic model of government and judicial measures.

The character development initiative implemented in schools two years ago does have varied degrees of success in terms of students learning about community, and about a notion of caring about fellow members of collective society. In the report “Character Development in Action” that presents successful practices, the St. Clair Catholic District School Board, for example, explains their program called “Creating Belonging” with one aspect of school culture promoted as fostering empathy because students become familiar with the needs of others (Ministry of Education, 2008a: 16). This appears to be a wonderful program, but it seems to currently be running in only one school district and at one secondary school. Though arguably most, if not all, of the success stories promote positive social relations with care for others, empathy, and community involvement, the programs are not mandatory and not regulated, making it very difficult to measure what the actual success is. The nature of immeasurability, for example in the ‘positiveness’ of social relations, is of course why it is difficult to produce mandatory, regulated programs that would promote empathy, social relations, and community engagement. This leads me to suggest that the character development initiative, though positive in its intention, is not providing careful and complete delivery for opportunities for all students in all schools to develop intellectually and emotionally in parallel with what it means to be a member of collective society, and a citizen in Ontario, and Canada. It is not the intention of the initiative that is deficient, but the lack of definition and thoroughness of delivery and implementation.

3.3 Mapping Emotional Literacy and Care

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Howe and Covell point to the capacities of children as evolving in relation to intellectual development, social interaction, emotional

development, and the development of empathy (2005: 59). Education for citizenship is also linked to empathy:

Civic education should include relevant contemporary themes such as environmental issues and human rights, and also moral and character education. Its aim should not be limited to the provision of information about governance structures and adult citizenship rights. Instead, civic education should facilitate the development of values, reasoning skills, perspective taking, and empathy (Howe and Covell, 2005: 104).

Howe's and Covell's main thesis is that children's empowerment can be supported through redefining 'citizenship education' to include children's rights education, and increase the scope to include global citizenship education. I suggest that children's rights education asserts the recognition of the agency of students, thus helping forward the reconciliation of children as 'citizens of the present.'

In regards to empathy, as defined for this thesis, intersecting with the definition of civility, I conclude that that the curricula only partially address the aspects of civility. Again, the definition contains three factors: (1) to exercise self-constraint; (2) to express concern for others; and (3) to engage in rational dialogue through commitment to civil discourse (White, 2006: 446). In regards to exercising self-constraint, when a child develops his or her capacity to empathize he or she is also learning to exercise self-constraint because he or she learns not to have only his or her own feelings as important and significant in meaning and understanding, but that 'others' and the feelings of 'others' are also significant. Thus, empathic thinking does contribute to civility on this count, and developing it as a skill would produce civility in Ontario, and consequently also in Canada. In regards to expressing concern for others, when a child exercises empathy, he or she is expressing concern for others by the capacity to consider the subjectivity of an 'other,' and hence, civility is once again developed and supported with empathy. In regards to engaging in rational dialogue through commitment to civil

discourse, when a child uses empathic thinking and in exercising empathy itself, he or she is committed to civil discourse by allowing the subjectivity of an ‘other’ to be considered, and engaging in rational dialogue by this consideration.

3.3.1 Cultivating the Caring Student

If the public education curricula do not fully address the broad scope of emotional literacy how will children learn to care about others? If children know and accept the existence of others as distinct subjects from themselves, such as their fellow classmates, how does public education cultivate the caring student and the student who wants to participate in his or her community? Are young students interested in the self-evaluation that is made possible through empathy as a way of knowing?²³ This self-evaluation needs to be promoted to help youth decide to identify with citizenship and participate in civil society over the longer term.

If the focus of empathetic thinking is on the experiences of the ‘other’ instead of with the person himself or herself, then this may be the way for youth to understand an improved notion of citizenship for themselves, in the present and the future. It is the empathizer knowing, and learning, about himself or herself, and about others, that I suggest is significant for the delivery of character development and citizenship education. It is important for all of us, concerned about public education, to understand the social implications from the lack of the capacity for empathy and empathic thinking in gaining knowledge of others and how that affects children and youth as they participate in civility.

²³ I acknowledge that this statement induces the epistemological problem of reconciling the basis of knowledge of as “truth” vs. “subjective bias,” this problem is discussed in part the upcoming section 3.4.1 Limitations of Empathy.

Through scholarly research a strong connection has been made in understanding the roots of kindness and caring by exploring the relationships that children have with animals. In *Children and Animals*, Frank Ascione explores empathy in relation to children's relationship to animals, with the unfortunate fact that children do sometimes abuse them. Teaching children to care for animals is sometimes referred to as humane education. With the understanding that empathy is universal, it is thought that teaching children how to care for animals fosters connections with caring for other people and learning what is socially unacceptable behaviour, for example inflicting intentional harm (2004: 10, 28). Ascione also points to how violence can be prevented and diminished when children's development includes an "increasingly refined ability to connect with the emotional life of others, and respect for, or at least toleration of, others even others who are very different from us" (2004: 64). For citizenship education, I suggest that an idea of respect for the well-being of people and animals be included in school curricula in regards to learning about 'care' about, and for, fellow citizens.

Nel Noddings' book *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, presents the beginnings of changes in educational theory and policy explaining the move to establishing 'behavioural objectives' (1992: 4). Noddings argues that this objective for education does not allow for the student to develop for future learning, but for learning in the present. "If the item or skill learned is one that will be practiced over and over again in future learning, the problem of forgetting may not be so great, but teachers and curriculum makers would have to engage in some analysis to ensure that skills learned for an immediate purpose (the test) are actually embedded in future lessons. This has rarely been done" (Noddings, 1992: 5). Thus, the agenda for students to learn competencies in

particular subjects does not allow for the development of thinking in complex ways to address issues and difficulties that are context driven.

Noddings points to the work of John Dewey, who:

...recommended a mode of associated living as the basis for both education and democracy. He insisted that students be involved in the construction of objectives for their own learning; that they must seek and formulate problems, not simply solve ready-made problems; that they should work together in schools as they would later in most workplaces; and that there is an organic relation between what is learned and personal experience (1992: 10-11).

Though over time Dewey's work became mistakenly identified as "anti-intellectual" his ideas are often quoted by contemporary educators. His support of not what, but how, subjects are studied continues to inform the development of contemporary curricula (Noddings, 1992: 41).

In particular, Noddings points to Dewey's suggestion of 'continuity' in education. Among the notions of continuity as 'purpose,' 'place,' and 'people,' there is also 'curriculum' (Noddings, 1992: 65, 66, 68, 70). Noddings suggests that it is secondary schools that need a new design of curriculum based on centers or themes of care, because elementary schools have shown receptivity to humane alternatives (1992: 70). She suggests the following themes of care: "care of self, care for intimate others, care for strangers and distant others, care for nonhuman animals, care for strangers and distant others, care for objects and instruments, and care for ideas" (Noddings, 1992: 70). However, she is not suggesting the removal of the existing academic subjects, but to divide equally the attention to traditional subjects and new courses devoted to care (Noddings, 1992: 70).

3.4 Exploring Some Possible Challenges

3.4.1 The Limitations of Empathy

Not surprisingly the notions of empathy and empathetic thinking have limitations. I will address two of them in this section: conceptualizing empathy, and the risk of passive empathy.

(A) Conceptualizing Empathy

Stein's basis for empathy is through 'knowing,' such that its basis becomes epistemological. As with any discussion about 'knowing' there is the subsequent challenge of never being able to replicate the individual subjective experience of another person. How then does Stein account for this? Susan Verducci presents the conceptual history of empathy and the implications that are raised for its use in moral education. The obvious contention in using empathy for learning is in the choice of the definition of empathy itself. Empathy has been "delineated as either: active or passive; rational or mystical; artistic or scientific; and a symbol or projection or reception. This jangled account of oddly opposite conceptions signals profound conceptual confusion, confusion that can endanger arguments over cultivating empathy in schools" (Verducci, 2000: 64). Thus, the biggest problem for establishing policies in Ontario's contemporary public education that support empathetic thinking and emotional literacy may in fact be figuring out which form of empathy best fits with any combination of moral education, character education, and citizenship education.

Verducci argues that Stein's empathy exists only when three characteristics are met: "(1) the emergence of the experience (we come into some sort of contact with another subject), (2) the fulfilling explication (our affect resonates with theirs), and (3) the comprehensive objectification of the explained experience (we "are at the foreign

subject and turned with it to its object”)” (2000: 77). Thus empathetic thinking originates with the experience of another, similar emotional expressions, and shared comprehension of the experience. This poses potential problems in support of training for empathy and empathic thinking skills as part of education because it could be argued that when children are in the process of learning that the skill may never fully develop because all three characteristics may never meet in the combination needed.

Finally, Verducci accounts for the problem of relativistic knowing from Stein’s empathy, “Stein clearly differentiates between emotional identification, emotional contagion, and empathy...Empathy must both grasp the feeling *and* the foreignness of the feeling” (2000: 78). Hence, relativistic knowing is acknowledged, however, Stein herself never reconciles the ‘problem’ and in fact the ‘problem,’ as in the title of her work is the blurriness of the boundary between ‘self’ and ‘other’ when we are all in social relations together. It is the uncertainty of the feeling in one’s self and the feeling that is of an ‘other,’ that is part of never being able ‘to know’ in full that which is experienced by an ‘other.’

Next, if the conception and basis of empathy is chosen and then used in support of teaching about emotional literacy, there is yet another limitation with empathy that poses challenges for the ‘child as citizen.’

(B) The Risk of Passive Empathy

In *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*, Megan Boler argues that there is a risk for the occurrence of passive empathy when children and adults recognize the feelings of another and empathize, but not invest in doing anything in terms of justice. She writes: “I am not convinced that empathy leads to anything close to justice, to any shift in existing power relations” (Boler, 1999: 156-57). Boler questions whether

empathy contributes to democratic communities or whether it may end by harming notions of democratic communities because responsibility is not taken. She proposes testimonial reading as the way to make empathy successful, “Testimonial reading involves empathy, but requires the reader’s responsibility... Ideally, testimonial reading inspires an empathetic response that motivates action: a “historicized ethics” engaged across genres, that radically shifts our self-reflective understanding of power relations” (Boler, 1999: 158). For the child, the notion of testimonial reading seems to require a level of lived experience that the child will simply not have, and hence, skills in empathetic thinking may not provide a positive social lubricant in the end without an experiential connection that the child can relate to.

In conclusion, it seems that the foundational obstacle in educational planning for teaching ‘empathic thinking’ and supporting the development of ‘empathy’ is to first choose a mutually acceptable definition of empathy, which teachers are invested in and that they have the ability to facilitate testimonial reading in support of children’s learning empathetic thinking skills. This helps us to understand the challenges that are presented in adopting emotional literacy into the contemporary curriculum. Recognizing that emotional literacy is important in children’s development, is it possible to reconcile the difficulties of definition, or do the costs of reconciling differences outweigh the benefits of emotional literacy, thus dismissing the idea from education planning in the future?

3.4.2 The Limits of Schooling

When it comes to the moral development of children and the moral education they participate in, it is important to recognize the limitation that are presented in the school as an institution. Children’s success as a result of their schooling is dependant on, and

limited by social factors, personal factors, and school factors. However, the broad scope of education allows for the consideration of broader implications, than those of schooling. West-Burnham and Jones present the essential components for comparing *schooling* and *education*. Schooling's components are: "linear, fragmented, curriculum content, information transmission, quantifiable outcomes, and structures;" whereas, education's components are: "adaptive, holistic, learning for understanding, knowledge creation, qualitative outcomes, and relationships" (2007: 13). I suggest that *schooling* limits the long-term support of children developing the capacity to empathize and the emotional literacy that accompanies the success of a child's emotional health. The way for long-term support of children's emotional literacy is for educational networks to be formed with the involvement of education administrators, parents and caregivers, and other community members. In England, this has been attempted through a program called "Every Child Matters," with the five elements: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being (West-Burnham and Jones, 2007: 14). Though these elements are abstract they do provide a framework for guiding children in a holistic sense. At the same time, however, the school that each child attends is itself a 'community' creating an opportunity for a child to learn morality and expand the boundaries of their emotions in the development of their emotional literacy.

I have reached the conclusion that public education, as it is currently constructed in Ontario, is only one small part of a child's learning through their life course.

Emotional literacy and empathic thinking can be guided and shaped, and themes of care

can be encouraged, but ultimately the child, who grows into a youth, and then an adult, continually decides on the result of his or her education through life.

3.4.3 The Politics of Behaviour

In parallel with the notion of prosocial behaviour that is supported by the ideas of empathy and empathetic thinking, there is also the interest in the potential positive outcome of diminishing violent behaviour between people in communities – that is between ‘fellow citizens.’ The issue that arises from addressing ways to diminish violent behaviour is the uncertainty of the implications for the notion of citizenship. Perhaps the potential answers suggest that the definition of citizenship in modern societies needs to expand to capture the social nuances of moral relativisms and “the end of ideology” (Waiton, 2008: xiv). In *The Politics of Antisocial Behaviour*, Stuart Waiton discusses the notion of diminished subjectivity in modern times and how individuals as framed in the structure of the social world need to be protected. Major issues in political campaigns, notably in the United Kingdom, have focused on individual’s liberty as “the right to be protected” instead of freedom to make choices (Waiton, 2008: xvii). He goes on to say: “The understanding of individual responsibility and of the relationship between the individual and society are, today, both confused and confusing” (Waiton, 2008: xvii). Waiton suggests that the modern world has diminished the understanding of a sense of moral purpose that traditionally existed, and what now exists is the individual at risk, and in need of protection – ‘a victim.’ Waiton suggests that it is a collapse of power at the political elite level which has transformed ‘the public’ to become individuals at risk, “Today society does not face the occasional moral panic, but is rather in a permanent state of amoral panic” (2008: 10).

From Waiton's discussion, the questions that arise here are whether citizenship needs an understanding of a universal moral purpose, and whether empathy now becomes even more important to pass on as an emotional literacy skill to citizens? With the rise in concern for antisocial behaviour, and the need to protect individuals, it remains surprising why the issue of emotional literacy has not been more prominently placed on the public education agenda. Or perhaps with the Ontario Ministry of Education's "character development initiative" it is believed to have been addressed and been implemented?

An aspect of children's learning is approached in the area of 'therapeutics' as the self-help industry that is so predominant in the Western world. Children (and adults) "are encouraged to think of themselves today as vulnerable or victims, continually being invited, to make sense of their troubles through the medium of therapeutics" (Furedi in Waiton, 2008: 91). The interpretation of the emotional effects of crime victimization is a predominant area of research in criminology, yet it seems the significant impact on the education agenda is for 'anti-bullying' campaigns.

Waiton states that an examination of antisocial behaviour mistakenly treats it as a social problem that is generally making things worse for everyone, instead of a focus on the realm of morals and politics that address the *asocial* society we live in, not *antisocial* society (2008: 11). So, what is the better way to support civility and citizenship, even when "the human subject persists, but in denial of its own subjectivity" (Heartfield in Waiton, 2008: 84)? Waiton concludes that a prosocial approach to society would be progressive, he asks: "How can we burst the bubbles many of us seem to be living in?" (2008: 160). My response is that there need be a loud call for teaching the skill of empathetic thinking to young people. I do acknowledge that people are being de-

socialized by having third-parties mediate for many social conflicts, (Waiton, 2008: 160) and perhaps children are not being encouraged to speak out when injustice strikes them in their social relations, but instead are to go to an adult-figure who will resolve the conflict and miss a learning moment for children. However, perhaps increasing skills in emotional literacy will decrease the need for mediation in the first place.

3.4.4 Public and Private Expressions

In *The Fall of Public Man*, Richard Sennett argues that boundaries of public and private lives have undergone transformations. The public lives of individuals have transformed to become more private, and the traditional public life no longer has significance in the social realm resulting in private lives existing in psychological crisis. “Western societies are moving from something like an other-directed condition to an inner-directed condition – except that in the midst of self-absorption no one can say what is inside. As a result, confusion has arisen between public and intimate life; people are working out in terms of personal feelings public matters which properly can be dealt with only through codes of impersonal meaning” (Sennett, 1978: 5).

Sennett’s theory of expression separates public and private behaviour. This ties into the discussion and problematizes the support of my argument because Sennett argues that expression in the realm of the public no longer has traditional meaning. My argument is for civility being produced in the public life of education for the public of citizenship and social relations, thus, the traditional framework of civility I argue for and Durkheim’s notion of a collective moral consensus passed on through education become unsupportable.

Sennett continues:

To talk about expression in public leads naturally to the question: what kinds of expression is the human being capable of in social relations?...As concern for questions of selfhood has grown greater, participation with strangers for social ends has diminished – or that participation is perverted by the psychological question. In community groups, for instance, people feel they need to get to know each other as persons in order to act together; they then get caught up in immobilizing processes of revealing themselves to each other as persons, and gradually lose the desire to act together (1978: 6, 11).

This suggests that the notion of community is no longer significant for a meaningful existence in, for example, neighbourhoods, schools, or people organizing together to fight for children's rights.

Sennett's position calls into question the authenticity of the connected social relations that is the outcome of my argument. In response, I suggest that the notions of autonomy and empathy as cultural practices that require the individual will and the interest in connecting with others as the way out from possibilities of inauthentic relations. Individuals will continue to reconcile their 'public' way of being with their 'private' way of thinking and feeling and the erosion of the public life should not diminish the opportunity for social relations intended to lubricate human connectedness. The need in our social world is for a motivational shift to a thinking mode that has intention for human connectedness through empathy, and perhaps this means the boundaries of public and private will shift and be redefined once again.

3.5 Conclusion – Educating for Children's Emotional Lives

This chapter has explored the question: *What ways is empathy taught and how is it problematized in the contemporary citizenship education project?* The results have established that the contemporary public education curricula and the contemporary citizenship education project do give children and youth opportunities to practice and develop empathy, however only to a limited degree and not with enough consistency to

support what I argue is a need for a developed social skill set. While the Roots of Empathy program appears to be gaining in popularity and is offered in an increasing number of schools as time goes on, there is generally a lack of addressing topics of emotional literacy and empathic thinking, most especially at the secondary school level in a province-wide mandatory and regulated format. With the course in civics being offered at the Grade 10 level there is a wide gap between leaving the elementary level of Grade 8 and arrival at the second year of high school. This transition in age represents a significant time in the emotional lives of youth, who in Grade 8 are approximately thirteen to fourteen years old, and by Grade 10 at approximately sixteen years old and coming to some legal status of adulthood when relating to others takes on dimensions that have not been experienced earlier in their lives.

Emotional literacy in general, and empathic thinking in particular, promote all three aspects of civility, and therefore, I argue it is imperative that a broad scope of emotional literacy be infused into the Ontario K-12 curricula because communities will continue to exist and positive social relations will make participation in those communities more meaningful and rewarding. This not only has implications for communities on the local level, but also exponentially up to addressing the social solidarity of Canada's diverse citizenry. Unfortunately, the notion of empathy is problematic, lending difficulty to implementation in a mandatory and regulated fashion. In acknowledging that empathy does have limitation and challenges, I suggest that this should not dismiss the need for it within emotional literacy as part of a developed social skill set. Therefore, work needs to continue to comprehensively infuse emotional literacy

and the development of empathic thinking into the contemporary citizenship education project, and the public education regime in general.

4 Conclusion: Civility - Citizenship, Community, and Social Relations

The thesis has explored how public education promotes the practice of taking account of others in the interest of producing civility and civilized citizens, by examining the question: *In the interest of producing civilized citizens, does the contemporary citizenship education project in Ontario's public education system recognize the agency of its students and deliver opportunities to learn about and explore emotions and develop empathy and practice empathic thinking skills?* The completed research and analysis strives to make a contribution to contemporary discussion concerning: individual development in collective spaces; potential outcomes from education for improved social order; and emotions in human interactions in support of empathy as a capacity, and empathic thinking as a skill, to produce civility in communities. This discussion is not without limits and the recommendations are not all encompassing. The future of civility and citizenship in Canada will require continual attention and re-examination. What is provided is further understanding of how public education is producing, or not producing, civilized young citizens ready to participate in their present lives and future social lives as adult citizens.

Through investigation and discussion of the topic of civility, further understanding has been established and conclusions have been put forward to define the placement of a number of issues in the context of public education. These conclusions are: (1) what contemporary civility is and what is involved in its production; (2) the form of children's agency taken into consideration; (3) children's agency acknowledged and activated through children's rights education; (4) the form and role of emotions in general, and empathy in particular, as part of citizenship education and character

development; and (5) some problems and challenges that emerge from the ideas investigated.

The significance of the research findings can be gauged by posing a revised question: “Can civility survive in contemporary communities where empathy and empathic thinking are not supported as important social skills?” The evidence suggests “no” because the production of civility is inherently linked to: a skill of taking account of others, exercising self-constraint, concern for others, and participation in dialogue which have all been linked to empathy in order to be successful. Thus, the proliferation of empathy and empathic thinking are corroborated as the basis for the production of civility in contemporary social life.

It is acknowledged that public education is nuanced and civility and empathy can both be framed with a characteristic of ambivalence. It is also conceded that public education is not “all bad.” However, the critical issue is that public education is not “all good” at delivering what is needed to create and maintain Canadian society, yet it remains the best technique to use to promote civility, social solidarity, and social cohesion through its educational enterprise of educating for citizenship. “Every society has its distinctive ideal of what the desirable citizen shall be. It expects its educational system to develop that ideal. This is readily apparent to anyone who studies the variation in projected human ideals from society to society and then discovers the congruence of society and education in each instance” (Lear, 1961: 196).

The reconciliation of structure and individual agency can now be explored with an advanced level of sophistication in the patterns and practices of contemporary public education. The societal structure, in this case the Ministry, remains as the authority for

education, and the individualism commonly reputed to be missing from Durkheim's theory of education (Pickering and Walford, 1998: 5) can be found in the emotional expression and personalized experience of feelings that each student has and will have. In Ontario, the contemporary citizenship education project needs to support the notion of a collective consensus of character and citizenship plus recognize and support the individualism of each student as he or she experiences his or her emotions. Thus, supporting emotional literacy as a major component of citizenship education.

Though the challenge of the claim that emotions are "slippery and unpredictable" remains, the notion of emotional intelligence does invite conversation and debate about emotion by pulling the topic from behind a curtain of evasion and exclusion out into discourse (Boler, 1999: 59). Hence, the notion of empathic thinking as an attainable and honed social skill retains validity.²⁴

Part of the examination in this thesis is to conclude on the dilemma of social exclusion and community membership faced by youth because of the contentious position they hold within a social group. In the agency of children and youth only being recognized in part, inconsistently, and with considerations, there are real consequences for their rights to participation. The issues remain complex but are aided by the movement for children's rights and children's rights education, which continues to grow as both a social and political movement, along with childhood studies as an emerging field of interest on university campuses. These will continue to provide the attention needed to further define and reconcile the place of children and youth and their rights to participation as citizens.

²⁴ Boler suggests the opening up of discourse about the relationship of emotional labour to capitalism and the workplace. For example, see (Hochschild, 1983).

In Ontario, public education is promoted as the cornerstone of civil society, and thus its function is to produce civil members of society, namely citizens. If contemporary education frames the function as serving community membership, what form or technique will children learn in order to fulfill this function, when students as ‘individuals with agency and emotional capacities’ are not recognized?

For the most part, contemporary social contact is mainly exhibited through electronic networks and young people appear to be encouraged to take account of others through means that minimize in-person contact, in-turn, making it much easier to dismiss the consideration of perspectives that are different from their own. But at the same time, it is true that more people communicate more often with one another than in the days before these fast-paced technologies existed. As well, with the popularity of home-schooling in North America it is interesting to consider that publicly regulated education may need to enter a phase of redefinition. That said, the vast majority of children in Canada and Ontario continue to attend public school.

With the objective of promoting social cohesion, how does Ontario’s curriculum promote or perpetuate social cohesion? As has been established, the objective of social cohesion is not consistently delivered through citizenship education or character development. Instead, its promotion is only in the symbolic sense and abstract sense because there are minimal learning opportunities and little, or no, practical skills associated with the modules on character development and citizenship education beyond volunteer work, with which a set of problems is presented if the work is not structured to create learning opportunities for students.

In conclusion, the recommendation resulting from the analysis completed is for the Ontario Ministry of Education to develop a new field of study for the K-12 curricula, called “Citizenship, Community, and Social Relations.” Of promise, and closest to this new field of study, is in the Ministry’s education pillar of “community, culture, caring,” as mentioned in the report on the Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy (Ungerleider, 2007: 15). Unfortunately, for the program to be useful and productive, the Ministry has yet to define what this pillar entails and to provide a framework for schools and school authorities to use for program planning and delivery (York University, 2007: 8). Until that is completed, administrators, teachers, and students do not have a concrete plan to pursue.

This recommendation is based on student’s development for the whole time spent in public education from kindergarten to Grade 12 with a foundation of promoting ‘the account of others’ in alignment with supporting ideas about ‘care’ as part of everyday life. In Chapter 2, the suggestion was made that ‘skills’ had replaced the notion of ‘habits’ as part of the educational process. The new field of study is not to suggest a return to the traditional notion of cultivating habits, but instead to use the notion of emotional skills to create a motivational shift in honing social skills that support students in the aspects of self-constraint, concern for others, and participation in dialogue, with emotion regulation forming the substantive portion of the skill set.

The ‘ideal character’ for citizens, as children, youth, and adults, is a socially skilled and caring individual who regulates his or her emotions, cares about others, and is committed to participating in rational dialogue as part of community life. Also, children need to learn that they have rights and to learn what their rights are. New ideas and

understandings of the contemporary citizenship education project can inform students of their balance of rights and responsibilities and the social virtue of open-mindedness.

Education needs to be understood as an ongoing activity with awareness of the “continuous interdependence between problem-posing and problem-solving” to meet the “unfinished character of humans and the transformational character of reality” (Bickmore, 2004: 195). Giving students opportunities to connect with real problems and understanding the consequences that may arise through practicing different problem solving techniques and decisions will provide a rich educational experience and make improvements toward students’ social development. These ideas are to form a new pedagogy to be passed on in the module on *citizenship* in the new field of study.

The module on *community* will be addressed first by creating awareness that empathy is challenged if the environment in public schooling is focused on accumulating individual credentials and almost constant competition. It is a commonly held view that public schools are “conduits for individual success” (Westheimer, 2008: 6) and thus rife with competition. Hence, it is not surprising that violence and bullying are often in the news and spawning the need for the implementation of a Safe Schools Act. The notion of community needs to be communicated and taught as a body of knowledge that includes all the various forms of community and the types of bonds, ties, and networks that form them. Children and youth would benefit from understanding more than just the definitions and workings of democratic governments and institutions, as what is currently delivered in the curriculum. Children’s and youth’s development of ‘self’ is directly linked to these expanded understandings. In addition, public education could deliver programs that enable students to prepare to handle the various dimensions of conflict that

are a constant in community life. For example, decision-making and problem-solving skills can be developed through modeling and practice of various relationships found in communities within and between cultures and individuals (Bickmore, 2004: 190).

Lastly, when we do not take account of others with empathy or empathic thinking our knowledge of others is based on assumptions, which leads us to inauthentic engagement and dialogue in social relations. Instead, empathy and empathic thinking create the space for people to know and have an account of themselves and others, in authentic *social relations*, which then perpetuates social cohesion. This practice will also create possibilities because with the consideration of other perspectives comes the possibility of redefining what is already thought to be understood within a certain framework. This results in practical uses of empathy and empathic thinking for creating possibilities that would have otherwise been missed.

Public education in Ontario could better serve its students and communities in coming to terms with how empathy makes a positive contribution to social cohesion and citizenship by introducing the program Roots of Empathy into all its schools as a province-wide mandatory program. The program could represent citizenship education from the early years of education, for example, Kindergarten to Grade 6. From Grade 7 to 12 there could be problem solving exercises for students with role-play to further develop perspective taking and empathic thinking in bringing together the three elements of citizenship, community, and social relations.

A change in pedagogy could also better serve the development of students by including what is referred to as “pedagogy of discomfort” for youth in the last year of high school. This is suggested for older youth because they have the maturity to deal

with multiple ideas and the complex social consequences that arise from them. This pedagogy is described as an invitation for “educators and students to engage in critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs, and to examine constructed self-images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others. Within this culture of inquiry and flexibility, a central focus is to recognize how emotions define how and what one chooses to see, and conversely, not to see” (Boler, 1999: 176-77). This process is meant to be collective and not individual (Boler, 1999: 177), and thus, fitting for exploration in a classroom. In undertaking a “pedagogy of discomfort” with empathic thinking as an activated skill, public education would also further prepare students for the complex relationships found in post-secondary studies and professional training and employment in the social world at large.

Finally, the contemporary citizenship education project has been advanced by provision of support for reaching beyond notions of individual freedom, toleration, and respect toward skill in actual engagement with others and an understanding of the communities that everyone flows in and out of in their lives. This ultimately supports movement away from negative social consequences of such things as alienation, isolation, and prejudice, which is of benefit to everyone. Ultimately, this is why the future of civility is to be aligned with the development of empathy and empathic thinking as social skills - making civility social.

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