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The history we need

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Published in:
Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research

DOI (link to publication from Publisher):
[10.1080/00313831.2014.907200](https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2014.907200)

Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Jørgensen, S. L. (2015). The history we need: Strategies of Citizen Formation in the Danish History Curriculum. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 59(4), 443-460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2014.907200>

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The history we need. Strategies of citizen formation in the Danish history curriculum

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Jørgensen, S. L., 2015, I: *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*. 59, 4, s. 443-460

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2014.907200>

Abstract

Teaching history in schools can be a significant policy instrument for shaping the identities of future citizens. The Danish curriculum for teaching history of 2009 aims at strengthening a sense of ‘Danishness’ which calls for theoretical analysis. Focusing on this particular case, the paper develops a political theoretical frame for evaluating such strategies. While David Miller sees promoting a national identity to be a legitimate strategy of citizen formation in a liberal democracy, this view has been challenged by among others Arash Abizadeh. Miller could answer Abizadeh’s challenges once the debate is viewed in a pedagogical context where children are in the process of citizen formation. While their debate offers central elements to the evaluative frame, the final frame developed includes cooperative practices.

Keywords

Teaching history – democratic citizenship – National identity – Denmark – David Miller

Introduction

History is taught in primary and lower secondary schools for several purposes including democratic citizen formation and nation building. This reflects that the teaching of history in a national perspective is bound to influence citizens' identities and sense of connectedness to national political institutions and their co-citizens (Callan, 1997). A troubling strategy for promoting this sense connectedness in future citizens is to focus on self-aggrandizing narratives rather than national self-criticism. Particularly in the post 9/11 climate there may be reluctance to tell the story of national practices of colonization rather than episodes of liberal progression. This is indicated in the Danish case of curricular change in 2009; a change aimed at strengthening contested ends of *social cohesion* and a sense of *Danishness* (section 1) (Connolly, 1994).¹ Some political theorists claim that promoting constructed national narratives undermines the democratic incentives of future citizens (section 2), while others such as David Miller claim that only if a constructed national identity is brought on to future citizens can democracy work (section 3). Through a confrontation with criticisms of Miller's position (section 4 and 5), this paper provides a frame for evaluating the Danish strategy (section 6).

There are several reasons to focus on David Miller's position. Primarily, he asks the right questions: How can citizens form and motivate the civility needed for democratic dialogues? What are the seedbeds of civil attitudes towards citizens with whom one does not share interests, social roles or cultural and socio-economic background? In particular, why would citizens who primarily identify with groups closer to themselves than the national citizenry come to support non-sectional arguments in democratic debates at the national level? The questions reflect that Miller is part of the trend within deliberative theories of democracy to confront questions of feasibility (Bohman, 1998) as well as the general political theoretical trend of analysing the institutional grounds (including school settings) for the formation of citizen virtues (Callan, 1997; Dagger, 1997; Frazer, 1999; Gutmann, 1999; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Pettit, 1997; Reich, 2002). Miller seeks an attractive middle ground between one-sided multicultural or conservative positions and adopts arguments from republican, communitarian, and radical democratic perspectives as well as liberal and minority sensitive ones (on questions of minorities, see Miller, 2000; compare discussions of Miller's position

in Bell & De-Shalit, 2003).² Additionally, Miller is the exemption to the fact that few European theorists focus on the normative issues related to teaching history to future citizens in the manner of their American counterparts Eamonn Callan, Amy Gutmann, William Galston, Stephen Macedo, and Rob Reich.³ The British background of Miller's approach makes it relevant to the Danish context. In neither case is constitutional patriotism an option, as it might be in USA or Germany, and both are cases of countries with long and mythical pasts (Miller, 1995, p. 171)

Clearly, Miller's instrumental defence of nationality *is* contested. Claus Offe takes the "assumption" that we can still viably and feasibly tie "citizenship to national culture" to be "the greatest weakness in Miller's argument" (Offe, 2011, p. 363).⁴ However, critics fail to consider his arguments in the context of teaching history to future citizens that are in the process of developing deliberative competences. Here, even Miller's strongest critics lose much of their bite (section 2 and 4). This paper is a first attempt to consider Miller's relevance to evaluation of strategies for teaching history in primary and lower secondary schools (compare O'Leary et al., 1996).

In this sense, the contextual analysis also contributes to the philosophical debates (compare Miller, 2012). This middle range theoretical approach lets normative theory serve as a frame for contextual analysis, and makes the contextual analysis reflect back on the theoretical frame. This approach sheds light on the different functions of teaching history and brings theoretical analysis closer to empirical research questions concerning the effect of different approaches to the teaching of history: how does the particular teacher's implementation affect the effects on bi-lingual children? To what extent does a possibly changed cultural discourse broadly in Denmark influence the teachers' and pupils' interpretation of the curriculum?

Strategies for the teaching of history in Denmark

Though nationalist intentions for the teaching of history is a recurrent theme in Denmark (compare Togeby, 1976), when contrasted to the earlier 2004 curriculum for 3rd to 9th grade history teaching (see below), the 2009 curriculum marks a distinct change in the manner and

degree to which a national identity is explicitly aimed at. The change is motivated by concern for *social cohesion*: “History can be used to build up and strengthen social cohesion in communities such as the national” (UVM, 2009, p. 18). It also reflects new beliefs about how social cohesion should be strengthened in a society with recent immigration. The Ministry informs teachers that future citizens should share in a set of national narratives that take manifest form in symbols, monuments, museums, treaties and significant historical occurrences (UVM, 2009, p. 41). Particularly, the newly included ‘Canon of Danish History’ expresses the idea that social cohesion requires providing the next generation with a sense of ‘Danishness’. In a remarkable statement, it is argued that pupils should know of King Christian the 4th since this is part of “the Danish identity” and “since he is the king most Danes remember when asked to name a historical king” (UVM, 2009, p. 27). Similarly, Bishop Absalon is part of the Canon though his place and importance is “constructed as a national myth” by the medieval historian, Saxo (UVM, 2009, p. 41, 26).

This strategy for teaching history explains the *Canon* overall. Of its 29 elements, 19 relate to Danish national history while seven mark international events which celebrate the formation of a Western, liberal, peaceful, Christian civilization. One, the energy crisis, marks the potential conflict between Middle Eastern oil and Western demands for oil, as well as the ‘civilized’ advancement of alternative sources of energy which gives Denmark a prominent place. One, Tutankhamon, is meant to give 3rd graders an interest in history, but as the only representative of non-western culture, it is the easy mark of Orientalism; a view of other cultures as curious, and colourful but backwards as they are based on vast inequalities between masters and slaves.

The 19 national elements mark ‘liberating’ occasions of progress or elements of national remembrance. The constructed quality is apparent as negative historical episodes are marked by external enemy intrusion while positive episodes are marked by internal developments of liberation and progress. These positive episodes are constructed as clear markers of transition. The Canon inspires the view that Danish history forms a progression from peacefulness and justice to an even higher degree of peacefulness, liberality, justice and modernism through non-violent steps and peaceful revolutions. Historians have criticized some of the elements as historically false (i.e. the 1849 constitution did not mark – as

suggested – ‘the peaceful introduction of democracy, which has existed ever since’), but instrumental incentives silenced such critique.

While the canon might make majority children identify more strongly with Denmark, it might not promote full scale social cohesion. First, it ignores and obscures instances of marginalizing and incivility. Secondly, immigrants and natives are likely to grow a sense of difference rather than sameness as the teaching focuses on the children’s family relations to Denmark while ignoring the history of Danish emigration. Thirdly, the descriptions of relations between king, church and people suggest a particular and exclusionary Danish construction of secularism and liberality (compare Per Mouritsen, 2006). Fourthly, the pupil’s discussions of “cultural clashes in the Danish, European and Global context” (UVM, 2009, p. 4) reaffirms the idea of a cultural clash. The explanation for including ‘9/11 and the war on terror’ in the curriculum (while ignoring 2WW which was found too complicated for pupils to comprehend) expresses official belief in such a clash: “The conflicts and polarizations between the Western-Christian and Middle-Eastern-Muslim culture have grown since the attacks and the war on terror” (UVM, 2009, p. 33). Fifthly, discussions on ways in which values and attitudes influence social change leading to comparative differences between nations is framed by narratives of Danish progression (i.e. ‘compare the contemporary living conditions in Denmark to those of other countries and discuss the historical preconditions for such changes’) (UVM, 2009, p. 7). Compared by standards of economic welfare and perceived happiness, Denmark is likely to come out as superior to Middle Eastern countries. Majority and minority children might now disagree on whether national success or failure reflects how in the past only some countries chose the path of ‘the right values’. Sixthly, it is on the basis of the above sketched frame that the future citizens are to observe historical cultural relations between Denmark and foreign countries. Seventhly, with the above-sketched frame in mind as well as a focus-theme on “being Danish” and recollections of Danish myths, pupils must come up with suggestions concerning “how to integrate foreign cultures” (UVM, 2009, p. 37).

The curriculum reflects a Danish post-9/11 climate with worries of integration and political discourses reflecting antagonisms of ‘Protestant Danishness’, ‘the West’, ‘Civilization’ on the one hand and ‘Islam’, the ‘Middle East’ and ‘barbarism’. The popular contrasts between

‘modern protestant Scandinavia’ and ‘pre-modern Islamic Middle East’ is not challenged by the curriculum. The abovementioned framings of identity building strategies are likely to widen the gap between minority and majority children. In that perspective, the strategies are unlikely to strengthen society wide social cohesion.

Questioning strategic constructions of national identities

My critical analysis of the Danish curriculum reflects the liberal worry that promoting constructed national narratives undermines the very prerequisites of liberal democracies. Theorists argue that for liberal democracy to live up to its promises, citizens cannot be taught that they are fundamentally unequal. Andrew Mason believes that if “stateschools [...] educate children in the history [...] of the dominant culture” (Mason, 1999, p. 268) it will have moral costs such as lower self-esteem among minorities (Mason, 1999, p. 271f). Referring to this argument, to Arash Abizadeh promoting constructed narratives stand on a slippery slope to “ethnic nationalism” (Abizadeh, 2004b, p. 233, 241) as such narratives are incapable “of transcending *ethnic* particularity” (Abizadeh, 2004b, p. 233). To Iris Marion Young, the instrumental use of national identities inevitably stabilizes an illegitimate hierarchy as some groups in society will be more familiar and committed to the national identity than others. Tensions strengthen among groups as symbolic hierarchies undermine the ideal of equality: ”assimilated groups suffer from cultural imperialism” as “the privileged or dominant cultural community will see their community as objectively superior or universally valid and discount minority cultures as inferior or as less than fully human” (as quoted by Mason, 1999, p. 269). Pupils later mimic their teachers’ strategy of manipulation and deception (i.e. retelling national myths) legitimized with reference to a higher purpose (i.e. social cohesion). As teachers deceive, future citizens are taught to disrespect other citizens. They learn that segments of citizens can legitimately tell “lies” to other segments (Abizadeh, 2004a, p. 293).

At the public level of reformulating a national narrative, the instrumental strategies are bound to undermine the ends of liberal democracy such as forming “equal, autonomous, rational agents” (301) that defend the right to live by norms of “publicity, public justification, and freedom of expression” (291). The instrumental argument is that “the truth or falsity of a set of myths can be rendered normatively innocuous if the myths serve some

important socially useful ends” (298). As Abizadeh sees it, this means that those participating in the public debate on the national identity *have to* provide a specific outcome; “the *telos* of the discourse is to come to a *socially useful* understanding *about* history” (ibid.).

Once dissent and critique of power is silenced with reference to functional necessity, nothing will stop the powerful factions that republicans see as constant threat to liberal democracy and ideals of non-domination. “[S]ome myths rather than others” are canonized and these “will inevitably serve some groups’ interests better than others” as “least some social actors will recognize the power of myths to legitimate sociopolitical arrangements” which strengthens their powers of arbitrary rule and “to service their own domination” (293). They can remain in power without any criticism once they succeed in “subjecting the masses to the interests of the powerful via false consciousness” (300).

Lastly, liberal democracy depends on whether we believe that our co-citizens have developed capacities for public deliberation and reasoning. If their identity is rooted in popular beliefs and mythical narratives, why would they cherish rationality, truth and the open flow of information? Abizadeh argues that if one “locates the possibility of the critique of power in an account of deliberative democracy” but makes deliberative democracy rest on an identity ethos of national myths, one ends up with “an insurmountable tension between critique and the needs of social integration” reflecting “an incoherence” (296).

In this perspective, the Danish case expresses a dangerous strategy. In contrast, the 2004 curriculum was more in line with the arguments just made. In 2004, history brought forth first order critical attitudes in the form of national self-criticism. It was believed that “The past can be used for comparative purposes as a reference and reflection framework to set current values, patterns of behaviour and life forms in perspective. Current values and behavioural norms can thereby be clarified and problematized” (UVM, 2004). Pupils acquired second order critical attitudes in the form of capacities of scrutinizing politically *constructed* nation-building through historical myths as well as a critical eye for how people in power may construct historical facts for their own purposes (ibid). As stated, “Commemorative Politics is about power over the experiences, histories, and symbols that history consists of. Who interprets and uses the collective memory with a specific purpose?” (ibid). A second theme in the 2004 curriculum that marks a contrast to the 2009 curriculum

is the attempts to expand the future citizens' identification beyond their immediate ethnic co-nationals. The teaching stimulated an insider perspective on emigration and immigration through narratives of how foreigners offered a new home to Danes when they were alliterate, religious peasants fleeing from unemployment, hunger and war. Additionally, they learned of the negative historical impact of European colonization before they were asked to study how foreign cultures have influenced Danish culture and debate the difficult but possibly positive outcome of foreign aid (ibid).

The theoretical arguments suggest that the curriculum ought to be turned back to its former content. On the other hand, Tariq Modood, who shares ends with the liberal critics, defends strategies for promoting a national identity. Confronting the charge that "the logics of the national and the multicultural are incompatible" (Modood, 2007, p. 146) he argues that at times of crisis (such as in the post 9/11 cultural climate) only a national identity can "hold people together" (147). It can attract the positive attention of recent immigrants as well as majority citizens (Modood, 2007; Parekh, 2002). Based on experiences of the divided Canada, Will Kymlicka has reached a similar conclusion:

Citizens must feel that they *belong* to the same community. They must have a desire to continue to live together and govern together, and to share the same fate, rather than seeking to form their own separate country, or seeking to be annexed to some foreign state. Social unity, in short, requires that citizens identify with each other, and view their fellow citizens and one of 'us' (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 257). If Modood and Kymlicka are right, worries concerning exclusionary tendencies in the Danish curriculum should not lead to the short cut that national identities are *necessarily* exclusionary and can serve no legitimate purposes as suggested by the critics above. Interestingly, Modood finds support for his own view in David Miller's 1995 book, *On Nationality* (Modood, 2013, p. 196).

David Miller's liberal democratic national instrumentalism

Might Miller come to the rescue of the Danish curriculum? Miller admits that "national identities typically contain a considerable element of myths" that are "fraudulent", "deliberate inventions made to serve a political purpose (Miller, 1995, p. 35f)." Nevertheless, "Rather than dismissing nationality out of hand [...], we should ask what part these myths play in building and sustaining nations" (ibid).⁵ Miller believes nationality can strengthen

“the ethical character” of citizens and their “sense of solidarity with and obligations to their compatriots” (36). Therefore, “it may not be rational to discard beliefs, even if they are, strictly speaking, false, when they can be shown to contribute significantly to the support of valuable social relations [...] [and] valuable functions” (36). Which attractive liberal democratic ends would solidarity based on a national identity support?

To Miller, deliberative democracy is attractive as it allows a community “to reach the best possible decision on matters of general concern” (Miller, 1990, p. 285). Nationality is required, not because it makes us smarter, but because it bridges those gaps between citizens that mark the central problem for deliberative democracy. The problem is how to form future citizens given the prerequisite of deliberative democracy that “people should participate politically, not as advocates for this or that sectional group, but as citizens whose main concerns are fairness between different sections of the community and the pursuits of common ends” (Miller, 1990, p. 284; compare Shorten, 2012, p. 47). We need to avoid the “factionalized form of politics which, at best, amounts to horse-trading between the various groups” (Miller, 1990, p. 285). Future citizens need to see through “diversity interests” (Miller, 1990, p. 272) and “ethnic divisions” (Miller, 1990, p. 285; Miller, 1995, p.97). Since citizens face co-citizens as contesters with different interests, they may continue to promote their own sectarian interests even when opponents argue for moderation. They may fail to argue sincerely. Why? Because they lack trust in the opponent’s willingness to listen to their arguments, moderate their interests and argue sincerely (Festenstein, 2009, p. 280). This lack of trust is likely to continue since both parties are well aware that insincerely usurping deliberation may be a rational strategy for themselves as well as the other party.

As Miller sums up, “to the extent that we aspire to a form of democracy in which all citizens are at some level involved in discussion of public issues, we must look to the conditions under which citizens can respect one another’s good faith in searching for grounds of agreement” (Miller, 1995, p. 98). Given the end of deliberative democracy as well as the problems of sectional interests and trust, the question is, “how can we create an environment in which people see it as their business to stand back from the particular interests with which they are associated and to act as representatives of the public as a whole, assessing particular claims from a detached point of view (Miller, 1990, p. 272)?

Miller's commitment to deliberative democracy and his republican worry of the constant threat of fractional politics based on "sectional interest" (Miller, 1989, p. 71) makes him open towards an instrumental defence of a national identity as source of citizens' mutual deliberative trust: "Trust requires solidarity not merely within groups but across them, and this in turn depends upon a common identification of the kind that nationality alone can provide" (Miller, 1995, p. 140). If I believe that my fellow citizens share a national identity with me, I may likewise trust that their abstaining from playing insincerely is based on extended self-interested motivations and thus to be trusted. With a shared national identity, a person will not necessarily see contributions as a "pure loss, from the point of view of the private interests of the person making it, because he is helping to sustain [a] relationship from which he stands to benefit to some degree" (67).

Once citizens can bridge such differences, we can establish a "dialogue model" (Miller, 1990, p. 268f) of democracy which "insists that everyone should take part in this debate on an equal footing" (Miller, 1995, p. 153). Then "deliberative democracy" reflects "the ideal of a political community in which decisions are reached through an open and un-coerced discussion of the issue at stake" (Miller, 1995, p. 96). In such a climate inclusiveness strengthens the epistemic quality of deliberation: "the greater the pool of opinion on which it draws, the greater the chance of finding this best solution" (Miller, 1990, p. 285). The epistemic claim of this approach trades on whether "those engaged in it are willing to modify their views when superior contrary arguments are produced" (Miller, 1990, p. 285). Only when citizens are willing to listen to and give reasons will democracy involve 'real' debates. Thus, the ideal involves a "moral pressure [...] to offer supporting reasons" (Miller, 1990, p. 268f); particular, reasons "of a general kind, connecting the policy they favor to an idea of justice or common interests [...]" (ibid). This shows why it is imperative to find a way of bridging differences of interests based on particular group identities. Future citizens need to be able to "place their concerns as citizens over and above their concerns as interest spokesmen" (Miller, 1990, p. 288, compare 286f)." Nationality can provide future citizens with the incentive "to arrive at an agreed judgment (Miller, 1995, p. 96), to "obtain a compromise" (151). Nationality can make "each group [...] willing to listen to others" and be willing "to moderate [...] their] demands where this is necessary" (ibid). It can motivate them to express sincerely held reasons rather than argue strategically (96). Nationality can make

future citizens “engage in politics as citizens, that is, as members of a collectivity committed to advancing its common good” (Miller, 1989, p. 70f).

This brings us a step towards legitimizing Danish practices since to Miller, “the principle of nationality implies that schools should be seen, inter alia, as places where a common national identity is reproduced and children prepared for democratic citizenship” (Miller, 1995, 142).

Can Miller answer the critics?

Whether Miller’s position could legitimize Danish practices as *liberal* practices, however, depends on whether Miller can answer the critics’ claim that promoting nationality undermines the feasibility of liberal democracy (Abizadeh, 2002; Abizadeh, 2004a; compare Bell & De-Shalit, 2003; Benner, 1997; Mason, 1999; Song, 2009; Song, 2011). In particular, to what extent does Miller’s approach strengthen a hierarchy between citizens, allow for domination and silence dissent?

(a) *Hierarchies of status*. Miller does claim that recent immigrants “must [...] be willing to embrace an inclusive national identity, and in the process to shed elements of *their* values which are at odds with its principles” (Miller, 1995, p. 142). On the other hand, he also argues that “groups outside the ethnic core cannot be expected straight forwardly to embrace the national identity” (123). These groups should retain their right to “explore different interpretations of national identity” (128). All Miller believes his approach “needs to ask of immigrants is a willingness to accept current political structures and to engage in dialogue with the host community so that a new common identity can be forged” (129f). Inclusiveness is also indicated by his guidelines for how history ought to be taught. History should be taught in the spirit that supports the process of weighing up one’s national identity “against other aspects of personal identity” in order to decide “how best to integrate that identity with other identities one bears” (44). For this, minorities need to be aware of the content of such a debate to take effective part in it. Therefore, teaching the national identity strengthens the capacities of immigrants rather than threaten their status.

Cultural minorities should not be seen merely as the recipients of an identity, but must be expected to play their part in redefining it for the future. It is important, therefore, that they should have access to the raw materials of the

debate. [...] we must accept the idea of a core curriculum, in the sense of a body of material to which every child is exposed in subjects such as history and politics [...] the core curriculum must be presented in such a way that it leaves open the possibility of differing interpretations, and there should be scope to emphasize or de-emphasize material according to the needs of particular groups of children (180).

Thus, it would contradict Miller's approach, if minorities experienced the teaching of a national history to be a public expression of the inferiority of their status, culture or identity. When thought of properly, "nationality does not require deference to established institutions or the myths that sustain them, it need not outlaw dissent or select as new members only those who already share the existing national identity" (129). Less is needed for nationality to play the functional roles expected in Miller's approach.

(b) *Hierarchies of knowledge*. If Miller could answer the hierarchy of status charge, can he answer the hierarchy of knowledge concern? What happens if elites know that there are no objective basis of trust, but install myths in future citizens "to buttress a given collective identity" that serves their own purposes (Abizadeh, 2004a, p. 293)? Abizadeh believes that on the basis of this hierarchical knowledge-setup, rationality, trust in other's rationality, and civility wither. In that perspective, there seems no ground for state school support for such a scheme. Nevertheless, in particular when considering the pedagogical context where we are dealing with children who are in the process of becoming future citizens, Miller could answer the critics once again.

First, it becomes apparent that in the pedagogical context of educating future citizen, we already see 'lies' and 'truths' as standing on a continuum. We find it only natural that small children are served facts piecemeal in doses fitting for their cognitive development. From this it follows that narrative structures can serve a purpose particularly in the younger years. It follows that such practices do not undermine the possibility of later revealing a broader perspective including analysis of and testing such narratives through critical scrutiny. Later on in the educational and formative process, a fuller picture should be presented, particularly if the stories refer to real persons and historical contexts. Myths and narratives may provide an excellent ground for strengthening the critical and imaginative capacities of future citizens

(Nussbaum, 1997). Abizadeh himself recognizes that myths can serve an integrationist purpose as "they effectively express moral or ethical "truths"—that is, that they inspire action by virtue of resonating with or effectively shaping social actors' moral or ethical aspirations" (Abizadeh, 2004a, p. 312f).

Secondly, in the context of education, it is only natural in the outset that there exists an unequal amount of knowledge between the tutor 'elite' and the pupil 'masses' (including knowledge of the purpose and method of the tutoring). Thus, the use of myths and narratives may serve a purpose which only the teacher is aware of, but it is not thereby easily to be categorized as an instance of 'false consciousness' and manipulation.

(c) *Domination*. Miller shares Abizadeh's end of a non-dominating society (compare Pettit, 1997). Could a national identity be promoted without undermining that end? What if the majority believes that minorities fail to express commitment to the national identity they developed in history classes? To illustrate, perhaps in Danish history classes, majority citizens grow a belief in the right to dominate those who fail to express full commitment to the national history of political progression. Such a 'right to dominate non-believers' does not follow from Miller's model. Miller claims that his approach can function without requiring "deference to established institutions or the myths that sustain them" (Miller, 1995, p. 129). Majority citizens must learn to trust that society can reproduce itself while national identities are constantly being reinterpreted by individuals and the public. To Miller, strategies for teaching a national identity should "leave room for selective endorsement" (Miller, 1995, p. 45). Thus, pupils should learn to tolerate dissent. Only a detailed analysis can reveal whether a particular curriculum provides such a learning ground. Since Abizadeh connects potentials for domination with silenced dissent, I shall give the problem of domination fuller treatment below.

(d) *Silenced dissent*. Abizadeh worries that dissent will be silenced once a functional outcome of the public debate on the future national identity is demanded by Miller. An answer can be reconstructed in the following manner. A first premise for Miller is that European nationstates need a conversation about their national identity as "[n]ationality can no longer remain a diffuse, taken-for-granted cultural matrix" (178). "The conversation will

usually be about specific issues: [...] which version of national history should be taught in schools” (127).⁶ Such debates should follow two liberal and anti-conservative guidelines.

First, participants ought to admit that “[n]ational identities are not cast in stone” just as “the meaning of membership changes with time” (ibid.). In this sense, Miller distinguishes his defence of the functions of nationality from “conservative nationalism” according to which “identities are given” “and it is essential to the stability of the state that these identities should be protected against subversion and transmitted to new generations of citizens” (ibid., 120). The alternative [to national identity as a *given*, SLJ] [...] is [...] common membership in a nation where the meaning of membership changes with time’ (ibid.). Related to this, citizens should bear the burdens of tolerating dissent: “These discussions must proceed on the basis that no one should be penalized or excluded for expressing views that challenge the traditional understanding of national symbols and historic events” (128). As a guiding reference, Miller argues that Europeans could learn from the American case as a case where “a common identity” has evolved to be “accessible to all cultural groups” including the more concrete ideas of common membership and shared history (141).⁷ In particular, “[O]lder nations like Britain have much to learn from newer nations like the United States, where nation-building as a deliberate practice has a long pedigree” (178).

Secondly, participants should admit that:

The minority groups want to feel at home in the society to which they or their forebears have moved. They want to feel attached to the place and part of its history [...] So they need a story that they share with the majority, though a story that can be told in different ways and with different emphases by different groups [...] Their need is for a national identity which can be embraced [...] ‘as an addition to rather than a replacement for ethnic consciousness’ (138).

It follows from this latter demand, that, “existing national identities must be stripped of elements that are repugnant to the self-understanding of one or more component groups” (142).

The two demands frame “an explicit public debate about the character of national identity, and especially about the ways in which a historically transmitted identity [...] must adapt to

new circumstances, especially to increasing cultural pluralism” (179). The debate should be public in the sense of “a collective conversation in which many voices can join” and where “[n]o voice has a privileged status” (127). Such “open processes of debate and discussion to which everyone is potentially a contributor” contrast to conservative strategies where national “identities” “are authoritatively imposed by repression and indoctrination” (39).⁸

Miller expects a double outcome of these debates that will satisfy the need for engaging national narrative and national self-criticism. The double outcomes are expected from

a healthy struggle between those who want to hold up a bowdlerized version of the nation’s history [...] and those who draw attention to lapses and shortcomings: injustices inflicted on minorities, acts of treachery, acts of cowardice, and so forth. The first group reminds us how we aspire to behave; the second group point to defects in our practices and institutions that have allowed us to fall short (40).⁹

It follows from this reconstruction that, admittedly, Miller’s procedure does not involve a fully open dialogue. For conservatives, Miller’s procedure for the national conversation is framed in a way that contradicts their beliefs about the status of national identities. Might conservatives willingly change their mind? Perhaps Miller could convince them of the instrumental relation between attractive ends and a more constructed approach to national identities. In addition, the strategies for teaching of history, discussed so far, would prepare citizens for the flexible understanding of nationality desired by Miller’s guidelines. Since Miller does not demand censorship, I would rather see this as an optimistic strategy for reaching liberal outcomes through an open, but normatively framed discourse rather than seeing it as an illiberal and self-undermining process. Thus, I find that Miller can answer the charge that his position is self-undermining as a liberal one.

Strengthening Miller’s instrumental strategy

The previous discussion of whether promoting a national identity in history classes can be reformulated in functionalist language. Functionalists in the tradition of Robert Merton (Merton, 1968) critically question whether social functions fulfil their promises or are dysfunctional (Warren, 2001, p. 37). They distinguish manifest from latent functions where

manifest functions refer to expressed motives whereas *latent* functions are unintended but effective functions (Holmwood, 2005, p. 91). The curriculum has the “manifest function” of strengthening social cohesion, but it may turn out that it has “latent functions” such as widening the gap between groups of future citizens that might “contradict” the former (Lægaard, 2010; Warren, 2001, p. 37). The question is therefore whether the manifest attempt to strengthen social cohesion and nationality is dysfunctional and conceals latent functions.

Whereas the 2009 curriculum manifestly expresses commitment to *social cohesion* as a strategic mean, it remains unclear whether the strategy reflects a commitment to both stability and democracy as ends. If the mean is meant to serve the end of fostering democratic capabilities, the curriculum might turn out to be counterproductive. The question of whether the strategies undermine its own ends is a question of whether the Danish program entails what Archon Fung has called pragmatic equilibrium (Fung, 2007).

A second theme in the debate so far relates to Merton’s disregard for classical functionalisms’ belief in irreplaceable functions. The question is whether a national identity would be replaceable. Miller argues that it is alterable and theoretically (but not practically) replaceable (Miller, 1995, p. 142; on types of liberal nationalism see Moore, 2001). The argument for practical irreplaceability is that nothing else exists that could bridge the gaps between segments. The argument for alterability is that a national identity can take many forms that would all provide us the intermediate *trust* needed for deliberative purposes. However, as I shall suggest below, Miller fails to consider a promising basis for trust. Without undermining Miller’s position, my strategy questions the irreplaceability of national identities and searches for latent functions.

Considering the Danish history since the national defeats of 1864, the grounds of trust is often believed to rest on practices of society wide cooperation (Lidegaard, 2009). Partially rooted in national narratives, a commitment to such historically defended strategies of cooperation are often manifestly expressed in continuant practices within social institutions of work, school, and civil society (compare Anderson, 2010; Honneth, 1998; Rousseau, 1979; Warren, 1996). This particular case may express something universal. From Plato to

Rawls, philosophers have found that citizens' "well-being depends upon a scheme of cooperation without which no one could have a satisfactory life" (Rawls, 1971, p. 15).

If experiences of cooperation in families, in schools, at work, in civil society and within the state at large can provide a national democracy with its liberal *ethos*, then the teaching of history could take this into account when it aims at forming future citizens. It is important to see that experiences of cooperation do not need to be common; all we need are a structural net of experiences that allows for somewhat similar experiences. On top of this, focusing on historical experiences of exclusion from cooperation in the teaching of history makes vivid that through history groups and classes had different experiences of being part of or disconnected from the national project and its cooperative progressions.

Cooperative narratives support Miller and Abizadeh's liberal democratic ends of non-domination and rational dialogue among critically alert citizens (compare Mason, 1999, p. 281). Retold as plural national narratives of cooperation, the national focus does not conflict with Abizadeh's claim that "[t]he bases of liberal democratic social integration need not be the same for each citizen" (Abizadeh, 2004b, p. 247).

The strategy of including narratives of cooperation in the citizen formation strategy finds support in Cécile Laborde's defence of a necessary cultural element in practices of citizen formation. Interestingly, Laborde is otherwise in line with Mason's and Abizadeh's worry concerning the ability of a national identity to accommodate immigrant minorities (Laborde, 2002). Contrary to Mason and Abizadeh, however, Laborde finds that 'belonging to a polity' necessarily involves a strong political *culture*. Whereas *belonging to a polity* for Mason was based on a subjective sense of feeling at home in the central public institutions including political symbols such as the flag, Abizadeh saw political identities to be founded on individual's differentiated, but autonomously established political thoughts and ideologies. To Laborde, political identities are founded on something less symbolic and subjective (Mason) or individually autonomous (Abizadeh), namely the idea of an engaging political culture. As she puts it, "what matters, more than a sense of nationality per se, is the right kind of public spirit and social ethos (2002, p. 603)." The political culture consists of institutionalized social practices and norms (i.e. forms of cooperation) that form both identities and capabilities. Laborde connects the lucid terms *ethos* and *spirit* to recognize the

interconnectedness of citizens' sense of civic identity (spirit) and their *engagement* with political practices and existing norms (ethos) (compare 2002, p. 606). Culture is thus not merely about *identity* as when Mason talks of citizens' sense of belonging and Melissa Williams talks of their sense of shared fate (Williams, 2003). Culture relates to practices and virtuous dispositions, ways of doing, acting and cooperating as well. Both identities and capabilities seem necessary to future citizens, and the question remains how to strike the right balance between particularism and universalism (Laborde, 2008).

It is important to stress, however, that the pragmatic and instrumental perspective on how to form future citizens can connect to universal approaches both in the liberal *national* as well as the *cosmopolitan* sense. From a pragmatic and instrumental perspective, fostering a national identity that is not exclusive of cosmopolitan sentiments might be an important immediate strategy for making progress with ideals of global justice rooted in cosmopolitan moral obligations and *human* rights (Miller, 2007; compare Axelsen, 2013; Nussbaum & Cohen, 1996)

Revisiting the Danish curricular change

In light of the theoretical debates above, a first question to ask concerning the Danish curriculum is whether it combines the two strategies suggested by Miller. Did it contain both engaging narratives and self-criticism? My analysis reveals a lack of self-criticism. With its neglect of the self-critical perspectives of the 2004 curriculum, those who do not easily identify with aspects of Canon are likely to feel alienated from the national identity. The 2009 curriculum might have aimed at engaging narratives, but I believe it failed. While it does reveal strategies of identification, the historical figures are not presented as worthy of identification. Furthermore, the *people* as such abstractly represent good sense and liberal progression; neglected are concrete co-operators who slowly realized that shared problems are best solved through inclusive practices.

Abizadeh made us aware of the constant dangers of national self-aggrandizing narrative and a possible slippery slope towards ethnic nationalism when there is a lack of self-criticism. This worry seems relevant considering the Danish 2009 curriculum. As shown, focus on shaping an affirmative national identity is not in itself problematic, but it *is* problematic that the curriculum stresses an alleged gulf between Western, Danish civilization and Muslim

identities. The public frame is bound to spill over to the class room debates. Additionally, the curriculum frames the debate on the clash in a troubling manner. In short, recognizing and discussing a possible gulf is not a problem; the problem is the overall frame of the debate that I take to be self-aggrandizing narratives as well as the particular frame which is religion, 9/11 and a war on terror. In combination with the fact that immigrants are labelled as 'Muslims', this teaching would be counterproductive to the ideal of using the teaching of history to support the form of equal democratic citizenship defended also by Miller.

Does the curriculum establish or reaffirm a status hierarchy? In its present form, minorities may perceive the national curriculum for history as an act of misrecognition of the presence of minority cultures within the Danish nation. I suspect that the 2009 curriculum makes it easier for majority children to identify with their 'own' constructed culture and history while making it harder for minority children with 'Muslim' background.

In contrast, the 2004 curriculum suggests a model for how to form citizens who are self-critical and alert to the powers of nationalism. Pupils extend their solidarity as they come to see representatives of alien groups as equally vulnerable and in need of protection and civility. Their national pride is supposedly founded on policies of caring and respecting humans (i.e. the slow progress of the welfare state, and foreign aid) rather than mythical national heroes and narratives. This model may not fully capture what Miller had in mind when he defended the promotion of an engaging national identity, but it helps us understand how majority and minority pupils might have a more equalized challenge in forming an identity.

Was the 2009 curriculum formed on the basis of inclusive public debates? In contrast to the anti-conservative frame defended by Miller, in the 2007-2008 public debate, the curriculum was defended with strong conservative rhetoric and with very little opposition from the left (see, however, Andersen & Eistrup, 2011). The change was criticized on procedural and empirical grounds. It was claimed that not enough trained historians had taken part in the process to guide the curriculum closer to established facts, and it was claimed that certain topics should have gained more weight in the curriculum than they did. Ironically, the strongest liberal criticism came from across the border from the Swedish national board for the history curriculum.

Does the curriculum prepare future citizens to engage in a public debate on how the national identity should be shaped? Does it provide all with basic knowledge about their national history – including its popular aspects? The 2009 curriculum frames debates on the national identity by the question of ‘how to integrate immigrants’. However, these ‘debates’ are not framed as open discussions of the national identity. Even with a good teacher, the curriculum neglects the opportunity to provide grounds for such an open debate. Concerning the point about making pupils alert to the ways national narratives may serve the interests of the powerful, in 2009 the defence of social cohesion takes a more affirmative form where the meta-texts *inform* the teachers about how to think about the canon.

Does the curriculum provide historical narratives of cooperation that might ground civility? Will children learn about episodes of successful cooperation between people, groups and citizens who otherwise stood in direct opposition to one another? If it does, does it also reveal the other side of the coin: the fact that there were outsiders to such cooperative practices which provides grounds for questioning any one-sided stories of national progression? The curriculum makes no reference to the powerful cooperative movements that have shaped later institutionalized practices of cooperation in Denmark.

Conclusion

This paper illustrates the productivity of contextualizing political theory in educational settings through its guiding question: can the Danish strategy of reproducing constructed national narratives in the teaching of history be legitimated on liberal democratic grounds? To answer that question, in section 3 to 6, this paper applied political theory to investigate which liberal democratic ends teaching national narratives could serve. As argued in section 1 and 2, the strategic means should not undermine these ends. The most important question concerning the instrumental defence of the teaching of national history is whether it undermines liberal democratic incentives in relation to immigrant children. Though serious doubt can be raised to the instrumental use of nationality to provide the prerequisites of deliberative democracy (section 2), this paper defended the overall strategy defended by Miller (section 3-4). This defence rests on considerations of the particularities of national programs for teaching history to children (section 4).

Miller's quest for functionally adequate strategies for bringing on a national identity to strengthen democracy in pluralistic states is of great importance but so is Abizadeh's point that strategies for promoting democratic citizenship should not undermine the preconditions for rational deliberation. The current Danish curriculum illustrates why it is imperative to be alert to Abizadeh's challenge when following an instrumental strategy. The manifest functions of the narrative proposed in the curriculum may undermine the latent functions of citizen formation. If the narrative is a narrative of constant progress one may lose critical sight of what needs to be done if the attractive ideals of a rational, equal and free society with widespread solidarity is one day to be realized.

On the other hand, viewed in the context of curricular changes and strategies for forming future citizens, Abizadeh's scepticism concerning whether constructed national narrative can go hand in hand with shaping rational, reason giving and reasoning attentive citizens appeared less threatening to Miller's position than when considered in the abstract and focused on adults. Theorists should acknowledge the particularities of teaching children in their formative years. Criticism of instrumental strategies for promoting a national identity should consider facts concerning the cognitive development of children, the pedagogical setting including its stages of progression.

Consideration of the particular Danish case led to an evaluative frame for curricular change with purposes of citizen formation (section 6). Thereby this paper developed a normative framework for analysis and evaluating the Danish case of curricular change. The framework suggests that a liberal democracy needs both engaging national narratives as well as a citizenry that is willing to critically reflect on these narratives as well as engage in discussions of their future form. This leaves open the question, what an engaging narrative looks like. To fill this gap, I argued that a history of national cooperation within different particular institutional settings could serve as a focus for constructions of national narratives that would support the ideals of liberal democracy. Based on my analysis of the Danish case, I suggest that to bridge the national identities of majority and minority citizens a curricular strategy should combine stories of national commitment to institutional strategies for citizen-inclusion with stories of neglect and failure. If we look at history as slow attempts to include citizens in cooperative practices, the narrative might engage both minorities and majorities.

Additionally, it may remind of the need for constant struggle to live up to the ideals of liberal democracy. This perspective is productive for creative thinking of ways in which teaching history to future citizens could relate to existing and potential manifest and latent functional practices that support liberal democracy.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to commentators at Annual Meeting of the Danish Society for Political Science (2009 & 2011); Annual Meeting of The Danish Philosophical Society (2010); Department of Political Science, Aarhus University (2010); “Misrecognition” conference at Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, Bristol (2010); Axel Honneth’s Forschungskolloquium “Sozialphilosophie” (2010) (supported by DAAD); Department of Political Science (2011 & 2013), and Centre for Applied Ethics and Philosophy of Science, Aalborg University (2013). Thanks to Fabian Schuppert and three anonymous reviewers at *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*.

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Notes

¹ Teaching history is part of Danish integration policies as indicated by the fact that the first chapter in the course material provided for the Danish citizenship test (MFII, 2007) is a 100 page long description of Danish history followed by a chapter beginning with the historical origins of democracy.

² Sharing neo-republicans' concern with the seedbeds of citizen virtues, Miller shares the liberal worry that civic republicans expect excessive political participation (Habermas, 1994; Oldfield, 1990). The forget that the political "[c]ommunity [...] has a restricted character. It describes one respect in which members of a society may be related, but it does not exclude the possibility that they may also be related in other ways – say, as competitors in the marketplace" (Miller, 1989, p. 71). Though it follows from Miller's position that citizens should devote "more time and attention" [...] "to politics" (Miller, 1990, p. 268f) – particularly politics in the form of "debate, discussion and persuasion" (Festenstein, 2009, p. 279) – Miller is well aware that "This is a formidable requirement, as Rousseau understood in his pessimistic chapter on the silencing of the general will" (Miller, 1989, p. 70f). Though democracy needs active citizens, we look for preconditions for a modern democracy (compare Warren, 1996, p. 242f).

³ Though some compare EU wide strategies for forming citizens (Dobbernack, 2009), generally, Europe lacks political theoretical approaches to analysis of the teaching of history in primary and lower secondary schools (compare Gutmann, 1999; Hand, 2011; McDonough & Feinberg, 2003). Clearly, the historical narratives are very different in Europe just as the institutionalized strategies for citizen formation (compare Mouritsen, 2013). Additionally, the American multicultural policy of a pluralistic curriculum is less obvious in European states with recent immigration (compare Bauböck, 1996; Joppke, 2010).

⁴ Political theory contains a dense net of theories of both ends and means most of which are contested (Forst, 2002; McKinnon & Hampsher-Monk, 2005). A number of complex questions concerning the forms of citizenship to promote will not be discussed at all in this paper (Modood, 2013).

⁵ To Miller, myths are not merely lies, but a broad term for the interpretation of history where some events are interpreted in "a particular way" and some events amplified or diminished in "significance" (Miller, 1995, p. 38).

⁶ Here Miller is in line with Amy Gutman who argues that "Deliberation" should take "place at a variety of levels, including individual schools, local school districts, and state legislatures, is a way of publicly defending a civic educational program" (Gutmann, 2002: 36).

⁷ Miller also defends the right of citizens to engage in politics on the basis of religious convictions. To convince others, however, the religious citizen will need to refer to the shared perspectives inherent to the common public culture.

⁸ To Miller, conservatives see a "common national identity as essential to political stability, and also think that national identity involves an allegiance to customary intuitions and practices" (126). To strengthen "allegiance to authority" and "*piety*" "to established institutions" in relation to which the individual is related with "vertical ties" (Miller, 1995: 124), conservatives seek to protect the beliefs and practices of

nationality against “the corrosive acids of criticism” (ibid., 125) and “would-be immigrants who do not already share the national culture” (ibid., 126).

⁹ As an example of the latter perspective, Veit Bader claims a need to “rethink and rewrite the history of nations to include the history of [...] oppressed *ethnies* [...] of enforced cultural assimilation, of old and recent migration [...] of the oppressed and excluded [...] of newcomers who were exposed to discrimination, oppression and exploitation” (Bader, 1997: 783).