

Citizenship for a Modern Democracy:
Youth Perspectives on the Canadian Multicultural Reality

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Abstract

This paper explores the links between citizenship and multiculturalism in the Ontario secondary school curriculum Grade 10 Civics course and among Ontario youth. Contemporary citizenship theory suggests that a progressive approach to citizenship, fostering critical thinking, civic participation and commitment to social justice, is particularly necessary in a multicultural nation faced with complex issues like racism and inequity. However, this study offers preliminary support for the idea that Ontario's approach to citizenship education remains generally conservative in nature and does not create a platform from which students could internalize critical perspectives on multiculturalism. Analysis of the Ontario Grade 10 Civics course and interviews with five recent Ontario high school graduates likewise suggests that students may also retain more conservative attitudes towards citizenship and superficial knowledge about its links to multiculturalism. This paper suggests that more research into how students understand these complex topics might assist educators as they develop more progressive curricula.

Citizenship is a complex part of collective identity. This concept refers to the relationship between the individual and the state, and between individuals within a state. Situated critically within a pluralistic democratic country with two official languages and a policy of multiculturalism, Canadian citizenship exists today within multi-layered belongings and complex understandings... Within this rich context, notions of citizenship, identity, and civic education are hotly contested. (Hébert & Wilkinson, 2002, p. 3)

Questions of citizenship, including how a state should promote or encourage a certain model of citizenship, directly affect the nature of and strength of justice and democracy in a society (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000). What is the ideal form of citizenship for a democratic, multicultural state, and how should democracies promote this chosen form? In a state such as Canada, these questions must always be examined within the framework of cultural diversity. Citizens must not only be able to participate in the democratic process in a way that ensures peace and stability but also be able to do so when confronted with complex problems associated with multiculturalism (Kymlicka & Norman).

It is therefore not surprising that there is considerable concern about whether public schools approach citizenship education and multiculturalism in a manner that teaches critical understanding of those problems and their potential solutions (Bruno-Jofré & Henley, 2000; James, 2004, Osborne, 2000). The purpose of this study is to examine more closely the current state of the relationship between multiculturalism and citizenship in Ontario secondary school curriculum. What kind of citizenship are Canadian public schools teaching, and is it appropriate to a 21st century democratic and multicultural nation? Is there any commitment to critical examination of multiculturalism and citizenship in the curriculum? Are the two ideas linked in the curriculum, either explicitly or implicitly? To what extent does Ontario provincial attention

to anti-racism, including its policy on Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards, filter down to course-level outcomes in the Grade 10 Civics course, where citizenship education is concentrated in the high school curriculum?

Analysis of curriculum documents and interviews with recent Ontario high school graduates lends some direction to understanding what links may be present between multiculturalism and citizenship in Ontario secondary education. While the curriculum documents portray the basic tenets of what students are supposed to learn, students' perspectives give valuable information as to what students may actually have learned. In addition, they provide direction for further research into how multicultural and citizenship education in Ontario should evolve in order to best promote a democratic citizenship ideal.

In this next section of the paper, I will review the history of educational policy in Canada as diversity and diversity policy in Canada have changed over the past century. By situating current thought on democratic citizenship within education, I also explore how democratic citizenship theory is linked to critical theory on multiculturalism and anti-racism. Examination of anti-racism policy in Ontario education and the content of the Grade 10 Civics course against contemporary citizenship theory provide a background for understanding how Ontario currently approaches citizenship and multiculturalism in secondary education.

Multiculturalism, Education and Citizenship in Canada

Multiculturalism is both a central and defining aspect of Canadian society and citizenship and a source of tension and debate in public policy (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000). This debate and policy of multiculturalism has also affected public education as the cultural landscape of Canada has changed over the past century (James, 2004; Osborne, 2000). Examining how

education has traditionally approached multiculturalism and citizenship allows for better understanding of current theory and practice in education with respect to these two subjects.

History of Multiculturalism and Education in Canada

Canadian diversity and multiculturalism policy has changed much over the past hundred years, shifting accordingly the relationship between those policies and the practices of public education (Bruno-Jofré & Henley, 2000; James, 2004; Osborne, 2000; Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, 2008). As successive waves of immigration throughout the 20th century changed Canada's cultural landscape, public policy in the country shifted from an assimilationist approach that also intended to "keep out immigrants who did not fit the dominant White, British culture" to a profoundly different attitude that sees multiculturalism as a pillar of Canadian identity and citizenship itself (Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, p. 64). Schools simultaneously changed from an arena intended to perpetuate the goals of assimilation (Osborne) to places that teach respect, tolerance, and acceptance of other cultures (Peck, Sears, & Donaldson).

In the early 19th century, when public education was also still in its early years of existence, the prevalent Canadian attitude encouraged immigrants to assimilate with Canadian culture as they came to identify with Anglo-Canadian values (James, 2004). Society and schools in general did not recognize the cultures, languages, and histories of immigrants' home nations as having an importance in the assimilation process or as having a place in the school. According to Troper (2002), policy began to shift towards a multicultural perspective in 1947 with the creation of the Citizenship Act, which provides that all Canadians – whether by birth or by naturalization – are entitled to the same rights and privileges (cited in Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, 2008, p. 64).

In the 1960s Canada's cultural makeup began to change again after the Immigration Act in 1967 removed restrictions on non-white immigrants to Canada. Public education responded to Canada's now more visibly diverse population. Schools hired minority teachers and practiced multicultural education activities that focused on increasing students' knowledge and tolerance of different cultures (James, 2004). In 1988 the Canadian Multiculturalism Act came into effect, recognizing that cultural diversity is a fundamental aspect of Canadian society, "an essential part of what it means to be Canadian" (The Canadian Multiculturalism Act: A Guide for Canadians, 1990, Introduction)¹ and further committing the Canadian government to "preserving and enhancing our multicultural heritage and working for equal access and full participation of all Canadians in our society." (The Canadian Multiculturalism Act: A Guide for Canadians, 1990, p. 4). As such, the Act committed all Canadian institutions – including public schools – not only to the promotion of multiculturalism and the accommodation of different cultures, but to the elimination of inequity.

Around the same time, dissatisfaction was arising in public schooling because multicultural education was mainly concerned with superficial aspects of culture – sometimes referred to as the three F's: food, fashion, and festivals – and had failed to address the greater problems of systemic racism and inequality in Canadian society (James, 2004). As a result, anti-racism education surfaced in response to the need for schools to address these deeper issues accompanying ethnocultural diversity. The province of Ontario created, in 1993, its policy on Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards (James). James also notes that while anti-racism education is still criticized as not yet having reached an efficient level of development,

¹ Citation refers to Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism Canada (1990). The Canadian multiculturalism act: A guide for Canadians. Ottawa: Author.

“the fact remains that concerns about racism are no longer being silenced or dismissed as in earlier times.” (James, para. 7).

While racism may be better recognized now than in the past, this does not necessarily mean that its elimination has become a prominent focus of education in Canada. Some scholars have noted a shift in recent years that has seen education focus more on training for career success and individual economic gain than on responsibility to community (Bruno-Jofré & Henley, 2000; Mitchell, 2003; Osborne, 2000). Mitchell described the effect of this shift on approaches toward multiculturalism in schools. “The spirit of multiculturalism in education has shifted from a concern with the formation of tolerant and democratic national citizens who can work with and through difference, to a more strategic use of diversity for competitive advantage in the global marketplace,” Mitchell argued. (Mitchell, p. 387). This trend in public schooling in Canada does not depict an arena that would emphasize confronting social issues like racism.

While public education has made large strides in moving away from an attitude of assimilation to cementing multiculturalism and diversity as part of the Canadian citizenship identity, the development of more critical approaches to multicultural education remains unstable. Recent trends in education that emphasize preparation for career and economic success are unlikely to be conducive to changes to education that would facilitate a focus on learning for the elimination of social injustices like racism or inequity. Current critical citizenship and multicultural education theory discussed in the following sections sheds some light on how education could develop in a way that might better continue the evolution of public schooling towards education for effective democratic, multicultural citizenship.

Citizenship, Multiculturalism and Education: Current Thought

The question of citizenship in education in Canada has never been whether schools should be trying to create good citizens. Teaching citizenship has been one of the main objectives of public schooling since its creation (Osborne, 2000). Rather, the questions are about what type of citizen is ideal for a pluralistic, democratic society. Further, how can states promote this type of citizenship – particularly through public schooling? Some conceptions of ‘good citizenship’ focus on deference to authority, obedience, and service to one’s community and country. However, Westheimer and Kahne ask whether all states in the world – whether democratic or one-party dictatorships – would not want their citizens to possess virtues like the ones described above (Westheimer, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2003). What, then, distinguishes a democratic – and furthermore, multicultural – nation like Canada from any other type of state in terms of how it should educate its children and youth for effective citizenship?

In the context of education, Westheimer and Kahne, identified three types of ‘good citizenship’ conceptions during the course of many studies of citizenship education programs they conducted in the United States. Their three types, the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the social justice-oriented citizen, reflect three very different ideas of what ‘good citizenship’ entails – not all of which Westheimer and Kahne believe are ideal for good democratic citizenship (Westheimer, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2003). A personally responsible citizen, for example, defines good citizenship in the way it has traditionally been defined: as being mainly about charity, obedience and voluntarism; citizenship education in this category seeks to encourage students to develop their own moral character and respect authority. The participatory citizen is involved in civic affairs and would be more active in the planning process of community initiatives; as Westheimer says, “While the Personally Responsible Citizen would contribute cans of food for the homeless, the Participatory Citizen might organize

the food drive” (Westheimer, 2008, What Kind of Citizen? section, para. 5). Citizenship education that subscribes to the participatory definition would encourage students to vote and to take a leadership role in helping those in need in their community. Lastly, the social justice-oriented citizen is the most critical: he or she looks past superficial consequences of social injustice to try to address root causes of that injustice itself; in the context of the food drive activity these citizens would be “asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover” (Westheimer, 2008, What Kind of Citizen? section, para. 6).

Westheimer pronounces the personally responsible citizen an “inadequate response to education for democratic citizenship,” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003, p. 55) citing its focus on individual action that overshadows the importance of collective action and dialogue. Similarly, the participatory citizen model is also not ideal for a democracy because, while it emphasizes civic and collective action, it fails to analyze and address the causes of social problems. It is only the social justice-oriented citizen who, by embracing a role in the public sphere and the responsibility for righting social injustice through addressing root causes of those injustices, could potentially be representative of the kind of public participation and dialogue that defines a flourishing democracy (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003).

Schugurensky and Myers (2003) categorize citizenship education into two broader types which share overlapping definitions and criteria with Westheimer and Kahne’s three types of citizens. Conservative citizenship education (most similar to the personally responsible model) perpetuates the existing social order by encouraging students to be “good producers, good consumers, and good patriots” and instilling in them national loyalty, obedience to authority, and voluntary service (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003, p. 2). This type of citizenship education favours assimilation of immigrants into the dominant culture as students are taught to accept the

existing social structures and “ensure social cohesion.” (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003, p. 2). Their progressive concept of citizenship contains both virtues present in Westheimer and Kahne’s participatory and the more critical aspects of the social justice-oriented citizen types. In the progressive model the citizen’s ultimate responsibility is to further democratize his or her state through dialogue, participation in civic life, and a general concern for social justice. Further, progressive citizenship education does not seek to reproduce the existing social order but rather examines gender, race, and class structure for the inequities caused by them and tries to eliminate those inequities (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003).

These democratic citizenship theories are closely linked with multicultural and anti-racism education theories. Multicultural education has always failed to address tensions and issues arising from increased multiculturalism, such as the acknowledgement of structural and individual racism (James, 2004). Anti-racism education aims to address those by looking at why this type of racism might exist and how it can be fixed – as Dei defines it, “antiracism is fundamentally concerned with social change...antiracism acknowledges the reality of racism in society *and* the potential for change.” (Dei, 1996, p. 254, italics in original). Both acknowledging and examining a social injustice like racism would require what Westheimer and Kahne (2003) and Schugurensky and Myers (2003) suggest in their respective social justice-oriented citizen and progressive citizenship models: a concern with social justice that is focused on identifying and changing root causes of social problems; a commitment to critical thinking and dialogue; and a willingness to participate in political life in order to “grapple with social policy decisions that every citizen in a democratic society needs to understand” (Westheimer, 2008, What Kind of Citizen? section, para. 2). Therefore, anti-racism education requires educators to teach for many of the same qualities that would these progressive democratic citizenship models. As such it

would seem that the successful implementation of anti-racism education presupposes an effective level of social-justice oriented citizenship education.

The current situation facing these progressive citizenship education theories and anti-racism education in Canada is that they simply have not been developed or implemented at the practical level to an effective degree (Bruno-Jofré & Henley, 2000; Westheimer, 2008; James, 2004). “In study after study, we come to similar conclusions: the kinds of goals and practices commonly represented in curricula that hope to foster democratic citizenship usually have more to do with voluntarism, charity, and obedience than with democracy” (Westheimer, 2008, What Kind of Citizen? section, para. 2). The outlook for citizenship education that would facilitate the development of the qualities and skills necessary for social justice-oriented citizens seems therefore bleak – and those are the very qualities and skills demanded of students for the successful implementation of anti-racism education. Add to this the shifting of multicultural education towards using diversity as a tool for global economic advantage instead of for the development of democratic citizens, and it appears that anti-racism education’s effective development in Canada is hindered at least.

At the theoretical level it is clear that the success and continued development of a democracy rest heavily on its citizens’ having or acquiring the necessarily attitudes, virtues and capacities of progressive citizenship theory. “The functioning of society depends not only on the justice of its institutions or constitution, but also on the virtues, identities, and practices of its citizens,” stated Kymlicka and Norman (2000). It is equally clear that in a multicultural state, these types of qualities might be particularly important as citizens are also faced with issues like racism and intolerance, potentially crippling to the evolution of a democratic state if citizens cannot acknowledge or be committed to the elimination of inequity through a process of dialogue

and civic participation. However, recent trends in both citizenship and multicultural education would suggest that Canadian schools are not moving towards the adoption of either a progressive approach to citizenship that would encourage the skills necessary for a critical approach to multiculturalism through anti-racist education.

Citizenship and Multiculturalism in the Ontario Curriculum

How are citizenship education and multiculturalism intersecting in education – particularly in course-level learning outcomes? Ontario provides a good case to examine given its clear commitment to citizenship education with the implementation of a mandatory Civics course at the Grade 10 level in 2000. I analyze the Civics course outcomes here with respect to how they approach multiculturalism and citizenship (critically or conservatively) and how they link the two, if at all. While mandated curriculum documents alone certainly do not give a complete picture of what is actually taught in the classroom, Bickmore contends that in “official curricula do reflect public understanding and political will, and help to shape the resources available for implemented curriculum.” (Bickmore, 2006, para. 1). The curriculum therefore provides a logical starting point for exploring if and how Ontario might be approaching citizenship education and linking it to notions of multiculturalism. Furthermore, comparison of this approach to interview participants’ attitudes later in this paper gives direction as to how the curriculum may influence students’ conceptions of citizenship and multiculturalism.

At the provincial level, the Ontario government has shown some attention to critical approaches to multiculturalism: in 1993 the New Democratic Party in Ontario implemented its Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards policy, which required every school board in Ontario to implement an anti-racism and equity policy that would “reflect a commitment to the elimination of racism and in society at large” (Antiracism and Ethnocultural

Equity in School Boards, 1993, p. 4).² Policies had to address ten areas of the schooling experience, one of which was curriculum. Objectives for “curriculum” included such goals as identifying and eliminating bias and barriers in all areas of the curriculum and ensuring curricula would “reflect in an equitable way a culturally and ethnically diverse society,” (Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards, 1993, p.4). The Ministry of Education and Training also created an Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Unit to monitor the progress of the policy implementation in school boards. Unfortunately, the policy was never as effective as intended (Rezai-Rashti, 2003). In 1995 the new Progressive Conservative party came into power and shut down the Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Unit. Jerry Paquette argued that the management of the Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards policy resulted in the discreditation of education equity as a meaningful goal in Ontario (Paquette, 2001). However, that the policy has not been revoked by successive governments shows at least a symbolic attention to anti-racism at the provincial policy level in Ontario.

Do the concepts and commitments invoked by the policy, whether symbolic or not, filter down to the Civics course outcomes? The overview for the Canadian and World Studies subject area, which includes the Civics course, contains the strongest language linking the course to anti-racism education. It characterizes the “habits of mind” that Canadians need to acquire in a diverse modern society, including “understand[ing] that protecting human rights and taking a stand against racism...are basic requirements of responsible citizenship” (The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies [Revised], 2005, p. 24).³ As we

² This citation refers to: Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1993). Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation. Ontario: Author.

³ This citation refers to: Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (2005). The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies (Revised). Ontario: Author.

examine the specific Civics course outcomes, however, the presence of the concepts above wanes drastically.

Firstly, the Civics course, as well as the Ontario curriculum in general, shows a general tendency towards more conservative styles of citizenship (Bickmore, 2006). As discussed earlier, facilitating anti-racism education at the classroom level requires capacities similar to those found in the more progressive citizenship theory. The Civics curriculum fails to promote the responsibility of the citizen to engage actively and politically in examining root causes of injustice. For example, the curriculum asks students to “demonstrate an understanding of the citizen’s role in responding to non-democratic movements and groups through personal and group actions” (The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies [Revised] p. 68). While there is here a vague suggestion that democratic citizens have an obligation to resist non-democratic movements, there is no requirement for discussion of why non-democratic groups might exist and no suggestion that students might benefit from dialogue on how to solve those issues at their root cause.

The Civics course also fails to explicitly link general democratic values with practical examples in a way representative of progressive democratic citizenship theory. While it describes these underlying traits of democracy in one outcome in terms such as “freedom of speech, human dignity, work for the common good, and a sense of responsibility for others” (The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies [Revised], p. 67), examples of expression of those values are public awareness campaigns or events promoting national unity, like Remembrance Day (The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies [Revised], p.67). The third outcome in the section then asks students to “articulate and clarify their personal beliefs and values concerning democratic citizenship” using three suggestions:

voting age, compulsory military service, and mandatory retirement age (The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies [Revised], p. 67). Thinking about democracy in terms involving laws and national unity to the exclusion of all other terms is not consistent with a progressive citizenship approach.

Overall, language in the Civics course outcomes is vague when it comes to examining citizenship in relation to multiculturalism and/or racism. Several outcomes ask students to describe different groups' concepts of citizenship (an example being ethnocultural groups), and to describe events involving "differing" viewpoints, with examples being Quebec sovereignty and Native self-governance (The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies [Revised], p. 67). There is no requirement for teachers to use the designated examples. Furthermore, the example "differing viewpoints" certainly does not make any explicit suggestion that those might be culturally different viewpoints. An extremely notable exception in the curriculum outcomes is the exclusion of information on Canadian legislation, such as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, that defines Canadian citizenship within the context of multiculturalism. The neglect to mention this fact is remarkable as it facilitates a straightforward link between the two concepts.

There would certainly appear to be some opportunity for teachers to incorporate aspects of multiculturalism in the Civics course outcomes. However, it is not possible to find provincial policy on anti-racism or elements of anti-racism education portrayed clearly and explicitly in those outcomes. The Ontario Civics curriculum does not emphasize a progressive form of citizenship, nor does it explicitly link issues of multiculturalism to citizenship concepts in a consistent, critical fashion. Consequently, it would be difficult to claim that the Civics course

and related Ontario secondary education policy and curriculum documents are providing the necessary tools for the creation of effective citizens of a democratic, multicultural state.

The Role of Schools

Why is it important to link multiculturalism and citizenship in Canadian public school curricula? The role of the school in constructing notions of citizenship and multiculturalism in Canada is a prominent one, firstly (Bruno-Jofré & Henley, 2000; Hébert & Wilkinson, 2002; Osborne, 2000). It is important in a multicultural society that issues of citizenship and multiculturalism be explored and understood not only in a way that looks at the “three F’s” – food, fashion, and festivals – but in a way that facilitates Canadian students’ understanding of the real social issues embedded in multiculturalism and their affect on citizenship concepts, and vice versa (Bickmore, 2006; Jones, 2000).

In examining the minority rights debate, for example, Kymlicka and Norman (2000) made a case for one of William Galston’s (1991) virtues of democratic citizenship: that a democratic citizen participates in public discourse. Citizens must be able to “listen seriously to a range of views” and be able to separate “matters of personal faith from those that are capable of public defence” (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000, p. 8). However, in a multicultural society, they must also be able to imagine or see how their points of view appear to those from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds (Kymlicka & Norman, p. 8-9). This is what Kymlicka and Norman called a distinctly modern idea of participation in public discourse: where members of the public must be able to separate their private religious or cultural beliefs from those that can be defended in a public arena among people with varying cultural traditions, languages, religions, and backgrounds (Kymlicka & Norman).

Therefore, a defining aspect of democratic citizenship – that citizens participate in public discourse – must take into account the multiculturalism of Canadian society. However, this concept of multicultural public discourse can only be effective if it does not simply function upon or “reflect the majority’s cultural tradition, language and religion but is accessible and inclusive to everyone” (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000, p. 9). It follows that structural racism and the bias inherent in institutions created by the majority culture must be eliminated if a form of public discourse in a multicultural society is to function efficiently. This requires more than just a link between multiculturalism and citizenship. It demands a commitment to anti-racism, where public institutions are constantly and critically examined for any bias towards the majority culture and where barriers to the full participation of racial minorities are continually searched for and removed. As Dei puts it, “The problem of racism is also a failure to acknowledge and deal with difference in a way that moves beyond a celebration of diversity to fundamental power-sharing in communities” (Dei, 1996, p. 252). In education, this would require not only learning about and celebrating other cultures, but examining the White, Anglo-Canadian majority culture’s role in creation and maintenance of structural racism and power imbalance (Dei).

The school plays an important role in constructing concepts of critical, democratic and multicultural citizenship among Canadians (Jones, 2000). As discussed earlier, a main objective of public schooling has been the development of conceptions of citizenship. The Ontario government’s recognition of this objective is apparent in its creation and implementation of a mandatory civic education course. The past thirty years have seen public schools become the main arena for the implementation of multiculturalism as “the new identity formation” (Bruno Jofré & Henley, 2000, Introduction, para. 2). As shown by the history of multiculturalism and

education in Canada, public schooling policy changes as multiculturalism and diversity policy changes – this reflects the perceived importance of public schooling in transferring government policy ideas (one of which is a sense of common, cohesive citizenship) to Canadians on a large scale. Bickmore saw citizenship education as having the capacity to teach diverse groups of people how to handle conflict by making decisions in a democratic fashion, and stated that “schooling is one social institution that simultaneously facilitates, shapes, and impedes such conflict management” (Bickmore, 2006, para. 2).

The literature suggests that the development of more critical democratic citizenship education is seen as urgent among liberal thinkers. Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Dick Henley argued that the present tendency of Canadian schools to approach citizenship from the perspective of economic self-interest instead of the public good must be questioned if “there is to be a Canada at all” (Bruno-Jofré & Henley, 2000, Introduction, para. 2). Hébert and Wilkinson also noted that the school is perceived as having an important to play in the development of civic virtue (Hébert & Wilkinson, 2002, p. 30). Jones (2000) went as far as to say that if schools cannot find legitimate ways for young people to practice citizenship that incorporates a multicultural reality, “[young people] are likely to find undesirable ways to vent their feelings.” (Jones, 2000, The Search for a Deeper Understanding: A “Visible Minority” Perspective on Multiculturalism section, para. 8).

Schools have highly influential roles to play both in the development of citizenship among Canadians, the promotion of the government mandate on multiculturalism, and the linking of the two in appropriate and necessary ways for the development of a strong, continuously improving multicultural democratic society. Examining Ontario secondary curriculum documents suggests that this curriculum is not well-aligned with the concept of

promoting a progressive model of democratic, multicultural citizenship. The subsequent question is: what is the practical experience of students? What attitudes, knowledge, and opinions do young high school graduates hold on the subject of citizenship and its links to multiculturalism? The interviews conducted with five recent high school graduates provide some direction for understanding how young people view these concepts.

Methodology

This section reviews the rationale for choosing interviews as the method of data collection, the participant recruitment process and ethical considerations, details of the data collection and analysis process, and limitations of the methods.

Interview Rationale

Open-ended interviews were the method for data collection in this study, chosen in order to gain insight into the experiences of students who had relatively recently completed the Grade 10 Civics course. King (2004) suggests that the goal of interview is to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee and to understand how and why they come from this particular perspective. Open-ended interviews allow for a topic to be approached either in a broad or specific manner (King, 2004), which is particularly useful to a study where participants' knowledge of the subject in question could vary wildly in quantity and quality.

Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations

This study involved five participants, three male and two female, whom I recruited through personal contacts and acquaintances for convenience purposes. I knew two participants as acquaintances before the study and the three remaining participants were recruited through a friend. Participants were all over the age of 18 and were university students from Canada's majority culture (White, born in Canada of non-immigrant parents, and Anglophone). Further,

they had all completed high school in Ontario within the past two years and had completed the Grade 10 Civics course at some point during their high school experience.

Upon receiving approval from the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo, I began contacting friends and acquaintances who met the criteria above to tell them about this study and ask them if they might be interested in participating. If a student's response was positive, I provided him or her with a letter of introduction detailing the specifics of the study and what their participation would involve. I informed them that their participation would be voluntary and that at any time they could withdraw from the study. Once I had obtained five participants, I contacted each one individually via email or phone to make a mutually convenient appointment. When choosing the location of the interview, I allowed the students to make the first suggestion in order that their comfort could be the priority. All interviews ended up being conducted in public places on university campuses in Ottawa. Before the interviews, participants signed a consent form acknowledging that they had volunteered to participate and that they consented to their interview being audio-recorded.

I considered the fact that when a potential participant knows the researcher, it can be more difficult for him or her to refuse to participate in the study. I was very clear about participation being voluntary, repeated several times in my correspondence with the students that they were under no obligation to participate, and reviewed verbally the contents of the consent form before participants signed it at the start of their interviews. I felt that the students I contacted were generally eager to participate and seemed interested in the process.

After interviews were complete, I provided the participants with a feedback letter thanking them, reminding them of the purpose of the study, and offering them the opportunity to read the results of the study upon its completion.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were conducted individually and in person at a mutually agreed-upon location. Interviews lengths differed drastically among the five students: the shortest was approximately 25 minutes with the longest lasting around 50 minutes. The main goal of the interviews was to see if students would, through questions that probed their conceptions of and thoughts on citizenship, link citizenship to multiculturalism. If students did make any link, they were encouraged to speak more about multiculturalism and citizenship. If not, they were prompted to connect citizenship with culture. Interviews therefore began with questions asking the students how they defined words or concepts like ‘citizenship’ and ‘good citizen.’ While questions varied from one interview to the next according to students’ knowledge and what they chose to discuss, all students were asked some versions of the following questions at the beginning of the interviews:

How do you define citizenship? What does citizenship mean to you?

What is a good citizen? Are you a good citizen? Why or why not?

What is your definition of Canadian citizenship? What is particular about Canadian citizenship?

What beliefs or values are represented in this concept of Canadian citizenship?

Further questions asked students to elaborate on their responses to the above questions and were based on what topics were invoked by the students themselves. For example, two students mentioned that citizenship was about having rights and responsibilities. These students were then asked to elaborate on what kinds of specific rights and responsibilities a citizen might have. Another student suggested that citizenship was about “reaching out to the community” (Participant 5) and was asked to give examples of how one reaches out to his or her community.

A student suggested that citizenship was “the state of belonging to something” (Participant 4) and a discussion ensued that explored how he viewed this concept of belonging to “something” in comparison with the concept of being a citizen of a political state in the legal sense. A fourth student suggested almost immediately that tolerance was an important aspect of Canadian citizenship, and was asked to if tolerance was particularly important in Canada in comparison with other countries.

I then transcribed the interviews for analysis. The initial step of the analysis examined students’ definitions of citizenship: were they conservative or progressive in nature? I noted key words, concepts and phrases associated with the different models of citizenship discussed by Westheimer and Kahne (2003), and Myers and Schugurensky (2003). For example, a student who described a good citizen as being law-abiding and charitable would have their definition fit into a conservative model. A student who instead described a good citizen as being one who tries to work toward the attainment of equality and democracy would be categorized as having a more social justice-oriented citizenship definition. Often students’ word choice and ideas were not completely black and white like the examples given above. However, these kinds of words and concepts were what guided my categorization of students’ conceptions of citizenship into some level of progressive or conservative model. I then summarized the general tone and content of each student’s citizenship definition, remarking the main model of citizenship they seemed to subscribe to as well as any deviations they made that would connect their definition to the other models.

A theme that emerged quite quickly during the analysis pertained to students’ views of multiculturalism and diversity in Canada, which were overwhelmingly positive. This tendency was obvious and strong, so I spent some time noting the particulars of how each student spoke of

multiculturalism. What words did they use when they spoke of multiculturalism? Did they speak about why they thought multiculturalism was such a good thing? Did they mention where they learned these ideas or how they developed them? This helped me draw broad conclusions about the more exact quality of students' positive outlooks on multiculturalism as well as how and where they may have developed those views.

I examined the links students made between citizenship and multiculturalism. First, I noted whether the participant independently began talking about aspects of multiculturalism or cultural diversity in Canada or whether the participant only did this after being prompted to think about citizenship in relation to culture. I then analyzed how the link was made. Was it a direct link? For example, did the student, in his or her initial responses, define citizenship as having something to do with multiculturalism? Did the student define Canadian citizenship in particular as having something to do with multiculturalism? Or was the link less direct? For example, one student described tolerance as being an important part of Canadian citizenship and explained that Canadians needed to be tolerant because of their multiculturalism; this was considered a less direct link between the two.

Participants' general knowledge of citizenship policy and theory was noted. However, evaluating how much students know about the topic at the theoretical level was not the purpose of the study. In general, students were allowed to make links themselves, whether or not that was based on knowledge of more concrete policy and established theory or on general life experience and opinion.

Limitations

One potential limitation was my existing acquaintance with two of the participants, which may have made it more difficult for them to refuse to participate in the study. However, their

relationship with me also may have made them more comfortable and trusting during the interviews. As such their responses may have been more honest and authentic. The same applies to three participants who were unknown to me before the study. Although I did not know them, they were aware of the fact that we had a mutual friend. This also could have influenced their decision to participate and could have made them more comfortable knowing that the researcher was not a complete stranger.

Another limitation is the students' homogeneity. Participants were chosen specifically because they shared similar age, language, and ethnic, racial, and educational backgrounds. This was in order that the interviews could also provide some insight into not only what youth think of citizenship, but also what youth from the dominant Canadian culture in particular think of citizenship. While this gives more depth to the interview results when they are examined in a cultural or racial context, it does not give any insight into the experiences of youth from different backgrounds in Canada.

Findings

Several themes emerged from the interviews with the student participants. A substantial part of the beginning of the interviews was spent on creating a clear picture of the students' individual definition or conception of citizenship, and this constitutes the first theme. Students' ideas of citizenship were compared against Westheimer and Kahne's (2003) three types of citizenship and Schugurensky and Myers' (2003) progressive and conservative citizenship descriptions. Table 1 reviews Westheimer and Kahne's citizenship models and categorizes them as fitting into one of Schugurensky and Myers' citizenship types.⁴ Additionally, discussion of multiculturalism became part of four of the five interviews. A striking aspect of this subject area

⁴ Table taken from Westheimer and Kahne (2003, p. 52) with the exception of information in square brackets and the section *Exemplary interview data*.

Table 1
Kinds of Citizens

Description		
[Conservative] Personally Responsible	[Conservative] Participatory	[Progressive] Social Justice Oriented
Acts responsibly in his/her community	Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts	Critically assess social, political and economic structures to see beyond surface issues
Works and pays taxes	Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment	Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice
Obeys laws	Knows how government agencies work	Knows about social movements and how to effect systemic change
Recycles, gives blood	Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks	
Volunteers to lend a hand in times of crisis		
Sample action		
Contributes food to a food drive	Helps to organize a food drive	Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes
Core assumptions		
To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time
Exemplary interview data		
"I pay my taxes...for the most part. You know...I don't have much of an income, so I'm not the best citizen, but in terms of other responsibilities, I obey the laws, I don't deviate from what my country's...legal system entails, and I enjoy my rights without sacrificing others'." (Participant 1)	"[Citizenship is] participating in the community and reaching out. I guess voting. Participating in all the rights we have as citizens in Canada. I guess we're given all these freedoms, so use them to the full capacity...freedom of speech, <i>et cetera</i> ." (Participant 5)	"Who's saying that these people now are part of our country, when they may have different views, and because they're a part of our country now - they are the minority - and they just have to go and deal with how we feel...when if they were on their own, they would have a different thing and it would work for them?" (Participant 4)

was the consistency in students' general feelings about multiculturalism. Thus, the second theme deals with students' views of multiculturalism. Lastly, the main goal of the interviews was to examine how students linked citizenship and multiculturalism. A third theme is devoted to how students made these links. This last section includes two themes, minority rights and accommodation, which emerged when some students discussed more complex issues of multiculturalism.

Conceptions of Citizenship

Overwhelmingly, students' definitions of citizenship and of good citizenship were conservative in nature, with very few references to aspects of citizenship that would fit well into progressive, social justice-oriented citizenship models.

Two students initially suggested that citizenship should be defined mostly in the legal sense – that 'citizen' is simply a word implying legal status as a citizen of a political state.

Participant 3: Um...I guess, [citizenship is] more of a legal definition, like legally being considered a citizen of a country by the government.

Participant 2: I think as far as citizenship goes, that is just a legal definition of 'You are a Canadian citizen' and this other person isn't. That's what I see citizenship as.

When asked to elaborate on their answer, the participants drifted from the narrow legal definition and used words consistent with a conservative view of citizenship, as did two other participants. Examples of conservatively-oriented words and phrases used by these four participants to define or describe citizenship included: following or obeying laws, paying taxes, and keeping the country safe. Students' ideas about 'participation' as a citizen were mainly limited to charity and voting, as in the conservative model.

Participant 1: I pay my taxes...for the most part. You know...I don't have much of an income, so I'm not the best citizen, but in terms of other responsibilities, I obey the laws, I don't deviate from what my country's sort of legal system entails, and I enjoy my rights without sacrificing others'.

Participant 2: I guess I would say a bad citizen could be someone who's a criminal, or breaking the laws....

Participant 3: I guess just like the responsibility to keep the country safe, to not do anything that would kind of hurt the whole country as a whole, no terrorism or anything. And I think voting is kind of a responsibility, so if you're a citizen I think you should vote.

Participant 5: I mean I voted, and I participate...going to [university] and participating in that is kind of like its own community. I've also done some charity stuff for mental illness over the summer so I've contributed that way.

Two participants explicitly described rights and responsibilities of citizenship and a trade-off was indicated as existing between the two.

Participant 1: I would say I'm a good citizen. I follow the laws and I fulfill most of my responsibilities to my country, and for that I get my rights.

Participant 3: So you have certain rights, and maybe responsibilities...I don't know, like you have the right to certain services, and education, in Canada, health care, right to participate in the democratic process.

These examples and ideas would fit these participants well into the personally responsible citizen category, where obedience and responsibility to obey laws are emphasized. When pressed to elaborate on their conceptions of citizenship, participants often waded into participatory

citizen territory as they suggested that some form of participation in civic affairs was necessary for a good citizen. One participant suggested immediately that citizenship was about both “voting, using your rights to their full capacity, respecting laws and everyone around you” and “participating in the community and reaching out” (Participant 5). This interview was quite distinct from the other four in that the student’s ideas about citizenship matched quite closely Westheimer and Kahne’s (2003) participatory model. While she talked about citizenship almost exclusively in those terms, she did not specifically advocate a social justice-oriented stance but was very clear about participation being the foundation of good citizenship.

Another participant’s conception was also almost exclusively participatory, suggesting that contributing actively to one’s community was central to good citizenship.

Me: ...you said you contribute to the Canadian community, and that makes you a good citizen. And in the international community you contribute too?

Participant 4: Yes, and that makes me a good citizen.

Another student also wondered whether some form of community leadership might not be necessary for good citizenship:

Participant 2: Now that I think again, a good citizen could also be somebody who’s a community organizer, that kind of thing, like, kind of building their community, that type of person, somebody who’s very...I guess, selfless, somebody who’s completely selfless would be a good citizen. But I think that’s more just they’re a good person, in that nature.

While these students considered or advocated a participatory approach, there was no suggestion that confronting social injustice in particular was a defining aspect of citizenship. One student suggested that his own contribution involved social justice activism, but did not imply that this should be the case for everyone.

Participant 4: How do I contribute....I suppose I contribute by the advancement of accepted standards of you know, international human rights, and these things that people agree on as what people should have. And then we work towards the attainment of that. And so someone who works for that would, could be classified as a good citizen.

Further elaborating on Schugurensky and Myers' (2003) conservative conceptions, some participants associated concepts of unity, pride or patriotism with citizenship in their opening responses:

Participant 2: Um, I guess, you're trying to think that if you're a citizen of somewhere, you'd have like an inherent patriotism for that country.

Participant 3: I don't know, [citizenship] kind of goes along with a sense of unity, a sense of belonging to a certain group of people, a kind of national pride.

One student brought up several times during the interview the pride and happiness that he had seen in his immigrant friends and acquaintances when they received Canadian citizenship.

Participant 2: The area I grew up in in Toronto, there are lots of immigrant families, so when I was growing up I'd have friends who'd get their citizenship and it would be something they'd be really happy about...In grade seven or so when [my friend] did get his citizenship, his Canadian citizenship, and it was something that his whole family was just proud of.

Overall, participants' concepts of 'citizenship' and 'good citizen' fell into the jurisdiction of the more conservative definitions. Participants' talk of volunteering and charity, of law-abidingness, pride and patriotism, being productive and of being good citizens by voting give the interview results a very strong tilt towards conservative citizenship concepts, both personally responsible and participatory.

Views of Multiculturalism

Participants' views of multiculturalism were very positive. One student simply mentioned that he liked that Canada was multicultural. When asked whether he thought immigrants to Canada should accept certain aspects of a Canadian identity that he defined, he responded:

Participant 2: No. I personally don't believe in that whole melting pot idea...I like the individuality of people's own cultures.

Several other participants also expressed a very certain pride and confidence in multiculturalism as a strength of Canadian society.

Participant 3: I don't know, I think it's something that Canadians pride themselves on, accepting other cultures and like differences and opinions, as long as they're not doing any harm to anyone else, being able to accept them and integrate them into society, and also like a step beyond that is being able to celebrate it.

Participant 4: I'd say we're stronger in that than most countries because of our diversity. We see the good in others, one could say.

The concept that Canada is a nation made up of immigrants, with diversity as the commonality between various peoples and cultures, surfaced several times throughout the course of the interviews and always in a positive light.

Participant 3: Well I guess it's just like...Canada...we have always been at least 3 separate peoples, so since the beginning there hasn't really been anything to unite us other than our diversity. So of course today we have immigrants from like everywhere, and so I guess besides being proud of our country and the values which we promote, there isn't really anything that unites us other than tolerance.

Participant 1: I think the overall meaning of being Canadian is this idea of acceptance. People have different beliefs and different ideas and different cultures, but you can have them, and still be under the Canadian flag. We don't have this great Canadian ideal which we all follow, we all have different ideas we all bring that to the table and that's what makes the Canadian citizenship.

Two students discussed the peaceful nature of multiculturalism in Canada, with one of them stating that while things are not perfect, we're "not all throwing bricks through each other's windows" just because we have different beliefs (Participant 1).

Participant 3: I just think because tolerance is so important, it's just like a thing that we pride ourselves on. And we're saying okay I don't agree with your values, but I'm not going to start a fight about it and I'm not gonna not interact with you and not be able to work with you and be friendly with you just because I don't agree with certain things.

The fifth student did not discuss multiculturalism at all. Overall, the four remaining students quoted above conveyed attitudes that showed their constructions of multiculturalism were associated with positive notions like peace, strength, tolerance, acceptance, freedom to retain cultural traditions and heritage, and celebration of diversity. Moreover, students seemed to feel that Canada was quite successful in the levels of acceptance, peace, and freedom it has achieved.

Links Between Citizenship and Multiculturalism

Students did not in general make a link to multiculturalism through the initial two questions: "What is citizenship?" and "What is a good citizen?" Three students, however, independently linked citizenship to multiculturalism. One student linked citizenship to multiculturalism after being prompted to think about citizenship in connection with culture (but

gave very little elaboration), and the final student made no links to multiculturalism. All four students who linked citizenship to multiculturalism did so when discussing or thinking about Canadian citizenship in particular; how students made these links constitutes the first subsection. The second subsection describes participants' perspectives on accommodation and minority rights, which were discussed by several students during the interviews.

Links through Canadian citizenship

Students who linked multiculturalism to citizenship seemed to only begin to consider multiculturalism once they began to talk about Canadian citizenship (as opposed to the word or concept 'citizenship' in general). The participant below, when asked what a 'good citizen' was, responded right away from the perspective of Canadian citizenship:

Participant 3: I don't know, I guess in Canada, our shared unity, I guessed based on like, acceptance, being tolerant of all kinds of people.

The student went on to elaborate on "all kinds of people" as including different cultural groups.

A second student, when asked what citizens' rights might be particular to Canada, discussed how he appreciated Canada's religious tolerance and described it as "very, very good." (Participant 1). He then linked immigration to what he felt was a defining aspect of Canadian citizenship: acceptance.

Participant 1: I think the overall idea of Canadian citizenship is acceptance. We can't just accept [immigrants] and give [them] citizenship because we need them to have good jobs and stimulate the economy, we need to accept everything that they have, including their cultures.

A third student did not link citizenship and multiculturalism on his own, but when asked if there were any connections he would make between citizenship and culture, he spoke about how having a certain citizenship implied that you might grow up with some of the culture of that place of citizenship.

Participant 2: Like I said before I think citizenship is just a legal definition, or a legal term. But yeah, I would definitely say along with that it goes that if you're a citizen of a certain place, or a naturalized citizen, then chances are you would have grown up with some of that identity of where you're from. In that sense, culture probably does have something to do with citizenship.

When asked to elaborate, he suggested that a citizen might internalize some aspects of his or her home country but also, in the case of immigrants, the culture of an adopted country.

Participant 2: If you do immigrate to Canada, there's still...a lot of my friends pick up a lot of Canadian identity, but at the same time they have something that's unique to their own culture, that's part of their identity as well. I guess that's why Canada is such a multicultural country, and that's something I really like about it.

The fourth student also linked multiculturalism to citizenship while discussing Canadian citizenship. He did this by speaking briefly about minority and majority cultures when asked whether all citizens of a state should have to accept the state's rules.

Participant 4: Who's saying that these people now are part of our country, when they may have different views, and because they're a part of our country now, they are the minority, and they just have to go and deal with how we feel ...when it's like, if they were on their own, they would have a different thing and it would work for them. So it's tough. Where do you go from here?

The fifth student did not link citizenship to multiculturalism at all, even when prompted to discuss citizenship in relation to culture. Instead, she saw culture as in terms of the arts. When asked whether she thought citizenship had anything to do with culture, she responded:

Participant 5: Sure, like participating in arts and music, you know some countries value that more than others, so definitely.

She described Canada as a country that values the arts, and said that while those arts “contribute[d] to culture [and] citizenship because art is related to freedom of expression,” participating in them was not a necessary action for good citizenship (Participant 5).

Thinking about Canadian citizenship seemed to be the important step that brought the students from talking about citizenship in general to talking about multiculturalism as an aspect of citizenship. This at times seemed to be due to the fact that they were simply more familiar with Canada than with other countries. In fact, two students said that they did not know much about other countries and therefore were not able to discuss in depth what citizenship might be like in other nations. However, students seemed to see multiculturalism as a distinctive feature of Canadian life and for four participants this is what provoked them to discussing it alongside citizenship.

Issues and problems in multiculturalism: Accommodation and minority rights

Three participants in the study spoke about multiculturalism at some length. In those discussions, minority rights and accommodation surfaced as issues or tensions that students seemed to recognize or be familiar with. This section summarizes what students said about these two more complex concerns associated with multiculturalism.

The participants recognize the complicated nature of accommodation and seem to feel that it should respect lines drawn by safety concerns and the law.

Participant 1: I understand that it's acceptable in some cultures to treat women in a certain way, but here, in this country, it is not. So where do you draw the line, you know? You say your religious rights or your cultural rights are protected at one side, but over here, you're doing something very illegal and not acceptable in our country. Such as treating women in a submissive way, or whatever.

Participant 3: [Immigrants] should definitely accept tolerance and that kind of thing, because that's what makes our country work. There's a lot of different opinions here, and if we weren't so tolerant I guess we'd all just be fighting each other. I'm not saying they can't keep their own beliefs on other things, but they should accept some parts of what it means to be a citizen.

Participant 1: And what happens, you know, when you say, we respect and we give rights to cultures in all their facets, but what if they're a culture of violence? Now that contradicts with, maybe something that we're trying to promote here, so where do you draw the line. My point is that the balloon of the Canadian ideal is supposed to protect everyone and every individual, and if the culture goes in a way to hurt others, even the individual within the culture itself, it shouldn't be accepted.

Participant 3: I don't know if you can really define [when a personal belief that is different from the majority becomes unacceptable] other than what the law says right and wrong is.

Another student suggested that while newcomers to Canada might be expected to accept Canadian definitions of "right" and "wrong," that line between them might be more fluid and subject to the nature of those laws and how or why they were created.

Participant 4: That's tricky. I suppose that if [immigrants] do know what is expected here, then [accepting our definition of "right" and "wrong"] would make sense. But it's all a matter of whether or not our laws are...not just... justice is so arbitrary, it's so all over the map. What is just? Everyone has their own different opinion on that.

The students who discussed minority rights agreed that no single culture in Canada should be given "preferential" or differentiated treatment. The concept for two students seemed to be at odds with the concept of equality.

Participant 1: I think that would be really wrong [to change some rights and responsibilities for certain people based on culture]...How can you say one citizen has different rights than another citizen? That's the first part of the Charter: all citizens have the following things under them, no matter where they're coming from, their religious background, whatever culture they identify themselves with, they are still a citizen and they have these rights and responsibilities. So to say that a French person only gets these couple rights, and these responsibilities, is very prejudiced in my mind.

One student, when asked about what the "just" response might be if one religious group demanded publicly funded religious schools, answered:

Participant 4: Well what's just is not to have any funding. Because [funding religious schools] would be preferential to one [culture] over the other. When that's not kind of...what our legal system is based on.

Remaining participants

The other two students did not discuss at length the tensions and complexities present in the relationship between citizenship and multiculturalism. One participant's interview was quite short. While she felt it was important for Canadians to have their own distinct citizenship

because it was “part of our identity,” she did not connect multiculturalism either to citizenship in general or to Canadian citizenship (Participant 5). She felt that her notion of citizenship was a good one; when asked if everyone should subscribe to a conception of citizenship like her own, she replied:

Participant 5: Ideally that would be great, you know, but there’s definitely people who are not as independent of thinkers, and are more followers. But then again it varies per person.

The other student who did not elaborate further on the more complex aspects of multiculturalism and citizenship spoke at some length about his pride in being Canadian and about why immigrants might choose to come to Canada. Unlike several of the other students, he did not suggest acceptance or freedom as reasons why Canada might be seen as welcoming to immigrants. Instead, he felt that “opportunity” and stability might be the reasons why people from less developed nations might immigrate. For those from developed nations he felt the reasons might be more related to work or simple interest in travel.

Participant 2: Just in general, I would say...that’s probably why people come to Canada, because I would say it’s stable. I don’t think there’s that much risk of the entire Canadian government collapsing and Canada falling into anarchy, and so probably not much chance of that happening in a lot of countries...[For immigrants from other stable countries], maybe it’s just that Canada seems like an interesting land...it could be just as simple as following their jobs.

Students’ responses show some recognition of the concerns facing a multicultural society and some willingness to confront those concerns. Although two students did not articulate any such thoughts, the interview responses in general show that some students, at some level, are not

only connecting multiculturalism with citizenship but exploring how the two actually react in practicality.

Discussion

This study's findings give support to the idea that the Ontario curriculum's approach to citizenship remains conservative in nature and does not reach a sufficiently critical degree for scholars working in anti-racist or progressive citizenship theory. Likewise, it suggests that students may retain conservative attitudes towards citizenship and superficial knowledge about its links to multiculturalism. This is potentially due in part to the approach of the curriculum to these topics. More research into understanding the strength and directness of the influence of curriculum on students' knowledge is needed in order to more efficiently develop progressive curricula. This study also suggests that for curriculum development, further research on students' perspectives of citizenship, multiculturalism, racism, and education might provide educators with a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in students' knowledge in these areas.

Based on the interviews, the Ontario Civics curriculum does not seem to support classroom attention to the teaching of progressive citizenship concepts that might then serve as the basis for the teaching of anti-racism education. It also fails to link provincial policy on anti-racism to the specific Civics course outcomes. Students' responses were in general consistent with the curriculum analysis and literature. The participants in the study seemed to have learned exactly what conservative citizenship education teaches: that good citizenship is, in the personally responsible category, about law-abidingness, productivity, and obedience; and in the more participatory category, that it is about charity, service or volunteering, and voting. With one exception, students did not describe citizenship in progressive or social justice-oriented terms. Neither did they did not clearly see confronting and resolving social injustices, improving the

democratic process, or participating actively in public dialogue as defining responsibilities of citizenship either in general or in Canada.

It follows then that if they do not demonstrate possession of the capacities of progressive citizens, it is likely that they do not think critically about multiculturalism in Canada and its related conflicts. Participants' views of multiculturalism in Canada were positive – they seemed to appreciate that many cultures are present in Canada and they seemed proud that such diversity is managed in such a peaceful and tolerant way. Furthermore, the manner in which students connected citizenship and multiculturalism, if they did, was for the most part superficial and uncritical. Attitudes like tolerance and acceptance were even described as being central to the very idea of Canadian citizenship or identity: being Canadian was in part about possessing these attitudes and the students who spoke about this were very certain about it. These attitudes were either necessary or present due to diversity and multiculturalism. The students who made the link in this way seemed to generally feel that Canada and Canadians were doing fairly well in managing diversity. They did not acknowledge racism or inequity as being related conflicts. In the case of Participant 4, the link was more critical as he linked citizenship to culture by discussing the sometimes tense relationship between minority and majority cultures in a state where all citizens are asked to obey the same laws and rules. The general findings, however, may reveal that students are largely unaware of, or are not willing or able to confront, the deeper conflicts of a multicultural state. More progressive knowledge or approaches might find students acknowledging racism, both individual and structural, as a central problem of a culturally diverse population.

The lack of progressive attitudes was evident in participants' responses even as they articulated their thoughts on contentious issues like minority rights and accommodation of

foreign cultures. An important aspect of students' discussion about minority rights and accommodation is their certainty that equality, and in one case justice, means treating all cultures the same. It was clear that they perceived some kind of threat to stability or justice if one culture were to be given some kind of differentiated citizenship. They did not seem aware of the argument that differentiated rights might be necessary for equity because a dominant culture (their own) might possess some social advantages. Participants' also showed respect for the concept of accommodating other cultures; however, the limits to accommodation were defined by the law and by safety. A more critical attitude might see students questioning the adequacy of 'tolerating' other cultures, examining equity in a way that acknowledges their potential social advantages as members of the cultural majority, or attempting to think about how and by whom notions of law and safety are constructed before they decide that those should simply be the limiters of cultural accommodation.

As discussed earlier in this paper, the skills and capacities needed by students for effective anti-racism learning are the same or very similar to those advocated in a progressive citizenship education model. The Ontario curriculum's attention to anti-racism is weak and vague. Furthermore, its citizenship approach remains mostly conservative. Considering that students' definitions and ideas of multiculturalism and citizenship were consistent with what is found in the curriculum, this study supports the notion that school and curriculum in particular play an important and influential role in the development of students' conceptions in these areas. The degree of influence remains in question; therefore, future research might explore the strength and directness of the link between curriculum content and students' learning and perspectives. In other words, because the participants' views and the curriculum's approach to the topic seemed to be quite similar, more research is needed to understand better the importance of the curriculum

in shaping student experiences in comparison with other influences (e.g. family, media, or other aspects of the school experience).

Student perspectives in this study painted an important part of the picture in understanding how theoretical curriculum approaches may translate into students' practical knowledge. This is not only useful for educators who want to understand where connections and holes might exist in their students' understandings of citizenship and multiculturalism, but it is also valuable to those involved in curriculum development. For the evolution of the Ontario curriculum towards a more progressive, critical model of citizenship education, students' experiences can help display where weaknesses and strengths exist in the existing curriculum. While this study lends a small amount of insight into what dominant-culture students know and think, further research with a much greater number of diverse participants could give a more accurate exposition of where and how the curriculum would specifically need to change in order to become more progressive.

The continuation and evolution of a just and equitable democratic society rests at least in part on the development of an appropriate progressive citizenship model. This model must then be promoted in an effective way that would likely utilize the influential position of public schooling to reach Canadians. If democracy in a multicultural Canada is to persist and improve, schools must educate critical Canadians who are concerned with resolving social injustice, including those injustices resulting from multiculturalism. As such, examination of all aspects of the school experience, including students' personal experiences, is necessary for the development of a critical approach to citizenship in education that positions citizenship in the context of multiculturalism in Canada. This development would likely involve broad and deep changes in the current Ontario curriculum in order for progressive citizenship concepts to be

implemented as overarching values and not simply as a subject to be taught separate from all other courses. There appears to be some attempt to do this as seen in the overview for the Canadian and World Studies umbrella subject area, which described the subject as being partially about teaching good citizenship as part of all its courses. However, citizenship education in Ontario is still largely concentrated in the Civics course.

Schools would also likely have to shift away from the current trend towards emphasis on individual economic success in education as discussed by Mitchell (2003). This concept is at odds with progressive citizenship concepts that ask citizens to be responsible first for the well-being of their communities. Certainly, teachers and the training they receive are important factors in what students' learn. Progressive citizenship education would require teachers who embody the capacities this type of education asks of its students: critical thinking and willingness to engage in public dialogue. To exemplify the ideal democratic citizen, for example, teachers would have to both recognize and encourage dialogue about difference while also teaching students to care about the same certain things, like solving social justice problems – this is a challenging task at least. Changes to the citizenship education approach would have to coincide with the foci and methods of teacher education in Canada.

Teacher education is part of the change; however, teachers' personal backgrounds, attitudes, and beliefs influence what they teach as well. Another requirement for a widespread progressive citizenship model to take place is a social change. While school influences citizens who then have the potential to change society, it is also true that public schooling reflects political will and public policy in society, as discussed earlier in this paper. Implementing a progressive citizenship model in public schools presupposes that the state wants critical citizens who, by definition, would be more critical of their state. Similarly, citizens, especially the

educators who are going to teach a progressive citizenship model, would have to be made to see the reason behind its promotion and to a certain extent would have to accept and embrace this model. As this is in conflict with current social and educational focus on individual economic gain, Canadians would have to shift their priorities away from this focus and towards a more long-term focus on the improvement of democracy and its ideals in Canada. These objectives are certainly not as rewarding in the short term as achieving career success and financial stability. As such it would certainly be a challenging task to acclimatize citizens to a citizenship concept with less tangible impact in the short term.

It is difficult to imagine these social changes happening quickly, but it is not impossible to imagine them happening at all given some of the significant progressive changes made in general citizenship and multiculturalism policy in Canada in the past century. Some aspects of the development of critical, social justice-oriented citizenship remain unstable. However, there is certainly cause to believe that such a development could happen considering the prominence of citizenship debates in political theory and in educational discourse. While it may happen in a slow and daunting manner, a change in the approach of Canada and its public schools to citizenship is a necessity for the evolution of justice, democracy, and equity in Canada.

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