In Search of Good Citizens

Citizenship Education and Social Studies in Canada

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Introduction: Citizenship as a Central Purpose for Education

Ken Osborne ends an excellent recent article on citizenship education in Canada with the argument that "citizenship seems to have vanished from the educational agenda."[1] While Osborne might be right in the substantive sense, he is most definitely not right when it comes to rhetoric. Across Canada, preparation for democratic citizenship is widely acknowledged as a central goal for public schooling. The Province of British Columbia, for example, recently published a policy document titled *The Graduation Program 2004,* which includes a section outlining the desired attributes of the B.C. graduate "in the areas of intellectual, human and social, and career development."[2] Citizenship is front and centre as a key goal of public schooling according to this document, which says, in part:

> In their human and social development, graduates should achieve:
>
> • The knowledge and skills required to be socially responsible citizens who act in caring and principled ways, respecting the diversity of all people and the rights of others to hold different ideas and beliefs.
>
> • The knowledge and understanding they

need to participate in democracy as Canadians and global citizens, acting in accordance with the laws, rights and responsibilities of democracy. . . .[3]

At the other end of the country, the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation identifies citizenship as one of six "Essential Graduation Learnings."[4] Lest we think this focus on citizenship as a central goal for public education is exclusive to English Canada, the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec contends "the ultimate goal of elementary education is to prepare students to participate actively in society by playing a constructive role as citizens."[5]

Ministries of education in Canada are not alone in identifying education for citizenship as central to the educational enterprise. The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) claims that 75 percent of teachers support the idea "that the role of public education is to provide a well-balanced general education to prepare children for life and to assume the responsibilities of good citizenship."[6] The CTF itself has long supported education for democratic citizenship as a central goal for public education and has recently renewed that commitment through the launch of the program Living Democracy: Renewing Our Vision of Citizenship Education.[7]

Even beyond the education community there appears to be wide support for the idea that schools ought to focus considerable attention on preparing democratic citizens. Twenty years ago, George Tomkins argued "the goal of 'citizenship' probably

comes closer than any other to identifying the purpose that Canadians have usually believed the social studies should serve, even though they might not agree on what a 'good' citizen (or a good Canadian) is."[8] More recently a series of public opinion surveys in Canada demonstrated support for a wide range of purposes for public schooling, "but the two dominant goals emerging from such polls are preparing students for the world of work and preparing them for citizenship."[9]

It is not only in Canada where citizenship education is touted as a key aspect of schooling. The editors of a book looking at current approaches to citizenship education in twenty-four countries write, "It is clear . . . that a review and rethinking of civic education is taking place not only in post-communist countries and those with a short recent history of democracy but also in well-developed and longstanding democracies."[10] Indeed, the language of democratic citizenship and citizenship education is showing up in the policies and curricula of jurisdictions as diverse as Australia, Russia, Colombia, and Singapore—some of which one might be reluctant to call democratic.

This wide and general acceptance of preparation for democratic citizenship as a fundamental purpose of public education, however, belies considerable confusion and debate in the field around several key questions including:

- What do we mean by citizenship and citizenship education?

- What do we know about where young people are relative to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective citizenship?

- What are the best ways to educate citizens?

- What can be done to strengthen citizenship education in Canada and elsewhere?

In the remainder of this chapter I will turn to these questions, not so much to provide answers as to introduce the range of thinking, practice, and debate in each area.

Citizenship and Citizenship Education as Contested Concepts

I often begin presentations on citizenship education by asking participants to engage in a short exercise. I divide them into small groups and instruct each group to design a job advertisement for the "Ideal Canadian Citizen." We talk for a minute about what typical job ads contain, including a description of the ideal candidate's educational background, personal qualities, skills and experience, and then I set the groups to work with poster paper and markers to write their ads. When completed, the advertisements are posted around the room to provide a jumping-off point for our discussion. Inevitably someone objects to the word "ideal," but I point out that job advertisements shoot for the perfect candidate and selection committees take the person who comes closest to that target, with the best mix of education, experience, and personal qualities. A typical ad emerging from this activity looks like the one below.

While each ad is unique in wording and emphasis, overall they are usually very similar in substance. The participants' first impression is that there is obviously wide agreement on the qualities of good citizenship, but then I begin to ask questions about

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WANTED—THE IDEAL CANADIAN

The person we are looking for:

Has a love for Canada
Obeys the law
Knows Canadian history and geography
Is bilingual (French/English)
Is open-minded and tolerant of difference
Is a critical thinker
Is a good public speaker
Has lived in or travelled to various parts of
    the country
Has a record of involvement with the community
Loves hockey

the various criteria they have identified, pushing them to think beyond the surface. I have done this activity dozens of times over several years with groups of people ranging from elementary school students through graduate students to members of a local Rotary Club. One of the most common criteria identified across this wide range of groups is, "A good citizen obeys the law." I then ask, Was Mahatma Gandhi a good citizen of India? How about Martin Luther King, was he a good citizen of the U.S.? Or Nelson Mandela, a convicted terrorist, is he a good citizen of South Africa? How about Emmeline Pankhurst, who went to jail twelve times in 1912 for her part in suffragette protests (many of which involved the destruction of property) of British laws against women's suffrage, was she a good citizen of Britain? Closer to home, how about Louis Riel, leader of the Métis Rebellion in Western Canada, or Louis Joseph Papineau and William Lyon Mackenzie, leaders of the Rebellions of 1837 in the Canadas, were they good citizens? Or protesters arrested at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Vancouver in 1997, or at the Summit of the Americas in Québec City in 2001, are they good citizens? Most of the historic figures mentioned above are now, at least in the mainstream, considered heroes, with monuments erected in their honour, movies made of their lives, and streets, airports, and other public areas named after them. Nelson Mandela was considered such a good citizen by the parliament of Canada that he was made an honorary citizen of this country in November 2001, only the second individual to receive that honour. Emmeline Pankhurst was identified by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people of the twentieth century. *Time* placed her in the category "Heroes and Icons," which it described as "twenty people who articulated the longings of the last 100 years, exemplifying courage, selflessness, exuberance, superhuman ability and amazing grace."[11] It is interesting to note that joining Mrs. Pankhurst on that list of twenty are several others who fell afoul of the law in various countries including Rosa Parks, Che Guevara, Muhammad Ali, and Andrei Sakharov.

On reflection, most participants begin to back away from the contention that a good citizen always obeys the law, acknowledging that it is sometimes not only appropriate but even necessary for democratic citizens to break the law. The crunch comes, however, when I ask how we decide when it is appropriate and necessary to break the law, or if are there any limits to what a good citizen should do to challenge an unjust law. This is where the veneer of consensus begins to wear thin. Some participants quickly come to the conclusion that it is never appropriate to use violence against people or property in support of a political cause, but others, in the tradition of Mackenzie, Pankhurst, and Mandela, argue that sometimes injustice is so great, and the powers that be so resistant to change, violence is the only recourse.

If we push beyond the surface, this kind of complexity and difference of opinion exists around virtually every one of the criteria identified for good citizenship. When we say, for example, good citizens are open-minded and tolerant, does that mean open to anything? Tolerant of any lifestyle or cultural practice? What about the practice of infibulation, better known as female genital mutilation? Some parents in Canada wish to subject their daughters to this procedure, arguing it is part of their culture, what does it mean to be tolerant in this case?‡

As a democratic society we enshrine constitutional protection for free speech, but what about those who deny the Holocaust, contending it has been greatly exaggerated as part of a Jewish conspiracy to undermine Western Christian civilization? Should we protect their speech? Does it make a difference who they are? What if one happens to be a teacher who consistently expresses such views in the public square, in books, newspaper articles, or speeches? Should he or she be fired? What about the Jewish children in their classrooms, schools, and communities, aren't these children and their families entitled to some protection as well?

When we say a good citizen should know the history and geography of their country, what exactly

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‡ In Canada and most Western democracies this practice has recently been made illegal (1995 in the U.S.; 1997 in Canada), but there is evidence it continues to be practised by some.

do we mean? One of the most public educational debates in Canada over the past ten years or so has been over exactly that question. Some people, including some well-known historians, contend that Canadian history, as it has been taught in schools, has been effectively put to death by social historians, social scientists, and teachers infected with fuzzy thinking about what it is young citizens should learn about their country. Many from those groups, however, argue, with some evidence, that school history has been dominated by a bland, consensus version of political and military history, which avoids controversial subjects and is never connected to the lives and experiences of the people studying it.[12]

My point is this: while there is considerable consensus that preparation for democratic citizenship ought to be a central goal of public education, there is very little real consensus around what we mean by a "good" citizen. Most policy documents or public opinion surveys treat citizenship superficially, assuming we all understand the concept the same way. With most groups of people, even those from similar backgrounds, it does not take much probing to demonstrate that any apparent consensus about the meaning of good citizenship does not run very deep. This is as true for those developing educational policy and programs as it is for the students in my classes or the general public. In North America the school subject of social studies has been the part of the curriculum most directly charged with the responsibility of educating citizens and, even here, there is little agreement about what this should mean. Writing about social studies in a major research handbook on education, Marker and Mehlinger point out:

> the apparent consensus on behalf of citizenship education is almost meaningless. Behind that totem to which nearly all social studies researchers pay homage, lies continuous and rancorous debate about the purposes of social studies.[13]

The debate about what constitutes good citizenship continues, in part at least, because citizenship is a contested concept. The idea of contested concepts is rooted in the premise that there are some concepts inevitably mired in continual disputes about

their proper use. These disputes do not arise because the people involved are arguing about different concepts to which they have mistakenly given the same name, but because the internal complexity of the concept makes for disputes that "are perfectly genuine: which, although not resolvable by argument of any kind, are nevertheless sustained by perfectly respectable arguments and evidence."[14] Most writers hold a concept of citizenship that contains the same elements: "knowledge, skills, values, and participation,"[15] but there is wide disagreement about the role, nature, and relative importance of each element.

Disputes about citizenship arise not only because it is an internally complex concept, but also because it is a normative one. Normative concepts often fail to command a universally shared definition not only because of their complexity but also because they "describe from a moral point of view."[16] They are, in fact, appraisive in that they involve making judgements about what is better and best. Those who speak of educating for citizenship are not so much concerned with the narrow legal definition of citizenship as with some normative sense of good citizenship.

A group of researchers at the University of Montreal developed a conceptual framework to illustrate some of the constituent and competing elements of citizenship in liberal democracies. Figure 1 provides an illustration of how these elements interact.

In this model the vertical axis deals with citizens' sense of belonging. Most feel some sense of attachment to the national state but also derive a sense of belonging and citizenship from their connection to cultural or social groups within the nation (subnational) or to organizations that extend beyond the nation (supranational). Several political theorists have written about the multinational nature of the Canadian state.[17] Kymlicka argues that Canada contains at least two "national minorities," the Québécois and First Nations. Unlike more recent immigrant groups, these peoples existed as organized groups with defined territory as well as social and political institutions before the Canadian state was formed. For the most part, members of these communities continue to see themselves as citizens of those

entities as well as citizens of Canada. As Charles Taylor points out, this is essentially the two-level model of citizenship being worked out in the European Union [EU] where people are both citizens of their particular member country and, by virtue of that, citizens of the EU.[18]

In fact, people do not have to be members of national minorities to feel a sense of divided loyalties. Prominent Canadian historian Desmond Morton examines the persistent difficulty Canada has had establishing an overarching sense of national identity among its citizens, particularly when compared with its closest neighbour, the United States. Morton agues: "Canadian citizenship has had to coexist with loyalties to old homelands, newer provinces, or nations within and protected by the federal state, specifically *la nation canadienne française*."[19]

Recent research demonstrates that young Canadian citizens locate themselves on different places along this sense-of-belonging axis, with some feeling the tug of nation most strongly while others more closely identify with their province or region.[20] Indeed, most citizens in a democracy would not locate themselves at either extreme of the axis but at some point along it.

The horizontal axis in the model represents the tensions between the rights that allow citizens in a democracy to be free of the encumbrance of others to pursue "life, liberty, and happiness," to use an American phrase, and the obligation for democratic citizens to participate in their society. One writer asks the question this way: Are we to be idiots or citizens?[21] For the ancient Athenians, an idiot was a completely private person, cut off from all others, while the citizen took up his obligation to help shape and run society. The latter necessarily meant giving up some individual liberty in the service of others and the wider community, but such were the obligations of citizenship. There is great debate today about the forms of participation in which citizens should engage and even greater concern about signs of growing citizen disengagement. The latter is seen most clearly in declining voting rates among young citizens almost everywhere in the world. Voting is often seen as the most basic way in which citizens can and should participate in their own governance.[22]

FIGURE 1

GAGNON/PAGÉ CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK[23]
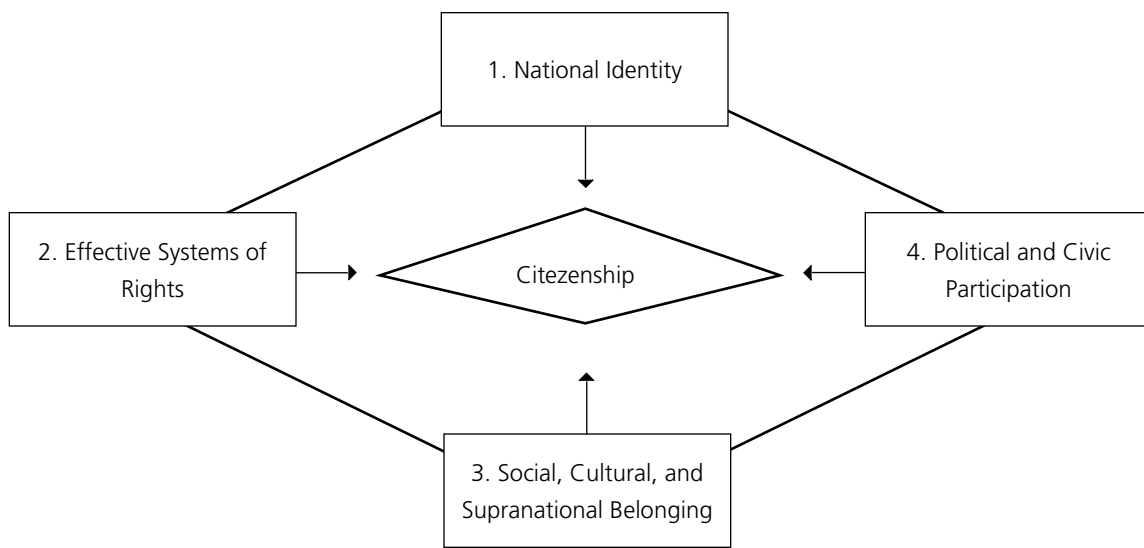
Citizens sometimes choose to not participate in their societies for a wide range of reasons, including: cynicism about the political process and political actors; low sense of personal efficacy or agency; feelings of exclusion due to race, gender, or class; narrow definitions about what counts as citizen participation; and personal preferences. Recent research indicates a trend away from participation in traditional political activities—voting; joining political parties; running for office—and towards what is alternatively called private or non-conventional modes of participation, including various forms of community-based activism and service.[24] Even then, much research documents fairly low levels of participation in both so-called conventional and non-conventional activities. Recent initiatives in citizenship education have been largely focused on addressing this perceived alienation from participating in civic life. Many, it seems, locate themselves towards the left-hand side of the horizontal axis, focused more on maintaining their rights to private life rather than on their contribution to the civic community. This has been of great concern to policy-makers and citizenship educators.

What the model demonstrates is that citizenship is a complicated idea, affected by many factors, including where a person finds his or her sense of belonging and the degree to which he or she is engaged with the civic culture. The varying degrees of force exerted by all of the polls on the model will pull individual citizens to different points on the scale and lead them to see their citizenship differently at various times in their lives and in different contexts.

All of this, of course, complicates the enterprise of educating citizens. The programs we design and implement for citizenship education are going to depend on the kind of citizen desired. For most of our history in Canada (at least outside Québec), there has been a great desire to educate citizens with a deep sense of attachment to the nation state vis-à-vis provincial, cultural, or ethnic identities. A number of attempts have been made to use the education system to help create the kind of overarching national myths that seem to sustain the strong sense of national unity in the United States. Before World War II, these myths were grounded in attachment to

the British Empire and the celebration of Canada's connection with all things British. With the weakening of the empire after the war, attention turned to creating home-grown myths to garner the loyalty of Canadians. History and social studies curricula in schools have been the main designated purveyors of these attempts at creating a national consciousness, but other extra- and co-curricular vehicles have been used as well, such as school assemblies and ceremonies to commemorate Empire Day, Remembrance Day, or Flag Day. The federal government, which has no constitutional role in education but has obvious interests in strengthening national unity, creates educational materials and sponsors a number of programs designed to foster a common sense of being Canadian.[25]

Current curricular goals with respect to national identity tend to be vague. *The Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies: Kindergarten to Grade 9* published as part of the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education states that it "will ultimately contribute to a Canadian spirit—a spirit that will be fundamental in creating a sense of belonging for each one of our students as he or she engages in active and responsible citizenship locally, nationally and globally."[26] It is unclear exactly what this "Canadian spirit" consists of, but this does represent one of the few explicitly stated goals for national identity in contemporary Canadian curricula, which tend to focus on more generic goals of good citizenship such as active participation, critical thinking and decision-making.

In terms of the participation of ordinary citizens in public life, there is considerable evidence that citizenship and citizenship education in Canada have traditionally been constructed in more elitist and passive terms than in many other democracies, particularly the United States. In other words, between elections Canadian citizens have largely been expected to leave the shaping of the county to political elites.[27] In the past, citizenship education in Canada has, for the most part, reinforced this elitist conception of democratic citizenship.[28] Curtis, for example, points out that from the earliest years of public schooling in Canada West (Ontario) in the nineteenth century, "education was centrally concerned with the

making of political subjects, with subjectification. But these political subjects were not seen as self-creating. They were to be made by their governors after the image of an easily governed population."[29]

Studies of more contemporary times have also described practice in citizenship education that is largely consistent with an elitist conception. In his landmark study of civic education in Canada, Hodgetts wrote about the "bland consensus version of history"[30] that dominated Canadian social studies classrooms. History teaching of this type focused almost exclusively on political and military matters, avoided matters of controversy, did not make any connection to the present, and emphasized the memorization of, among other things, "nice, neat little acts of parliament."[31] As Osborne writes, "the combination of curricula, examinations, textbooks, and pedagogy that prevailed before 1968, even when it was successful, served to produce a particularly conservative kind of citizenship."[32] While there is evidence that Hodgetts' research methodology had serious flaws, other studies have lent support to the argument that an elitist conception of citizenship education has dominated Canadian social studies, and several studies make the case that citizenship education in Canada has often been used to attempt to impose a narrow view of national culture on all students.[33]

Although citizenship education in Canada has generally been consistent with the elitist conception, in recent years there has been a move along the continuum to a more activist conception, at least in terms of official policy and mandated curricula. In her 1989 study, Masemann found that "the main ideology of citizenship education is the importance of citizen action and participation."[34] Sears and Hughes demonstrate that this trend has continued, arguing:

> Officially at least, good Canadian citizens are seen as people who are: knowledgeable about contemporary society and the issues it faces; disposed to work toward the common good; supportive of pluralism; and skilled at taking action to make their communities, nation, and world a better place for all people.[35]

They are careful to point out, however, that classroom practice is often different from officially mandated policy and there is considerable circumstantial evidence that citizenship education in Canadian schools maintains its essentially conservative character.

In sum, citizenship is a complex and contested concept and people use it to mean a wide range of things. Approaches to citizenship education naturally flow from these ideas about what constitutes a good citizen. In the past, Canadians, at least those responsible for shaping educational policy and programs, have generally held passive and conservative ideas about what constitutes good citizenship (i.e., good citizens are loyal to the nation state and vote every four years or so) and consequently citizenship education programs in schools have been designed to produce this kind of citizen. An examination of curriculum and policy documents in Canada indicates that in recent years the conception of good citizenship has shifted to emphasize active engagement in public issues. Indeed, a large measure of consensus exists across educational jurisdictions not only at the level of general educational goal statements but also at the level of specific citizenship goals of the intended curriculum. In all provinces and territories the goal of citizenship education is to create knowledgeable individuals committed to active participation in a pluralist society.[36] If there is general agreement that this is the goal of citizenship education, it seems to me that a fundamental question we need to answer before planning programs is: What do we know about where young people are relative to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective citizenship? We will turn to that question now.

Young People as Citizens

The degree to which activity in the field of citizenship education around the world seems to be driven by a sense of crisis about the state of young citizens is striking. Citizens, particularly young ones, are described as ignorant—they do not know even the basic information necessary to function as citizens; alienated—they feel cut off from the political life of

their societies, which they see as pervaded by dishonesty and corruption; and agnostic—they do not believe in the values necessary to undergird democratic citizenship.

The Civics Expert Group in Australia coined an interesting phrase, "civic deficit," to capture the idea of pervasive ignorance among the citizenry. The researchers reported that studies they commissioned "revealed a high level of ignorance about Australia's system of governments and its origins."[37] The British Advisory Group on Citizenship also used the language of deficit to describe British citizens' knowledge of their country's history and system of government.[38] In Canada, the Dominion Institute reminds us every July 1 and Remembrance Day that Canadians are disturbingly ignorant of basic facts of Canadian history, government, and contemporary culture, although wealthy Canadian families and foundations have poured millions of dollars into curriculum projects intended to "reclaim" a lost Canadian identity.[39]

In a more academic vein, eminent professors Michael Bliss and Jack Granatstein wonder about the "Sundering of Canada" and *Who Killed Canadian History?*[40] Peter Mansbridge, perhaps English Canada's best-known journalist, summed up the attitude well in a lecture at the Centre for Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University when he said, "Our ignorance is appalling."[41] In Canada and the rest of the world, this mantra of the ignorant citizen has been used to support calls for increased curricular attention to the knowledge of citizenship, particularly the study of national history and politics.

More compelling perhaps than the crisis of ignorance is the crisis of alienation. Carole Hahn, reporting on survey data collected in 1986 and again in 1993 from students in four European countries (Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and England) and the United States, outlines generally high levels of cynicism and disengagement from the political process.[42] Similarly, the authors of a significant international study write that "countries find themselves with increasing numbers of adolescents who are disengaged from the political system,"[43] and the British Advisory Group on Citizenship cites reports in that county that speak of a "potentially explosive

alienation" from the institutions of government.[44] In Canada, "voter turnout has declined in three straight federal elections," reaching a record low in the last one.[45]

Several explanations have been advanced to explain this alienation from politics, including high youth unemployment and bad personal experiences with attempts to influence the system.[46] A key reason advanced is disillusionment with corrupt or dishonest politicians. Hahn reports that in 1993 in four of the five countries she studied, less than 25 percent of students said that politicians could be trusted and in the fifth country (Denmark), only half said they could be trusted. She goes on to write, "Everywhere perceptions of honesty declined by about 20 percent from 1986 to 1993."[47] Interview data she collected indicates that media reports of political scandals were a major contributor to this decline. It is not only in the West where the practice of politics is linked to the growth of alienation among citizens. In summing up the situation in Japan, William Cummings writes, "Postwar school education has taught young people to value the democratic process. But postwar politics has been less than enthralling. Thus it would seem that apathy is common among young people and apparently increasing."[48] In Britain and elsewhere, "a coherent and sequential programme of citizenship education" is seen as the solution, at least in large part, to the crisis of alienation.[49]

In addition to the dual crises of ignorance and alienation, one finds in the literature great concern about the lack of commitment to the values of citizenship. I call this the crisis of agnosticism: citizens do not believe in democracy. There is wide agreement that democratic citizenship requires a commitment to certain values or dispositions. In other words, to be a democratic citizen it is not enough to know about democracy, one must believe in democracy as well.

Carole Hahn examined the level of commitment among the students she surveyed in Europe and the U.S. to certain democratic rights. In particular she looked at support for free speech and a free press. What she found was consistent with other work in the field in that it indicated that the students

expressed a high degree of support for these rights in the abstract, but when applied to particular situations involving the freedom of groups that the students did not like, the levels of support for their right to express themselves or publish articles in the press declined significantly. Hahn contends that this equivocation about some of "the core principles of individual liberty and respect for all" is cause for concern and is not well-addressed in citizenship education programs. She writes that her school visits in the five countries suggested to her "that educators have not given much deliberate attention to developing in students the capacity to extend fundamental freedoms and basic civil rights to groups that are the most disliked."[50] Because of the crisis of agnosticism, there is a growing focus on developing the values of democratic citizenship in citizenship education programs.

The concern about ignorant, alienated, and agnostic citizens is driving a flurry of activity in citizenship education around the world.[51] In Canada this has led, among other things, to the development of a compulsory grade 10 civics course in Ontario and the requirement that high school students in that province complete forty hours of "community involvement activities" in order to graduate.[52] However much these claims of serious deficit in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of young citizens ring true, in reality we know very little about what students in Canada know or can do, or how they feel about citizenship.

Close examination reveals that the empirical evidence for the crisis of ignorance facing citizenship and citizenship education is rather thin. Ian McAllister, an Australian political scientist, writing about the so-called new "civics deficit" in his country and elsewhere, argues:

> Ever since mass opinion surveys first began to be used in the 1940's they have consistently shown that most citizens are anything but knowledgeable about politics. The majority know little about politics and possess minimal factual knowledge about the operation of the political system.[53]

In his recent work Ken Osborne makes similar points with regard to historical knowledge in Canada, knowledge that is often regarded as foundational for informed citizenship. While scholars such as Bliss and Granatstein contend there has been a significant decline in knowledge of the history of Canada as a whole, Osborne argues that the evidence does not support this. He demonstrates the lack of historical knowledge among the Canadian population is not new but has been of concern to educators and policy-makers for 100 years or more, and has precipitated at least four previous crises of ignorance in the field of history education.[54]

What about the second element of the crisis, the alienation of citizens from civic participation? By many of the traditional measures—voting rates, numbers of young people joining political parties, levels of trusting politicians and public institutions—there certainly seems to be cause for concern around the world in both established and emerging democracies.[55] A key indicator of this alienation is a serious decline in voting rates. In Canada, for example, voter turn-out reached a record low of 61 percent in the federal election of 2000. The same pattern is being experienced in democracies around the world, and the evidence suggests that the most significant decline is among younger voters.[56] While much of the rhetoric in the citizenship education community attributes this decline to growing cynicism among young people, closer examination of the evidence indicates a much more complex situation. In fact, surveys of young people in Canada indicate "they are no more cynical than older Canadians."[57]

David Buckingham points out that there is a much more positive way of reading young people's disengagement from political processes. That is, young people have good reason to be alienated from a system that does not take them seriously. Perhaps the deficit is not with the young people, he suggests, but with a political system not open to real consultation and effective participation.[58] Hahn's interviews with young people in Britain seems to confirm this, as these young citizens often identified not being listened to or taken seriously by politicians as a key factor in their alienation. Similarly, the Centre for Research and Information on Canada suggests that structural elements such as Liberal Party hegemony,

the permanent voters' list and the first-past-the-post system of election might all contribute to voter disaffection. They argue that young people are no more alienated than their parents but are less likely to vote out of a sense of duty.[59] One could argue that attitude is a positive one for democracy in the long run.[60] It is interesting to note that, while Hahn found students largely alienated from the formal political process, she did not find them alienated from all forms of participation. They were very willing to participate in community-based activities where they could see themselves making a difference.[61] A recent study asked a representative sample of fourteen-year-olds in twenty-eight countries about the kinds of civic activities they intended to participate in as adults, and the results indicate that these students are more positively disposed to participation than is evident in recent surveys of adult participation in Britain and the United States.[62] Madeleine Gauthier surveys recent research on the participation of youth in Québec and concludes that, while there is a definite shift away from participation in traditional party politics, there are clear signs that a new political generation is active and shaping its own sense of what it means to be civically engaged. She writes:

> Despite commonly-held opinions, modern young people are far from apathetic. They are active at various levels of involvement in community life, although political partisanship is often suspect, even sometimes by those who officially belong to a political party.[63]

In looking at longitudinal data from across advanced industrial democracies, Dalton argues that, while "there is clear evidence of a general erosion of support for politicians"[64] and formal political processes, one "response to popular dissatisfaction has been a move toward participatory democracy."[65] In early 2003, protests against a war in Iraq brought millions into the streets worldwide. While reports indicate these protestors were from a wide range of ages and social classes, there were many young people concerned enough to join and, in many cases, organize the rallies.[66]

What of growing concerns about an apparent lack of belief in certain fundamental democratic values? Is it true that young citizens in particular lack such basic dispositions as respect for diversity, open-mindedness, or commitment to the common good? While news reports of rising xenophobia evidenced in racially motivated attacks on foreign workers and ethnic minorities in Europe and the United States, or of fights between black and white students at a Canadian high school, might lead one to conclude there is a serious deficit of democratic values among the young, careful scrutiny demonstrates the situation is not that simple. Hahn reports, for example, that the European and American students she surveyed and interviewed were very concerned about racism in their societies. So much so, in fact, that they supported limiting the public speech and access to the press for members of identified racist groups.[67] While one might argue that willingness to support the suppression of basic rights for some groups is evidence of low levels of commitment to certain democratic values, it does, however, demonstrate that many young people are indeed concerned about respecting ethnocultural diversity. A British Council conference on citizenship education heard from secondary school students and teachers about student-initiated programs to promote human rights, counter racism, and develop pan-European understanding. In several cases students had worked with public authorities and advocacy groups, such as Amnesty International, to organize workshops and conferences for their peers on issues related to human rights and diversity.[68] In Canada, historian and nationally syndicated columnist Gwynne Dyer has written and lectured widely about how multicultural and immigration policies have largely been successful in making Canada into a more diverse, tolerant, and stable society.[69]

All of this is not to dismiss concerns about the ignorance, alienation, and agnosticism of young citizens but simply to say we really do not know much about where students in Canada, or elsewhere in the world, are in relation to our citizenship goals for them. Almost forty years ago A.B. Hodgetts directed a nation-wide study of civic education in Canada that included observation in hundreds of classrooms, surveys of thousands of students and teachers, and

careful analysis of textbooks and other teaching materials.[70] Hodgetts' report examined student knowledge and attitudes, pedagogical practice, the quality of teaching materials, and teacher training. Despite methodological difficulties, the report became widely accepted as the baseline for social studies teaching and learning in Canada, and its recommendations, particularly the establishment of the Canada Studies Foundation, had a significant impact on social studies curricula, materials, and teaching.

Since 1968, however, there has been no systematic, large-scale effort to evaluate civic education in Canada either by academic researchers or through provincial or national testing programs. Small-scale, sporadic studies have been reported in the academic literature but by and large these have been uncoordinated and therefore have failed to provide the basis for a reliable body of knowledge.[71] Testing programs, where they exist, are largely focused on the knowledge covered in particular courses or programs and are only tangentially related to the situated knowledge of citizenship as described above. There is virtually no effort to assess the skills or dispositions of citizenship on a wide scale. In recent years the Dominion Institute has commissioned several surveys of Canadians' knowledge related to history and citizenship. The results of these surveys have been widely reported in the popular press and have been used as part of a lobbying campaign for more and better history and social studies education in Canadian schools, but again, only factual information is being tested, with little attention to context. This testing is certainly not consistent with the sort of citizenship knowledge described in curricula and policies across the country. Some very promising research has begun over the past several years but it is far too early to make sweeping policy and curricular recommendations from this work and it is clear that there is a range of ways in which young people understand their citizenship and a one-size-fits-all approach will probably not work.

Educating Citizens

The prevailing ideology of citizenship education found in contemporary Canadian curricula tends towards an activist or participatory conception of citizenship. What appears to be clearly associated with this activist/participatory ideology is a commitment to a pedagogy of active learning.

Curriculum documents generally include suggestions for teachers on appropriate teaching and learning strategies. Ministry/department of education guidelines include teaching strategies ranging from direct instruction through interactive and indirect instruction to independent study and experiential learning. In 1991 Saskatchewan Education identified forty-six specific instructional methods as elements in these general strategies.[72] They are reproduced in Newfoundland's 1993 *Curriculum Framework for Social Studies* and again in the 1998 curriculum guide *Atlantic Canada in the Global Community,* a joint enterprise of the four Atlantic provinces (see Table 1). None of the methods emphasizes the "chalk-and-talk" and "question-and-answer" methods that Hodgetts identified as the dominant instructional approaches. Of course, the methods identified here constitute a broad repertoire of teaching/learning activities that includes, but is not limited to, the interests and concerns of citizenship education.

The Newfoundland and Labrador *Curriculum Framework for Social Studies,* in addressing the issue of teaching/learning approaches, says "there is no one best method, rather, there is a method which, in a particular situation, for a definite purpose, at a specific grade level, with certain resources available, will be effective."[73] No doubt this is so, but there is little specific direction to the teacher concerning how to match the method with the situation, purpose, grade level, and resources. Invariably, the teaching suggestions or recommended activities or sample teaching strategies encountered by teachers in curriculum guidelines are presented as choices from which they might select some or none, according to their professional judgement. Specific learning experiences are never mandated, nor are any particular learning strategies. Indeed, very little is expressed by way of preferred methods except a vague commitment to support those that require more active learning on the part of students. "These are only suggestions and ideas that can be adapted and modified for different

situations and needs,"[74] a Saskatchewan teacher's guide states. Certainly the implication in all of the guidelines is that teachers should choose whether to employ a strategy, when to employ it, and how to employ it.

What is abundantly clear is that the ministries/departments are reluctant to give firm direction on the matter of teaching and learning strategies in areas that are normally associated with citizenship education. An exception to this lies in the growing approval of learning activities that involve young people in direct participation in and experience of life in the community. Often this takes the form of volunteer work with social service agencies, in the belief that such experience will contribute to the development of a commitment to voluntarism. Apprenticeship-like experiences in the realms of business and politics are also popular; again, the presumption is that the direct experience of participation will help foster a commitment to participation in the life of the community, however defined. The recent report of the Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation (CSE) places special emphasis upon extracurricular initiatives in

Québec, such as student involvement in student councils, youth parliaments, community involvement, and the work of international associations such as Solidarité Tiers Monde.[75]

This faith in "service learning" as a vehicle for developing citizenship is showing up in educational jurisdictions across North America with many, including Ontario, requiring certain levels of community service for high school graduation. Rahima Wade and David Saxe, in their review of the literature on service-learning, point out that these programs typically focus on four key outcome areas: academic development—students will learn something about the issues in their communities and develop academic skills; social and personal development—students will develop a sense of altruism (commitment to the common good) as well as heightened self-esteem; political efficacy—students will believe that they can participate effectively, that they can make a difference; and future participation—students will grow into adults who are more likely to be participating citizens.[76]

In June of 2002 the McGill Department of

TABLE 1
POSSIBLE TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES

Direct Instruction	Interactive Instruction	Indirect Instructuion	Independent Study	Experiential Learning
Explicit teaching	Debates	Problem-solving	Essays	Field trips
Drill & practice	Role playing	Case studies	Computer assisted instruction	Conducting experiments
Structured overview	Panels	Inquiry	Reports	Simulations
Mastery lecture	Brainstorming	Reading for meaning	Learning activity packages	Games
Compare and contrast	Peer practice	Reflective discussion	Correspondence lessons	Focused imaging
Didactic questions	Discussion	Concept formation	Learning contracts	Field observations
Demonstrations	Laboratory groups	Concept mapping	Homework	Role playing
Guides for reading, listening, viewing	Cooperative learning groups	Concept attainment	Research projects	Synectics
	Problem-solving	Cloze procedures	Assigned questions	Model-building
	Circle of knowledge		Learning centres	Surveys
	Tutorial groups			
	Interviewing			

Political Science sponsored a workshop titled "Citizenship on Trial: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Political Socialization of Adolescents."[77] This event brought together political scientists, social theorists, and educators from Canada, the United States, and Europe to share research relating to young people and citizenship. A number of the presentations dealt with evidence of the relationship between youth involvement in community organizations and later civic activity. All presenters argued that the relationship between community involvement when young and later civic engagement is very complex. There is clear evidence that those who are engaged in civic activity as young people are more likely to be engaged as adults, but there is no evidence that this is a cause and effect relationship; it may simply indicate the personality traits of those individuals who choose to participate.[78] The citizenship education community needs to stay connected to this growing body of work and engage in discussion and debate with colleagues in political science.

The truth is that while there is a growing body of research knowledge about children's learning and how to foster that learning through teaching, not much of what we know has been systematically applied to the specific context of citizenship education. Preliminary work has begun but much more needs to be done. The research of Carole Hahn and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) indicates, for example, what appears to be a correlation between classrooms in which important social issues are discussed and investigated in a climate of openness and debate, and greater student knowledge and engagement.[79] This is helpful information but needs to be pushed further so that we can begin to understand the specific kinds of issues and pedagogical approaches that will foster growth towards good citizenship.

It is important to think about pedagogy not only in terms of the delivery of lessons in the classroom but also in terms of the context in which those lessons are delivered. Despite the fact that every educational jurisdiction in Canada states in policy and curricula that schools are places for the development of democratic citizenship and that students ought to learn to be involved and to confront difficult social and public issues, schools are often not very democratic places for either students or teachers. There is evidence, for example, that teachers resist dealing with critical issues in the classroom and that schools often discipline students who seek, in relatively benign ways, to express concern about policies or practices.[80] In the words of student David Brand, who was disqualified from participating in a school event because he protested his school's requirement that all students watch a daily program of news provided by the Youth News Network, "School is not the place to have an opinion."[81]

In spite of platitudes about preparing students for democratic citizenship, the attitude of educators often seems to be consistent with that expressed by Gene Hackman's character in the movie *Crimson Tide*. Hackman, playing the captain of a nuclear submarine, says to his first officer, "We are here to defend democracy, not practise it." Too often citizenship education in schools is sterile and removed from real issues—it is designed to teach about democracy, not practise it. When this is the case, students "learn lessons different from the ones taught in their social studies class about exercising one's democratic rights."[82]

Conclusion: The Way Forward

I began this chapter with Osborne's suggestion that citizenship is not a high priority on the educational agendas of ministries of education or the public across Canada. It is clear that at the level of rhetoric this is not true: there is lots of talk in policy and curriculum documents about citizenship as a central goal for schooling in general and social studies education in particular. A look below the surface, however, demonstrates Osborne is clearly right: technical and vocational concerns have been driving the educational ship over the last number of years and social studies is a low priority in educational jurisdictions around the world.[83] This is particularly clear in the level of attention given to the subject in provincial and national testing programs where it is virtually non-existent (Alberta is the only province to

regularly test social studies on a province-wide basis), as well as in curriculum reform initiatives, which generally see social studies lagging well behind work in literacy, mathematics, science, and technology.

In my view, some of the blame for the decline of citizenship as a real priority for schooling can be laid squarely at the feet of those of us who work in the field of citizenship education. We are often not clear about what it is we mean by good citizenship, how it can be effectively taught, and how we can assess student progress towards it. A review of the public education system in Ontario argues, "Policies introduced over the past seven or eight years were developed and enacted without much demonstrable attention to empirical evidence about what would improve teaching and learning."[84] While this report is commenting on educational reform across the board, the same claim could be made about reform in citizenship education over time and across jurisdictions: it is often driven more by hype and personal agendas than by evidence and thoughtful deliberation.[85] If we want citizenship education to be taken seriously, it is incumbent on those of us in the field to provide a knowledge base to support reform.

Some of this work has begun. The recent IEA study, for example, has provided a broad overview of the intended curriculum in citizenship education in many parts of the world as well as a sense of the civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes of fourteen-year-olds in twenty-eight countries.[86] Carole Hahn also provides interesting comparative data about civic education programs and students' knowledge, skills, and values in Europe and the U.S.[87] The data set for the IEA study is massive (90,000 students from twenty-eight countries were surveyed) and the analysis of that data is still at the preliminary stages. Much more work can and should be done with this data to address more specific and complex questions.

A recent survey conducted with first-year anglophone and francophone college and university students in several regions of Canada has also produced some interesting results. The survey sought to investigate several areas related to citizenship: where these students find their sense of belonging (to the nation, province or local area); what their attitudes are to diversity; and what their level of civic engage-ment is (both at the time of the survey and projected into the future). Again, the survey data is in the early stages of analysis but it clearly shows a number of types, which vary according to province, linguistic background, gender, and so on.[88]

Along with this large-scale survey work it is essential to build a more qualitative body of knowledge about the ways students think and feel about citizenship. There is a growing body of constructivist work on students' thinking in social studies, but it is very much in its infancy, particularly compared with work in science or mathematics.[89] This kind of work is necessary to fill out and extend the kind of knowledge large-scale studies like the IEA Civic Education study provide. For example, the IEA study has very positive results related to students' acceptance of diversity. When asked if immigrants should have the opportunity to keep their own language, for example, 77 percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed. On the question of being able to keep their own customs and lifestyle, 80 percent agreed or strongly agreed, and 81 percent felt immigrants should have the same rights as everyone else.[90]

Overall, the authors of the report on the research conclude, "Attitudes toward immigrants are generally positive."[91] While this might appear to be good news, it strikes me that much closer examination is necessary. All of the questions about immigrants on the IEA survey were posed in the abstract, with no implications for respondents. It is easy to say immigrants ought to be able to keep their own language and cultural practices and exercise the same rights as everyone else if there is no implied or actual accommodation required on the part of other citizens. What if, however, immigrants begin to demand government services in their own languages, raising the costs for those services and the tax burden for everyone; would the responses remain so positive? Accommodation, after all, is where the rubber hits the road with regard to diversity. A key question is: To what degree are citizens willing to accommodate diversity even when it costs them something materially or socially? The IEA study does not answer this question, but it needs to be addressed. The Citizenship Education Research and Development Group at the University of New

Brunswick and others are engaged in programs of phenomenographic research to get at the structure of young citizens' thinking about ideas such as respect for diversity, dissent, political participation, and privacy. It is hoped this kind of work will expand on other quantitative and qualitative work about young people's thinking in the social realm.

These are examples of some of the work being done that has the potential to build a knowledge base for reform in the field of citizenship education. This is a good beginning but it is just a beginning. Much more needs to be done. Some years ago Marker and Mehlinger reviewed research in social studies education for a major research handbook and concluded that most of the published literature was not empirical in nature but was concerned with advocating one approach or another with little or no basis in evidence.[92] Similarly, it seems to me that too much energy and print in the field of citizenship education has been given over to cult-like mantras about both what is wrong with citizenship education and how it can be fixed. Educational scholars in the field have a responsibility to provide deeper analysis about both areas to help, in the words of Janice Gross Stein, move the public conversation "from cult to analysis."[93]

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