

Canadian, eh?
**Exploring Diversity and Inclusion Issues Around Lifelong Learning
and Canadian Citizenship**

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We are educators interested in critically exploring different aspects of lifelong learning in relation to diversity and inclusion issues linked with Canadian citizenship. This paper begins with a brief overview of three different areas of research taken up by each of the authors. André Grace discusses his research around citizenship with regards to the need to develop a holistic approach to lifelong learning that is supportive of sexual minority youth. Shibao Guo draws upon a critique of Rawls's notion of universal citizenship to discuss his research with Chinese immigrant associations and the support that they provide to New Canadians. Patricia Gouthro discusses her research on citizenship by focusing the need for grassroots organizations to support Canadian writers whose work contributes to our unique sense of Canadian identity. The paper concludes with a discussion of common concerns around practical pedagogical, political, and policy concerns to support more inclusive approaches to adult learning around citizenship.

Shaping Lifelong Learning as Holistic Education for Citizenship for Sexual-Minority Youth – André P. Grace

Since at least the 1960s, there has been a failure to provide adequate citizenship education in Canada, resulting in our youth having declining political knowledge and diminished civic engagement (Grace, 2009). Moreover, in a current Canadian trend, our youth, which the federal government broadly defines as 15 to 30 year olds, are disposed to nonparticipation in lifelong learning (Grace, 2007). This is despite research that indicates participation in lifelong learning can have a strong influence on future success in schooling, later learning, work, and life. In the case of sexual-minority Canadian youth, lifelong learning is problematic if we consider formal public schooling as a component of lifelong learning. Sexual-minority youth include those individuals whose sexual orientations and gender identities fall outside heteronormative categorizations of sex, sexuality, and gender as well as outside the dichotomies of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual binaries (Grace & Wells, 2007). For too many of them, the negative impacts of schooling are captured in narratives describing confusion, depression, aggression, substance abuse, impulsivity, alienation, truancy, quitting school, being gay bashed, hurting others, running away, and suicide (Public Health Agency of Canada,

2006; Tonkin, Murphy, Lees, Saewyc, & the McCreary Centre Society, 2005). These narratives exemplify the outcomes and extremes of behavior associated with the disenfranchisement of sexual-minority youth as lifelong learners.

Focusing on the needs of excluded youth like sexual-minority youth who have experienced schooling as a psychically and biographically damaging engagement and who left school early, we need to develop social and cultural education models that help youth develop as learners and citizens who can mediate the complexities of change, institutional and community cultures, and civil society in order to learn and live in contemporary times (Grace, 2009). Using the example of a second-chance education and training intervention in Ireland called Youthreach, McGrath (2006) provides one such model. He asserts that education and training beyond formal schooling need to focus on broader social inclusion in addition to the usual emphasis on labor market integration if youth are to develop as full citizens. He argues that this requires social policy intervention that emphasizes developing the individual capabilities of youth as reflexive agents, helping them build individual relationships and allegiances, and enabling youth as learners to have interactions that they find meaningful and significant. McGrath elucidates the contours of this educational enterprise that helps youth by providing the supports to build personal resources to compensate for absences and hurts in schooling. It is his contention that “in order to activate educational inclusion for the most vulnerable, support for interventions that respond to the ‘individualized’ needs and capabilities of young people is critical for the realization of authentic social inclusion policy” (p. 596). In developing such policy: McGrath asks us to begin by asking a key question: “How might we characterize ‘inclusion’ at the interface between personal lives and social policy interventions” (p. 596)? In answering this question so that we think deeply about social inclusion, we may be able to develop education for citizenship practices in which learning is actually meaningful, stimulating, and democratic. These practices focus on learners as whole persons. They add social and cultural layers to learning that do not preclude helping learners to be performers and producers who are efficient and effective contributors to local and larger economies. In focusing on the full citizen and the worker, social and cultural education can meet instrumental education within a process of more holistic learning. McGrath provides this perspective on the importance of socially and culturally innervating the Youthreach learning process. The result is an active learning culture in which youth experience support, security, and self-comfort that gives them courage to try as individuals who know that when they choose to speak, they will be heard.

Analysis of young people’s narratives suggests that what unanimously appeals to young people, irrespective of their attraction to the program on the basis of the training allowance, are the structures of communication between tutors and participants, which can be interpreted as psychosocial processes of group inclusion, fostering relations of trust and promoting a sense of ontological (psychic) security. ... [In this sociocultural milieu, there] is evidence of greater disposition towards exploratory learning and ‘thinking beyond’ the way knowledge is typically transmitted. (pp. 602, 605)

For struggling youth, this kind of exploratory learning contributes to more holistic lifelong learning that helps youth grow as persons, workers, and full citizens. It provides them with knowledge that feeds the will to power necessary to overcome life risks including poverty, physical and emotional abuse, family dysfunction, and poor parenting or other deficient relationships with adults. This is lifelong learning remembering its commitment to social and cultural education as part of the holistic development of learners.

Beyond Universal Citizenship: Exploring Issues of Immigration and Lifelong Learning in Canada – Shibao Guo

Canada is becoming increasingly ethno-culturally diverse as a result of immigration. The 2006 Census of Canada reveals that between 2001 and 2006, 1.1 million new immigrants arrived in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2007). As a result, 19.8 percent of Canada's total population were foreign-born – the second highest in the world, after Australia. With more than 200 different ethnic groups, Canada has reached its highest proportion of foreign-born population in 75 years. A large proportion of recent immigrants to Canada came from Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Africa. When immigrant learners and their families move to a new country, they bring their values, language, culture, and educational backgrounds to the host society, adding to and enriching these new educational environments (Guo & Jamal, 2007). Without a doubt, profound demographic, social, and cultural changes brought about through migration have created new opportunities for development as well as new challenges for lifelong learning. In particular, we are grappling with many important questions: How do immigrants adapt to a society with a different language, culture, and tradition? How do they navigate the complex paths that citizenship entails? Can universal citizenship accommodate cultural difference and diversity? Can a liberal democracy address barriers facing immigrants effectively? In this regard, where do they get the educational programs they need to upgrade their language, knowledge and skills as new citizens? What is the role of community organizations concerning immigrants' settlement and adaptation?

Traditional liberals, such as Rawls (1971), advocate a culturally neutral state, where citizens deal fairly with each other and the state deals equally with all, regardless of how we conceive our ends. Rawls' "justice as fairness" is criticized as "unrealistic" and "unacceptably thin" because governments cannot be culturally neutral; indeed, all states are culturally biased (Bloemraad, 2000; Tamir, 1995; Taylor, 1994). As Bloemraad notes, one fatal flaw in Rawls' theory is that he predicated his whole discussion on a closed society where members neither leave nor enter. The ideal of a culturally neutral state promotes a universal citizenship which ignores differences and perpetuates oppression and inequality (Young, 1995). Consequently, "differentiated citizenship" (Young, 1995) and "multicultural citizenship" (Kymlicka, 1995) are proposed as alternative models to complement universal citizenship. In this context, it is important to explore the role of community-based lifelong learning in promoting inclusive citizenship.

In this paper, I report on a study conducted with two Chinese community organizations in Alberta which challenge the notion of universal citizenship: ASSIST Community

Services Centre in Edmonton and Calgary Chinese Community Service Association (CCCSA). The study involves document analysis and personal interviews with early founders, board members, and administrative staff. The study reveals that both organizations were founded in late 1970s to bridge the gap in social services for Chinese immigrants in both communities, and to help immigrants become full, participating members of Canadian society. Both organizations had austere beginnings, and were primarily staffed by volunteers owing to lack of funding. In their early stages, they provided basic settlement and information services, language translation and interpretation, and English classes. With the demographic changes and the increasing demand for their services in the late 1980s and early 1990s, both organizations found it necessary to evolve in response to changing community needs, including those of both newly arrived immigrants and established citizens. By the late 1990s, both organizations had become well-established community organizations, providing both immigrant settlement programs, and family development and support services. As transitional institutions, they helped ease the process of immigrant settlement and adaptation. Furthermore, they had become important bridges between the immigrant community and Canadian society at large.

The history of ASSIST and CCCSA has demonstrated that ethno-cultural organizations can be an effective alternative in providing accessible and equitable lifelong learning programs and social services for immigrants because they are more closely connected with and responsive to ethnic community needs. Their community actions represent a collective effort in pursuing social justice and have raised their level of social consciousness transforming them into social activists. The special programs and services that SUCCESS provided for immigrants were not unjust privileges; they were the first step in the process for immigrants to achieve fairness, justice, and equality. Allocating the necessary resources and support to Chinese immigrants enhanced inclusive and independent citizenship because failure to do so was more likely to alienate further the Chinese from identifying with the large society and becoming full members of the community. The study challenges the view of liberal universalism and provides an alternative model to interpret citizenship and democracy. The findings from this study will inform policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in developing new policy and fostering community initiative in the area of immigrant settlement and integration.

Citizenship, Lifelong Learning and Canadian Fiction Writers – Patricia A. Gouthro

A number of years ago I began a small scale research study in which I looked at Sisters-in-Crime, an organization dedicated to supporting women mystery writers, as an example of a grassroots learning organization (Gouthro, 2007). During the course of my research, I was struck by the differences in experience between Canadian and American authors, and how much fiction is related to issues pertaining to citizenship. This interest led the development of a current Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) study that examines the importance of fiction in shaping discourses around learning and citizenship within a Canadian context.

Although this research is still in the preliminary stages, it is apparent that fiction writing is an integral means by which a sense of national identity can be explored and shared

with others. Holden (2000) notes that one of the unique aspects of Canada, despite its historical roots as a British colony, is that it has sustained and supported its own national literature. At the same time, Canadian literature has changed quite a bit in recent decades. Young notes that Canada's policies around multiculturalism – although often critiqued – have helped to increase diverse representation within Canadian fiction. As a part of the SSHRC research study, I have conducted interviews with “key informants” – individuals in government, education, publishing and policy sectors to discuss supports and programs for Canadian fiction writers. There are currently several programs designed specifically to foster the development of writers from diverse backgrounds within Canada. Programs to support creative writing are perceived to be beneficial in facilitating opportunities for new and emerging writers to share their unique perspectives and stories.

In considering opportunities for learning around citizenship in adulthood, it is clear that most of this learning occurs in informal contexts. Writing groups, book clubs, on-line forums, and grassroots writing organizations are all examples of informal social contexts in which Canadians learn about fiction. Through discussions, writing exercises, electronic exchanges of information, and mentorship programs, Canadians engage with fiction both as readers and as writers, learning about and from each other.

There are also number of formal and informal programs, workshops, and conference events that also support adult learning around fiction writing. Government supports for writers, through grant-based programs and funding for publishers and different writing events, are also important to sustaining Canadian fiction.

By engaging in reading and writing Canadian fiction, citizens have the opportunity to learn about different experiences of others while also considering underlying commonalities and taking up ethical questions and considerations. Adult educator, Rennie Johnston, notes that one of the benefits of “pluralistic citizenship” is that it may “link explorations of common interests and a common culture to the politics of identity and difference” (1999, p. 184). These issues are central to learning about citizenship. Although his paper focuses on literature and youth, Stephen Wolk (2009) makes a valuable point that:

Living in a democracy poses specific obligations for reading. While a nation of workers requires a country that *can* read, a democracy requires people that *do* read, read widely, and think and act in response to their reading (p. 665).

In learning for democracy, values such as tolerance, respect, and empathy must be considered. Globalization and diversity are shaping Canadian culture and identity, and this poses unique challenges to citizens to learn across difference, to strive for understanding, and to think critically and creatively about future directions for Canada as a nation-state.

Lifelong Learning, Citizenship, and Being Canadian

Despite the different focus of these three different areas of research, there are certain commonalities. Each of us is committed to fostering an inclusive approach to citizenship that validates and supports all Canadians, whether they are newcomers, youth, visible minorities, or elderly members of our communities. An essential component of being Canadian is engaging proactively with diversity, to create a society that is characterized by respect for difference.

With that being stated, we each realize that much work needs to be done to address the challenges that Canada faces. While not dismissing the need to consider economic and employment concerns, we believe it is important to also take up cultural and social aspects of lifelong learning with regards to citizenship. Our formal educational institutions and government initiated programs are important in this regard, but in addition we need to foster informal learning opportunities at the grassroots level. This is not to diminish government responsibility or accountability around supporting Canadian citizens, but rather to stress the need for government support, policies, and programs that help to sustain these important and often localized initiatives.

As educators, we believe it is important to continue to do research around learning and citizenship in a wide range of contexts. The studies overviewed in this paper are just some of the examples of the kinds of important work being done within the broader field of lifelong learning.

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