

Exploring Youth Civic Engagement and Disengagement in British Columbia, Canada

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Abstract: This paper reports upon the findings of a research study conducted with British Columbian university youth in Canada, investigating youth beliefs about, and actions towards, civic life and the connections between these factors and youths' personal conditions and surrounding contexts. The findings illustrate the complexity of connections between youth civic views and behavior. Paying more attention to the dynamic interaction between individuals and their lived experiences and considering citizenship education curricula and teaching practices in relation to this complexity may help to improve citizenship education.

Key words: youth civic engagement, empowerment, citizenship education

Introduction

Howe (2010) argues that Canadians are less politically engaged over the last 20 years due to social changes that include a lack of interest or belief in government, changes in political culture and a decline in social cohesion. He describes the rise of a group of habitual non-voters who don't seem to have a political consciousness or interest in politics over their lifetimes. This group, which has disengaged from civic participation, is largest among those with the least formal education. This study adds to Howe's work by exploring university youth's views of and actions towards civic life through a research study that considers the relations between internal factors, such as personality and attitudes, and external factors, such as family and experiences, that may influence youth's civic attitudes and behaviors.

This research study found that British Columbian (BC) university youth were limited in their civic actions and engagement but they did generally value democracy. The results of the study help to clarify various internal and external factors that may influence youth's civic attitudes and actions. As previous studies have noted connections between youth engagement and civic action (Arthur & Davies, 2008; Beaumont, 2010; Gidengil, Blais, Nevitte, & Nadeau, 2004; Levinson, 2010) it would seem that fostering civic engagement should be a strong focus for citizenship education. Arising from this research the author has identified some key aspects of citizenship education that may increase civic engagement.

Key Terms

Youth interest in (or attention to) and involvement in civic life, in both the social and political sense, is understood to be engagement, and the processes, concepts and experiences which lead to an

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enhanced sense of self efficacy and thus to greater civic engagement are said to be empowering. To empower means to develop youth's sense of their political, social or economic efficacy, that is, their belief in their ability to bring change to their communities, societies, or nations, which may result in more active political or social behaviors.

Citizenship Education refers to the planned development of individuals' civic knowledge, attitudes, and skills, with the aim of developing actions towards the collective life of the community that attempt to improve that life for all (Arthur & Davies 2008; Banks 2007; Callan 1997, Reid, Gill, & Sears, 2010; Sears, 2009; Zajda, Holger, & Saha, 2009). Recently, acknowledging the growth of Citizenship Education as a significant field of study, Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan (2010) edited a comprehensive collection that discussed the philosophical and moral facets of civic education, contemporary American civic and political life involvement among youth, and immigrant youth. The chapters illustrated varied and changing forms of youth civic engagement in the United States. International scholars have explored youth civic engagement through such studies as the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study. The IEA study, which 28 nations participated in, was a comprehensive civic, longitudinal study. It explored the multiple factors that influence youth civic development, including classroom and school conditions. Canada did not participate in the IEA study. This paper adds to this international work by describing BC youth's civic attitudes and behaviors, illustrating how some Canadian youth are constructing and living their citizenship in a pluralistic nation, and discussing possible reasons for the research findings, some of which connect to the IEA study findings and recommendations.

Research Study: Methods and Data Sources

Canadian youth at a university in British Columbia were invited to fill out a survey that included questions on internal (personality and attitudes) and external (experiences, family, school, and culture) factors that may influence civic attitudes and behaviors. Questions looked at both types of factors which may influence youth civic attitudes building on Positive Youth Development Theory (PYD) (Overton, 2010). The theory argues that both internal and external factors influence youth's attitudes and behaviors. As youth's attitudes and behaviors are theorized to be the product of the interaction of internal and external factors, they are dynamic and fluid.

The survey also collected relevant demographic information (age/race/gender/class), and asked participants to identify which free time and civic processes they engaged in. Open-ended questions asked participants their views of government/politics, civic society/democracy and public participation, their ideal political state, and how they envisioned general public and their own participation in civic life (See Appendix 1 for the Survey Tool). After university ethics approval, the surveys were randomly given out to BC university students in varied programs, including Arts, Sciences, and Business Studies in the fall of 2014. Participants were between the ages of 19 and 28, with *youth* understood as young adults who are in the process of establishing their careers and lives. Participants entered their names in a draw for a \$50 gift certificate, which helped to increase the participation rate. The surveys were anonymous. Data was not collected on what programs youth were studying.

The study's main questions were:

- What are the characteristics and features of university educated youth's civic engagement and disengagement in a pluralistic democracy?

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- How does civic engagement relate to youth's individual characteristics and experiences?
- What recommendations for educators emerge from the findings?

Summary of Research Findings

Data was entered into SPSS and analysed using descriptive statistics and crosstabs. Open-ended questions were grouped into themes using an interpretive lens (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 2008).¹ The findings are summarized in Table 1, found at the end of this paper.

Demographics/General Characteristics

The university where the study was conducted has high entrance requirements and is ranked one of the best universities in Canada, so the students are not typical of all Canadian youth. Participants (n=42) were invited to participate at a public place (a cafeteria in a central location) on the university campus. More females than males participated and the majority identified themselves as middle class. They described themselves as coming from a number of ethnic backgrounds, with White/Canadian being the largest category that students used to describe themselves, followed by Chinese and Punjabi. A few identified themselves as having European, Latin American, Asian, Middle Eastern and African backgrounds. The majority identified their first language as English, followed by Chinese and Punjabi.

Youth selected varied personality types, with amiable being the most common choice followed by the analytical personality type. Half the youth were often or sometimes involved in religious activities. In sum, the youth were culturally diverse young Canadians with varied personalities, cultural backgrounds and levels of religious involvement.

Citizenship Education

In Canada, education is a provincial matter, so provinces mandate their own curricula and textbooks. The development of citizens is stated to be the aim of social studies in BC curricula. However, most of the social studies program is history education, with limited attention to citizenship, or civics, education. While there is some general attention to developing students' attitudes that are positive towards multiculturalism, the environment and empathy, content directly focused on learning about Canada's government structure and means of participating politically in society are limited primarily to a unit on government taught in grade 11, the last year of compulsory social studies education in the province. There is a new Civics 11 course but it is optional. This year and next year, new curricula is being released in BC which focuses on big ideas, or themes, such as how ideas and ideologies influence societies, and on competencies such as communication, inquiry, and critical thinking skills. These are largely framed around historical study, although teachers do have more flexibility to teach their areas of interest.

Unsurprisingly, then, most youth (67%) mentioned that they had taken civic education when they were in high school. However, only half of the respondents stated that they found it useful. The other students did not remember what they had studied or did not answer the question. Of those

¹ Some survey answers were incomplete. During data analysis, any survey question that was not filled out was coded as missing an answer in SPSS.

who did find it useful, 18% stated that they wanted to learn more:

- “Should have spent more time on this content.” (Student #41, survey, October 1, 2014)

Some students mentioned that they focused on learning about government and voting:

- “Told me about voting.” (Student #9, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “Gave me a better understanding on the elections.” (Student #20, survey, October 1, 2014)

Other students mentioned that their citizenship education had not been taught in an engaging manner:

- “Not useful. I wish they went more in depth rather than [sic] keeping it dry and boring. Young people need to be involved.” (Student #10, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “Important to know but poorly delivered.” (Student #14, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “Did not learn a lot.” (Student #19, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “I don’t enjoy learning about it.” (Student #33, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “Not memorable.” (Student #42, survey, October 1, 2014)

The youth were probably referring to the government unit of study in the Social Studies 11 course in their answers, which can be conceptually difficult for students, and which focuses on government structures and processes with limited attention to how citizens can participate actively in society, beyond getting involved in issues that they care about, thinking critically and voting. We have limited information on how teachers teach this unit, although the most commonly used textbook presents a traditionalist citizenship education program focused on understanding government structures, such as the roles of parliament and the senate and processes, like the passing of a bill and voting.

Personal Experiences and Families

The majority of students had not had significant lived experiences related to community or governmental issues that had affected their views of government. Those who had had experiences or issues described issues with religious Members of Parliament, the Northern Gateway pipeline, noise, zoning, transit, and politicians they did not like. In addition, half the young adults stated that they had grown up in families that were political active in some way (voting, talking about politics or other political events).

Activities

The activities that the youth most engaged in during their free time included spending time with friends, interacting with social media or engaging with pop culture. Few youth engaged in political activities in their free time or participated in patriotic activities. Further, youth identified the political processes that they did engage in as volunteering, their first choice, followed by voting, and following political news. Youth seem to view civic engagement as social form of citizenship in the sense of volunteering their time to help others. This is a view shared by adults and youth in other nations. The United Kingdom, for example, has a history of connecting volunteering to civic society (Brindle, 2015). Further, the Understanding Society survey found that more than half of UK youth volunteer (IVR). Few BC youth mentioned participating in more active forms of engagement such as boycotting or protesting. Further, while the youth actively engaged with social media, few used this

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social media to participate actively in political discussions or issues, unlike their American peers: research in the United States has concluded that youth engage in discussions about political issues through social media (Bennett, Freelon, & Wells, 2010).

Almost half the youth (43%) were *somewhat active* in civic processes. However, most of the rest (47%) were *rarely active* or *not active* in civic processes. Less than 10% of the youth stated that they were actively engaged. The activities that youth did participate in, moreover, were primarily volunteering or voting. Youth gave a number of reasons for their limited engagement: they were not interested or did not find political life relevant to themselves, they did not have time, they had other priorities at their life stage, or they felt powerless and believed no one was interested in youth:

- “I vote when voting comes up every time I can. Voting happens once every few years. I do not have time to give, otherwise. I do not follow any [sic] news/media.” (Student #14, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “As a young adult, it is not one of my top priorities.” (Student #18, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “Young adult, not ready to get involved in politics.” (Student #20, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “I do not participate due to lack of interest. I am a young adult with many commitments and I do not work/live on my own so few issues effect [sic] me directly.” (Student #26, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “I have very little interest in politics. I don’t believe my involvement will invoke change!” (Student #42, survey, October 1, 2014)

It appears that youth were limited in their levels of civic involvement as they did not see political life as relevant to themselves at their ages and/or they were involved in their own activities. Life stage as an influence on youth civic engagement was a conclusion reached by Finlay, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan (2010) in their research with American youth. Interestingly, considering their lack of actions, the Canadian youth surveyed here valued democracy.

Views of Government/Democracy

Most youth had positive or neutral views towards democracy in general and the Canadian government, and most also felt that it was important for people to participate in government processes. Thus, while youth’s participation in civic life was limited, they did, generally, value and recognize the importance of democratic forms of government. Some of the reasons they gave are those that are often given to support democracy, such as the need for citizens to be involved, to care about their nation and to make the right decisions:

- “People should care about the country. Officials should get paid little amount so only passionate people will pursue it.” (Student #25, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “We need responsible/interested people to make the right decisions.” (Student #24, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “We have the right and opportunity to share our lives.” (Student #23, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “People should be educated and involved when it comes to their government.” (Student #22, survey, October 1, 2014)
- “It is our government, we should run it & our voice can’t be heard unless we participate, vote, protest, volunteer, make yourself represented!” (Student #14, survey, October 1, 2014)

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- “So we can change how politics works and so the government actually does something good.” (Student #9, survey, October 1, 2014)

Further, when asked to describe their ideal government, many youth described features that are often included as key elements or principles of democracy such as fairness, equality, representation of the people, listening to the people and freedom.

In summary, the majority of youth of varied ethnic backgrounds at a Canadian university valued democracy and saw its processes as important. However, most were limited in their involvement in many civic processes (outside of community service and voting). The youth stated that they did not feel that government affairs were relevant to them at their life stage, as young adults, with other priorities and that time was an issue. In the next section, we describe the findings of a crosstabs analysis carried out in SPSS.

Personality-participation Type

While some studies have found associations between personality type or personality traits and forms of civic engagement and there is emerging interest in this area (Dinesen, Norgaard, & Klemmensen, 2014), this study did not identify any associations. There was a slight tendency for expressive and analytic personality types to state that they voted more than the amiable personality type. As well, the leaders/assertive types tended to be active in both voting and volunteering, the amiable personality types tended to volunteer more than vote, the expressive types to vote more than volunteer, and the analytic personality type to vote more than volunteer. Although the numbers were too small to be statistically significant, they do support previous research that found that individuals who identify themselves as *kind* tend to volunteer more than other personality types. Future studies, with a larger sample size, can study this factor further. Note that this study explored how people labelled themselves and not necessarily what their actual personality type is.

Gender-Personality Type – How Active

Males were more likely to identify their personality type as analytical and females were more likely to identify themselves as the assertive/leader and amiable personality types. However, the figures are not considered to be statistically significant. There was no statistically significant relationship between gender and level of civic activity.

Family/Education-Participation

Youth who remembered having politically active families were more likely to be civically active. This relationship was close to the 5% statistically significant value. Parents’ actions appear to influence youths’ values and actions towards civic life, one of the general conclusions of the IEA study. There was no statistically significant relationship between stating that one had studied civics/citizenship education in schools and that one voted, unlike other findings have found such as the IEA study. The Canadian youth researched here did not appear to vote in larger numbers when they had received education on the topic, perhaps as the youth found their citizenship education to be incomplete or boring.

Cultural Identification-Participation

Students in the survey who identified themselves as white/Caucasian were likely to state that they

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voted (67%). This voting percentage is higher than the national voting average, since the year 1997. According to the government body, Elections Canada, the national rate of voting has declined slowly but steadily from percentages in the high 70s in the 1950s down to percentages in the low 60s by the early 21st century. The association between identifying oneself as white/Caucasian and voting was statistically significant. The Chinese students in the survey, by way of contrast, were more likely to choose the option that they did not vote (86%). This was also statistically significant. There could be a number of reasons for this. Firstly, some of the Chinese youth stated that they had limited knowledge of democracy. This could be as they have moved to Canada recently and are not entitled to vote. The survey did not ask youth this question, but it is worth further research. Youth may also choose to participate in society through other means such as volunteering, as many stated they were active in society this way. Students who identified themselves as from other cultural groups were too limited in numbers to carry out an analysis; however, the majority did not vote, and they were more likely to select the option that they volunteered as their civic activity than white/Caucasian students. Only 33% of white/Caucasian students stated they volunteered. In contrast, 71% of the Chinese students, 80% of Punjabi students, and students of other ethnicities including Latin American, South Asian, Middle Eastern and African all selected volunteering as a (or the) civic activity they engaged in. Youth of varied ethnicities may volunteer rather than vote because the youth lack knowledge of democracy, they are new to Canada, they are not entitled to vote, or they don't feel empowered to participate in voting processes. In her interviews with ethnic youth in Canada, for example, Parker (2012) found that ethnic minority youth feel less empowered to participate in society than other youth. More research on the relations between ethnicity and civic engagement in Canada is needed.

There was also a statistically significant relationship between stating that one participated in religious activities and volunteering. Participating in religious activities was not correlated to cultural/ethnic background.

Those youth who stated that they voted also stated they were active. This was statistically significant. Thus, youth believed that they were being active, to varying degrees, by voting. This may be as many of the youth identified voting as the significant civic activity, as those youth whose parents were active stated that their parents were primarily active by voting. In other words, the youth had traditionalist views of what citizens do (Bennett et al., 2010). Some students connected their parents' actions to their own levels of civic activity or their views of democratic governments:

- "Democratic government: the people choose, therefore, they should participate." (Student #18, survey, October 1, 2014)
- "We voted, voting and attending political events, i.e., Rallies are very different." (Student #5, survey, October 1, 2014)
- "The way I was raised. . . . I understand the importance of voting and believe everyone should participate; its an honor that needs to be exercised." (Student #32, survey, October 1, 2014)
- "Talked about politics and voted . . . voting and staying informed is certainly important however it is not necessary for every person to attend rallies or write to government officials." (Student #39, survey, October 1, 2014)

Culture-Attitudes to Democracy

White/Caucasian, European and Punjabi students' answers tended to be skewed towards positive

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attitudes to democratic governments, although these were not statistically significant. In contrast, Chinese students were skewed to more neutral or negative views, and these answers were statistically significant. One Chinese student wrote “I have no interest” to participate in civic processes (Student #6, survey, October 1, 2014). Another wrote, in response to the question of why they answered the question on how they feel about democratic governments how they did, with the comment, “Don’t know anything about it” (Student #28, survey, October 1, 2014). Another stated, “China’s not a democratic govt [sic]” and replied to the question of whether it is important to be involved with the comment, “I don’t know much about democracy” (Student #36, survey, October 1, 2014). It is possible that Chinese students tend to have more neutral views towards democracy as they have learned less about it.

Further, those students who had backgrounds from some nations, such as Kenya and the Philippines supported democratic governments. Students who had come from other nations such as from Mexico and the Middle East were less supportive of (or neutral towards) democratic governments in general. More research can look at how students’ experiences and backgrounds may influence their civic views and attitudes.

Political Experience-Active Involvement

Youth who had had significant experiences with community issues or government that were memorable for youth were more actively involved in civic life. This was on the border of being statistically significant.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research study, conducted with Canadian youth of varied ethnic backgrounds, found that youth were mostly occasionally active in political processes, although the majority stated that they had studied citizenship education in school. Youth were primarily active in the traditional activities of voting and volunteering thus being dutiful citizens according to Bennett, Freelon, and Wells (2010). They generally believed in (valued) democracy and thought that citizens should be actively involved in democratic processes. These findings support the work of other scholars (Gidengil et al., 2004; Howe 2010; Sherrod et al., 2010). The study also considered how internal and external factors may influence youth’s civic attitudes and behaviors.

Internal Factors

Personality and Gender

There was a slight tendency for expressive and analytic personality types to state that they voted more than the amiable personality type, who tended to volunteer more. Thus the study provided some support for previous work that has found connections between personality and civic behaviors, in particular, personality type and civic actions (Dinesen et al., 2014) and community engagement and personality (Metzger & Smetana 2010), although the findings in this study were not statistically significant. No relationship was found between gender and levels of engagement. More research to clarify the many components of these results using a larger sample size can be conducted in this area.

Attitudes, Motivation and Efficacy

This research explored young people's attitudes to the government of Canada, to democracy in general, and to civic participation. Although the youth were limited in their levels of engagement mostly to occasional engagement, most had positive views of the government of Canada and democracy and most felt that people should participate in democratic governments.

Thus, pro-democracy and pro-participation attitudes were present, although few youth were very active themselves. Some of the reasons given by the youth match those of American youth in the study by Finlay et al. (2010). They stated that it was not important for them to participate at their ages and life stage, as they are still getting their lives organized and they have other priorities, such as school. Youth seem to feel they are in the process of becoming citizens, somewhat isolated from the larger society in which they live. Some of the comments by youth, included above, also illustrate that youth may feel a lack of efficacy to bring change. Perhaps if youth come to feel that a political issue has a direct effect on them while at the same time feeling that they have the ability to do something about it, their participation rates may rise.

Knowledge and Culture

Most of the students had taken citizenship education in schools, although their comments illustrated the materials to be incomplete, boring, or focused on voting and government processes. Future research studies can explore in more detail what content teachers are focusing on and whether they are teaching "traditional" citizenship behavior, such as the importance of voting. Studies can also explore how citizenship education can be made more engaging and effective for students.

External Factors

Family background influenced youth's civic behaviors. If youth's parents were civically active, their children tended to be as well. However, youth who stated that their parents were active stated that their parents were active primarily by talking about political news or voting. As well, having a significant experience in the local community associated with government/politics led to more active civic behaviors in youth. That is, youth who had had such experiences were more active in their communities. This could be as having this experience helps to make the government/local community more real or meaningful to youth. Experiences are real learning events through which we build key concepts that structure our thinking (Bruner 1997; Dewey 1916). Experiences have the potential to be civically empowering.

Overall, many of the findings of this study with young adults at university support those of the IEA study conducted with young teenagers. Both studies described limited youth engagement and some connection between youth's views and family background and the type of teaching done in school. They demonstrated youth to have a traditionalist conception of civic engagement, in the sense of voting and volunteering, and to have positive attitudes to democracy and active involvement. Youth seem to have a view of citizenship as entailing social and political participation (Marshall, 1950). In this sense, youth are engaged to an extent that is similar to that of adults in the community. It would be useful for educators, youth and citizens to consider what kind of democratic society they are aiming at and what type of education will fit this aim. Is voting and volunteering sufficient for the majority of citizens to engage in, or is more needed? For example, how important are critical engagement, voice and discussion? How active should citizens be and in what sense? Do youth need to be involved in more active and transformative forms of citizenship, such as boycotting, protesting,

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and joining social movements, when the majority of adults don't engage in such actions? Are there some broad characteristics of citizenship that the majority of social members can agree on? Who should be involved in the process of determining such concepts and aims? What if citizens disagree on aims and processes? How will these be negotiated?

As BC youth appear to receive limited information on Canada's political processes and practices in the current curriculum and some said themselves that their citizenship education was incomplete, youth may benefit from deeper and longer study of these, taught in ways that are more engaging for youth. Youth may benefit from more factual knowledge as well as more discussion on and about social issues (Hess, 2001). The IEA study recommended issues-based instruction. Discussing issues can lead to engagement and engagement can be empowering and result in greater civic participation as youth come to feel a sense of connection to issues.

Educators can also consider which other methods can engage and empower youth. From this study, political experiences were associated with increased political engagement. Thus, students may benefit from more experience-based learning. These experiences could include connecting schools with local political activities, venues and people, such as visiting city hall, or getting involved in a civic issue. Cargo, Grams, Ottoson, Ward, and Green (2003) pointed out that educators can create an empowering experience by identifying possible activities for students in the community with willing partners that are perceived as interesting and relevant to youth. Teachers can create a safe and welcoming environment by facilitating dialogue and skills development among youth, providing feedback and understanding of the issues involved, and encouraging and supporting youth to take responsibility for project tasks and to successfully complete project aims. Cargo et al. (2003) found that taking responsibility led to an increased sense of self efficacy among youth, and these experiences changed the youths in a cyclical manner: "actualization of potential was an incremental process, a consequence of action and a precondition for further action" (p. S75).

An underexplored area which emerged from this study as worthy of further research is how ethnically diverse youth within pluralistic nations may be constructing their citizenship and engaging in civic life. In this study, white/Caucasian students had more positive views of democracy than did Chinese students. Further, white/Caucasian students were more likely to engage civically through voting while ethnically diverse students were more likely to participate civically through volunteering. While Parker (2012) has identified some differences in attitudes between majority and minority ethnic youth in her interviews, and American research illustrates differences in how Latinos and African Americans may engage in American civic life (Sherrod et al., 2010), more research in general is needed in this area.

Finally, this paper has considered the relations between youth political and social engagement, empowerment and action. This study illustrated the complexity of youth views and how these are the product of lived experiences, context (including education and family) and selves. It shows that multiple factors shape citizenship attitudes and behaviors and that attitudes do not necessarily mirror actions. What are the educational implications of recognizing multiple influences on attitudes and behaviors? Should educators aim to negotiate a tenuous balance between leaving space to recognize various ideologies and ways of being without pushing ideological positions on students, while at the same time balancing our social need for some common aims and vision? How can educators do this?

Conclusion

This paper discussed the findings of a research study on youth civic attitudes and behaviors in BC, Canada. The research study found that youth behaviors are complex, influenced by individuals' cultural and family backgrounds and lived experiences. Supporting and adding to the literature in the field, correlations were found between youth civic attitudes and behaviors (Finlay et al., 2010), community engagement and experience (Magen & Aharoni, 1991), family and civic participation (Lenzi, 2014), and culture and civic views (Andersen & Siim, 2004; Moeller, 2013).

This study opens us possibilities to explore the complexity of youth civic views and attitudes, as these are embedded in internal and external factors and conditions, and the questions, tensions and possibilities available to citizenship educators. Educators can consider teaching more political knowledge to youth and think about how to make citizenship education more relevant, memorable, engaging and empowering for youth. They can also consider what they are teaching about citizenship, how and why they are teaching this and how they can negotiate possible tensions in varied lived conceptions of citizenship. This very process may lead to increased engagement and thus empowerment by opening up diverse possibilities for civic participation. Perhaps educators themselves need to move beyond the dutiful conception of citizenship (Bennett et al., 2010)?

Further research can consider which factors may be most significant in affecting behaviors. Based on the findings of this study, personality and family were not as statistically significant effects as community experiences and culture/ethnicity.

Table 1. Summary of the Findings

Canadian Youth	Number of participants: 42				
Demographics					
Gender	Male: 43%		Female: 57%		
Class	Upper: 33%		Middle: 59%	Working: 8%	
Cultural affiliation	White/Canadian: 50%		Chinese: 17%	Punjabi: 12%	
First Language	English: 71%		Chinese: 17%	Punjabi: 5%	
	Yes		No	Don't remember	
Citizenship education	67%		21%	12%	
Personal political experience	26%		64%	9%	
Family's political involvement	50%		38%	12%	
	Often		Sometimes	Never	
Religious Involvement	21%		29%	50%	
Personality type	Assertive	Amiable	Humanistic	Analytical	Mixed
	12%	37%	17%	22%	12%
Free Time Activities	Spending time with friends (19% of responses) Interacting with social media (18%) Engaging with pop culture (12%) Patriotic activities (4%) Political activities (1%)				
	Important	Neutral		Unimportant/ Doesn't matter	
Attitude to political participation	88%	7%		4%	
	Active	Somewhat active		Rarely Active/ Inactive	
Civic involvement	9.5%	43%		47%	
	Supportive	Neutral		Do not care/not supportive	

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Attitudes towards democracy	59%	34%	7%
Attitude towards govt. system in Canada	50%	36%	15%
Students' civic participation	Volunteering (33.8% of responses) Voting (30.9%) Following political news (10%) Boycotting (9%) Using social media to interact politically (6%) Protesting (3%)		
Correlations			
Internal			
Personality-voting	Not statistically significant, $X^2(4, n=42) = 3.98, p=.41$		
Personality-volunteering	Not statistically significant, $X^2(4, n=42) = 3.00, p=.56$		
Gender-Personality type	Not statistically significant, $X^2(4, n=42) = 7.2, p=.126$		
Gender-Civic activity	Not statistically significant, $X^2(4, n=42) = 7.79, p=.09$.		
External			
Religious activity-volunteer	Statistically significant, $X^2(2, n=42) = 7.8, p=.02$.		
Active family-voting	Borderline statistical significance, $X^2(8, n=42) = 15.1, p=.057$		
Culture-voting	Statistically significant: White/Canadian-vote: $X^2(1, n=42) = 4.67, p=.03$ Chinese-not vote: $X^2(1, n=42) = 4.28, p=.03$		
Chinese-neutral view of Democracy	Statistically significant, $X^2(3, n=42) = 9.89, p=.020$.		
Voted: Active	Statistically significant, $X^2(4, n=42) = 16.46, p=.002$		
Political Experience-Active	Borderline statistical significance, $X^2(8, n=42) = 15.23, p=.055$		

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Appendix 1: The Survey Tool

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. This will help us understand young people better. Please answer the questions honestly. The study is anonymous. Please do not write your name on this paper. Please mark your answers with an X.

1. Please choose:

Male Female Other/undisclosed

2. Class:

Upper Middle Middle Working

Other: _____

3. Cultural/ethnic identification: _____

Citizenship: _____

What is your first language? _____

4. Your age: _____

5. Did you learn civic education/civics/government content in a high school class, where you learned about government, its processes and voting?

Yes No Don't remember

If yes, what were your feelings about this content? (useful? not useful? and so on). Why? Where did you take the course?

6. Have you had any significant experiences regarding issues in your community or the government or politics that have affected your views of politics or government?

Yes No Don't remember

If yes, can you explain?

7. When you were growing up, was your family active in political activities, such as voting, talking about politics, going to political events and so on?

Yes No Don't remember

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If yes, what were your parents' views of government (such as what party did they support)?
What types of activities were they involved in?

8. How would you describe your personality?

See the attached information about personalities. Which is most like you?

- Leader/Driven to succeed/Competitive
- Friendly/Relaxed/Optimistic
- Like working with other people and making them happy/Outgoing
- Like working with numbers or alone/Organized/Introverted

9. How often do you participate in religious events?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

If yes, what activities do you get involved in? _____

10. What types of activities do you do outside of your school or work? Select all that apply.

- Sports (play or watch sports)
- Watching TV
- Cultural (plays, arts)
- Pop culture (movies, music)
- Political (join political parties, talk about politics, get involved in issues)
- Spending time with friends
- Going out for dinner
- Community work
- Interacting with social media
(phones/internet/games)
- Participating in patriotic activities (like Canada Day)
- Other: _____

11. Which of these civic processes do you engage in? Select all that apply.

- Voting
- Joining a political party
- Protesting
- Boycotting
- Writing government officials or newspapers
- Volunteering
- Following political news
- Joining civic groups such as environmental groups
- Interacting in political activities or discussions using social media

12. Overall, how active are you in the civic processes listed in question 11?

- Active
- Occasionally active
- Not active

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13. Please explain why you choose the answer you did to question 12. That is, please explain why you are, or are not active, in civic processes. Do you think that your participation may be affected by the life stage you are at (i.e. young adult?) Why or why not? Are you too busy? Do you have other interests and priorities?

14. How supportive are you of:

- the government in your country

Interested in Neutral Don't care

Why do you feel this way?

- democratic governments in general

Interested in Neutral Don't care

Why do you feel this way?

15. How important do you think it is for people to participate in government processes, such as those listed in question 11?

Important Neutral Doesn't matter

16. Please explain why you answered question 15 as you did:

17. Please describe what you think the ideal government type would look like. Who would participate in the government? How? What responsibilities would the government have and how would it carry these out? Why do feel this way?

18. Any other comments or questions? (optional)

Thank you for participating in the survey.

Personality Types²

1. Assertive – Competitive – Lion

You are an active person who strives to be the best at everything you do. You are a high achiever, decisive and strong-willed. You are found in leadership positions and are efficient and independent.

2. Amiable – Spontaneous – Otter

You have a friendly, outgoing personality. To you, life is an adventure. You enjoy interesting things are optimistic. You are excited about the opportunities that life brings and look forward to the future. You don't worry about details and are relaxed and don't worry about doing things perfectly.

3. Expressive – Humanistic – Golden Retriever

You enjoy making other people happy and are good at bonding with other people. Your focus on other people is your greatest asset. You enjoy getting along with people and value happiness, friendship, and respect. You enjoy working with others and are relaxed and don't worry about details too much or about doing things perfectly.

4. Analytical – Methodical – Beaver

You are organized, dependable and rational. You weigh options carefully before making a decision and consider details carefully. You are persistent, serious, and orderly. Often, you are a perfectionist, introverted, and like to do your best.

² Modified from: <<http://workawesome.com/freelance-2/web-analytics/>>