

Editorial Introduction

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The articles presented in this special issue are a collection of papers presented at the CGCER Graduate Student Conference on Theories and Practices of Citizenship Education hosted by the Centre for Global Citizenship Education & Research at the University of Alberta in November, 2010. The conference brought together graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, professors and community-based organizations from across Canada, as well as scholars from Brazil, Turkey, the Czech Republic, the United States, and Australia.

The conference focused on exploring the notion of citizenship as a contested space. Historical theories of citizenship are often structured as a binary of normative or empirical conceptualizations. There are normative theories that seek to define the rights and duties citizens should have, or empirical theories that set out to describe historical perspectives of how citizens have attained the rights and duties they actually possess (Bellamy, 2008). However, the conference was an opportunity to bring together Canadian and international scholarship that challenges the boundaries of such constructs of citizenship. Multiple worldviews supported by theories of indigenous knowledge, postcolonialism, critical race, feminism and other social theories aimed at critiquing imperialist and hegemonic notions of citizenship are dominant in the field of education and other social science areas and provide the means to critically engage around the possibilities for citizenship education in order to redefine how citizens embody both their rights and duties in local and global communities. Indeed, these theories are constituted by a series of social and global linkages in the form of initiatives, movements and organizations that serve to combat neo-liberal globalization, motivated by aspirations towards “a better, fairer, and more peaceful world which they deem possible, and to which they believe they are entitled” (Odora Hoppers, 2010, p. 78).

The articles in this special issue illustrate the diversity of locations of citizenship education and each feature a unique perspective on the role of education in advancing a social critique that aims at enacting the fair and just society to which Odora Hoppers refers. While the range of contexts for education among the articles is broad, the ideas in the papers themselves are connected by a common thread which positions education as a most powerful tool for disruption. The authors share a claim of the need to radicalize the basis of citizenship education to empower different ways of thinking about the nature of what it means to be a citizen. The authors in this special issue remind us that citizenship is a contested space, and that such uncertainty is valuable, for it gives agency to the momentum required to disrupt injustice, whether it lies in the workings of formalized institutions or in domesticity of everyday life.

In “Settlers, sell-outs and sons of the soil: The creation of aliens in Zimbabwe and the challenge for higher education”, Munya Hwami engages discourse analysis aligned with anti-colonial perspectives to critique the production of subjectivities in government led narratives of

Zimbabwean citizenship. He argues for an essential role of higher education institutions in Zimbabwe to lead the development of citizenship education to produce responsible and tolerant citizens, i.e. “cosmopolitan patriots”. Beginning with an historical overview of changes in contemporary Zimbabwean politics through which the Mugabe government toils to delink the national economy from western powers, Hwami illustrates how such efforts led to the rising question of citizenship, and the author advances the argument that higher education institutions are strategically positioned to locate their role outside of hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism and nationalism in order to alter the way citizenship is conceptualized in the state. In this argument, he posits that a new epistemological approach to education that is locally and politically informed to advance the debate on citizenship is needed, so that the notion of citizenship remains connected with principles of democracy. While Hwami recognizes strength in unhu/ubuntu philosophies commonly used to connect humanity among diversity as “human conduct in relation to others”, he argues the value of a critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism. That is, a “double critique” (Mignolo, 2008) of neoliberalism and nationalism is required in order to educate citizens who are equipped to “deconstruct and reconstruct ideas for the continued decolonization of Zimbabwe.”

In her article, Krista McFadyen discusses the perspectives of Canadian Aboriginal people on Canada’s culture towards human rights. In this discussion, the author asserts that while Canada maintains a reputation for honouring human rights, insights provided by Aboriginal people support a different reality, suggesting gaps in institutional and societal practices that lead McFadyen to propose an aspect of Canadian culture that normalizes human rights violations. Throughout the article, she provides a thorough review of the connections between Indigenous peoples and human rights institutions, internationally, in Canada and in Alberta, noting perpetuation of colonial control in these relations. Consequently, McFadyen raises worthy questions about whether or not achievements of Indigenous peoples’ recognition for collective rights and identities at an international level have materialized into positive impacts on the actualized everyday experiences of Aboriginal people in Alberta. Citing data collected through the Aboriginal Commission on Human Rights in 2009, McFadyen illustrates that formalized institutional processes are not sufficient to protect human rights claims made by Aboriginal people and provides recommendations for ameliorating human rights so that they can become relevant for Aboriginal people, including the role for public education and self-determination in articulating a vision of decolonized communities. Of significance is the attention that is given to the voice of Aboriginal people and their everyday lived experiences that challenge taken for granted assumptions about the universality of human rights in Canadian society.

Chovanec, Kajner, Mian and Underwood share insights about citizenship learned through research about community service-learning. In the article, the authors present findings from a research project that involved examining how university graduate students’ perceptions of citizenship was reflected in their assignments and the way they talked about their learning in completing a service-learning component of an adult education course. The researchers commit themselves to a critical pedagogy and draw upon the citizenship framework developed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) to consider the ways in which the students expressed shifts in how they think about themselves as citizens. Guided by a critique aimed at improving service-learning in post-secondary contexts, Chovanec, Kajner, Mian and Underwood find that students’ perceptions of themselves as citizens changed throughout their progression in the graduate level

course and that placements in non-traditional settings such as activist organizations enhanced the opportunity for students to reflect critically about their own understandings of citizenship. They recommend that attention to issues of collegiality, opportunities for authentic reflection and commitment to preserving the intensity of the service-learning experience are factors that strengthen the outcomes of service-learning towards an orientation for social justice. In conclusion, the authors assert a legitimate union of critical pedagogy and critically engaged service-learning as a valid pedagogical approach to promoting justice-oriented citizenship education in higher education.

In reading these articles, we are reminded that citizenship as a concept is not confined merely to theoretical ideals but that the meaning of citizenship is also realized in its practice, the principle of praxis elaborated by Freire's emancipatory pedagogy. In doing so, it is possible to envision a notion of citizenship that is non-static and realized through multiplicity. Importantly, the authors highlight the significant role for education in bridging the divide between the global institution of citizenship and its practices in local spaces. To go one step further is the possibility of looking at these two locales in relation to one another. As Shultz (2012) stated, "Whether we are addressing issues that have a global or international reach, or localized issues and distributions, processes of social justice that open the public sphere to the generative complexity and creative potential of diversity should be seen as ways to address the significant challenges that we face today" (p. 40). The ideas presented in the articles in this special issue point to the value in conceiving of a contested notion of citizenship and the role of education in helping make sense of how citizenship is both practiced and theorized in contemporary society. Besides the three articles, this issue also contains a book review, Brian Pusser, Ken Kempner, Simon Marginson and Imanol Ordorika's *Universities and the publics: Knowledge creation and state building in the era of globalization* (2012), reviewed by Munyaradzi Hwami.