# Citizenship Perspectives of Mainland Chinese Students in a Canadian International School

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**Abstract**

Ever since the opening of the Chinese market in the late 20th century, international educational programs started to blossom. British Columbia Offshore Schools (BCOS) started to emerge in the mid-90s with their first opening from Maple Leaf Educational Systems in Dalian. Their student population continued to see growth in many educational companies; however, in recent years, its population started to decline, and the program has been criticized for being culturally based on the curriculum in the West and not taking the perspectives of Chinese culture.

This qualitative research study explored the citizenship perspectives of five students in Grades 11 and 12 enrolled in BCOS in Mainland China. The data were collected using semi-structured Zoom interviews. Guided questions were prepared and adjusted during the interview based on participants' English language comprehension.

The results of this research suggest participants believed in *Personally-responsible, Participatory*, or *Patriotic* citizenship with Chinese core values guiding their perspectives and the emergence of *Justice-oriented* citizens. Their inner circle and outer circle impacted their citizenship engagement and perception. Each participant expressed different benefits and challenges to engage in citizenship, including financial resources, family contributions, curriculum implementation, and personal interests. Overall, Chinese BCOS students are keen and eager to engage in citizenship development opportunities, and further support is needed by the student body, school community, and BC Ministry of Education to shape their citizenship.

Keywords: Chinese Citizenship, International Education, British Columbia Offshore Schools, engagement, Socialist Core Values, patriotic

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Further Research Justifications

Travelling for some individuals can provide benefits and shape one's perception of the world; for many, it is a life-changing experience. Some can blend in with the culture quite well, while others have difficulty adjusting. As a privileged white person, I grew up in Europe, was raised in Canada, and had the opportunity to coach football in many parts of the world. After my Bachelor of Education degree, I decided to work in China. Over the years, I held various roles as a physical educator, student union and athletic committee advisor, athletic director, head of the department, student support and educational coordinator, curriculum writer, and athletics co-chair of the British Columbia Offshore Schools (BCOS). Throughout my experiences, I noticed many cultural differences between the West and East, having both worked and resided in both parts of the world as an educator. As a white, heterosexual, privileged, European male, I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural, social, curriculum, organizational, political, and other related phenomena.

As an English as a Second Language learner, I can empathize with students in similar situations. Growing up, I had many challenges learning about Westerners' customs and what being a good citizen entailed. Learning about the different perspectives of citizenship engagement sparked my curiosity and motivated me to explore citizenship perspectives in the East. From a young age, I was always curious to know what it meant to be a good person and how I could become an active participant in the process. As a child, I was fortunate to experience different cultures in Europe and then settle in Canada as a teenager. As a young adult, I was able to travel and observe different cultural norms. When I was an educator in China, I had a first-hand glance at the different citizenship perspectives that emerged when students attended BCOS, which prompted me to commence this research thesis and further analyze my findings in relation

to the existing literature. While research shows distinct differences between Chinese citizenship and the West, little research has been conducted on Mainland Chinese citizenship students in BCOS. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate how students explore citizenship development and the related effects on their citizenship perceptions and participation in BCOS in Mainland China. This research was conducted over three months and explored the citizenship perspectives of five Chinese students enrolled at a BCOS in Mainland China.

The introductory chapter examines the existing Chinese educational model, the role of the BCOS, states my positionality on this research study, introduces the research questions and the participants' backgrounds. In addition, it also discusses the BCOS structure and clarifies common terminologies and definitions pertinent to citizenship.

Chapter Two reviews the literature as it relates to this research study and the researcher's questions. It conceptualizes citizenship between the West and East, outlines some of the policies that shaped modern China, and examines factors that contributed to the development of citizenship engagement. Chapter Three provides an overview of the data collection and analysis processes and discusses some of the researcher's biases and assumptions. Chapter Four discusses the findings from the students' perspective. Chapter Five analyses theoretical frameworks of citizenship education in the West and East and factors contributing to citizenship in BCOS. The last chapter summarizes the major findings and suggests ways to further strengthen future studies in citizenship.

### *Existing Chinese Education Model*

The current Chinese education model structure is composed of six years of elementary, three years of middle school, and three years of high school. Yet only elementary and middle schools are mandatory for all students (Liu, 2018). After the expansion of university education in

1999, greater emphasis has been placed on students' preparation and acceptance into secondary education. The two-system high school was formed: ordinary and key-point schools (Ye, 2015). The key-point high schools generally received more funding and had top-quality facilities and educators. They are meant to build the pathway necessary for students to attend elite universities, which in turn leads to better social status. On the contrary, ordinary schools do not receive as much funding, students come from rural families, and are less likely to attend university. In Ye (2015), graduates from key-point high schools are 68.5% likely to attend tertiary education in comparison to ordinary schools, which are only 35.1%.

Over the past few decades, the new social order, as described below, has allowed parents to focus on their child(ren)'s education. Parents go above and beyond to get their children into the key-high senior schools. If the students struggle with any concepts, their parents enroll them in after-school programs (Wu, 2008). However, students' preferred school selection is limited because they are allowed to attend the schools in their district, which is determined by their *hukou* registration. The *hukou* registration system is responsible for verifying residence addresses. This policy has caused social imbalances—students from urban *hukou* are more likely to attend high school education than those of rural *hukou*. They are also exposed to more qualified teachers, and schools have more available resources at their hands. This disparity influences parents' perceptions of their child(ren)'s education and their educational pathways. In the past, parents had registered public toilets as their *hukou* address in hopes of getting their children into a good school. However, there is a more reliable way around the *hukou* registration policy; parents with available resources can buy property in urban areas near their preferred school. In addition, the College Entrance Exam, known as *gao-kao*, and the merit-based system make it challenging for some upper-class students to be successful and attain a high score (Liu,

2018), which creates a newly emerging market for high schools, specifically BCOS education, for wealthier families.

Upon completion of their Grade 9 compulsory year at the public school, students must complete the *Zhong Kao*—a major admission exam that determines their high school (Alexander, 2019). However, after their compulsory year, students are eligible to enroll in a BCOS program. BCOS has foundation English courses in addition to their Chinese courses to prepare students for the full Grade 10 BC program. While these courses are not mandatory and students do not earn any credits, it makes for a smoother transition.

### *British Columbia Offshore Schools in China*

In the late 20th century, the Chinese government opened its market and adjusted its policies to reform education and other services to develop its economy (He, 2017; Liu, 2018). The trends of decentralization and marketization allowed foreign industries and companies to communicate and encouraged collaboration with the Chinese market. In 1995, the Chinese government introduced an Education Law that permitted non-public sectors to function as non-profit organizations. This direction prompted the BC Ministry of Education to partner with the Maple Leaf International School at Dalian and granted its first offshore school license to operate in China (Wang, 2017). In 2008, there were 12 independently certified schools in Mainland China and, as of 2020, there are 45 BCOS programs, of which 37 are located in Mainland China (Government of British Columbia, 2021; Schuetze et al., 2008). The private school market in Mainland China makes BCOS and other foreign schools one of the most valuable curricula for middle-class families (Alexander, 2019). Educators and staff "teach, assess, and evaluate the

public BC curriculum as well as confer the same BC high school diploma that domestic students in Canada earn" (Alexander, 2019, p. 2).

Traditional international schools and offshore schools are different in their ownership, student population, and governance (Schuetze et al., 2008; Wang, 2017). Furthermore, Bunnell, Fertig and James (2016) illustrate three typologies for international schools. Type A are the traditional schools, and their student population of international schools is composed mostly of expatriates holding a foreign passport. The schools are usually non-profit organizations, are parent cooperative, and run-on limited resources. Type B are ideological schools with the focus on educating students for global peace, and there are relatively few that exist. Their curriculum seeks to provide international perspectives, for example, the International Baccalaureate. Lastly, type C international schools are privately owned and are composed mostly of local citizens, with a few exceptions. Some examples of these schools are the Global Education Management Systems based in Dubai and BCOS (Alexander, 2019; Bunnell et al., 2016). Schuetze et al. (2008) believe the BCOS curriculum, specifically in Mainland China, acts as a hybrid that must offer part of their curriculum instruction in Mandarin and is taught by Chinese-certified teachers.

According to Wang (2017), the student population in BC programs is over 20,000 and is expected to have an upward projection. However, current enrollments in the BC programs across China have dropped to just over 10,000 students (Government of British Columbia, 2021). While there has been an increase in international students compared to previous years in Canada from 2010 to 2020, there has been a reported 17% decrease of international students from previous years. The majority of the students arriving in Canada come from India or China, with 68% settling in Ontario or British Columbia (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2021). Traditional international schools focus on students of expatriates, whereas offshore schools serve

local citizens, are for-profit, and deliver a Canadian curriculum with mandatory Chinese classes (Wang, 2017). However, over the years, the BC programs have been continuously criticized for being culturally based on the students that are raised in the West, and as such, the curriculum does not reflect the cultural differences and values of students in China (Alexander, 2019; Steffenhagen, 2013).

**Research Purpose and Questions**

While the student population was expected to increase in BCOS, current enrollments have dropped significantly. The BC programs were continuously criticized for being culturally based on students in the West, and its curriculum did not reflect the values of students in the East. The purpose of this research study was to investigate citizenship development and the related effects on their citizenship perceptions and participation in BCOS in Mainland China. The following research study explored citizenship perspectives of Grade 11 and 12 Chinese students attending BCOS. A phenomenological research design was utilized to investigate the deeper meaning of participants' perspectives of citizenship. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling and interviewed at their preferred location. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived differences between Canadian and Chinese curricula?
2. What curricula address citizenship within BCOS?
    a. What motivates students to engage in citizenship education?
    b. What barriers impact citizenship learning?
3. How do BCOS participants' citizenship perspectives map onto Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) citizenship typologies?

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is to provide a contextual and historical background of citizenship development along with findings from the early 20th century to current issues and trends. In the first section, I explore notions of citizenship with global and Chinese features. In the second section, I review and discuss various theoretical models of global citizenship. In the third section, I further explore definitions and theoretical approaches of the Confucianism ideologies and their contributions to society. In the fourth section, I dig deeper into the historical developments of policies in China from the early 20th century to the present. In the last section, I focus on discussing various approaches towards citizenship engagement from local and international schools in China.

### Notions of Citizenship

The term citizenship has many definitions and interpretations, and its contents are the direct response to the needs of the modern workforce. According to Osiadacz (2018), the earliest version of "citizen" was found in the Bible, where Paul describes himself as a citizen of Taurus, a city in Turkey. In *The Republic of Plato,* a good citizen is a self-disciplined individual, and the extent to which they apply the societal rules is dependent on their superiors. "The desires of the less respectable majority are controlled by the desires and the wisdom of the superior minority" (Lee, 2003, p. 135). Conversely, Marshall (1964) describes citizenship as a mixture of sociopolitical and civil elements, with the addition of cultural and group rights. When minority groups are assimilated into the pluralistic society, their group attachments will eventually diminish and die and pave the way for unity. Understanding global citizenship, however, may be difficult due to the synonymous names associated with it and the challenge of agreeing on what its definition encompasses. Confusion arises from the multitude of perspectives obtained by

various disciplines. Different definitions will provide a variety of outcomes. For example, philosophical interpretations focus on moral values and education about global awareness (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013).

When one explores citizenship ideologies and concepts, particularly in China, governments have constantly focused on shifting their attention towards fostering multiple identities that require transferring citizenship education from community to a multileveled dimension: self, local, national, and global (Pan, 2011). These theories continue to expand on the idea of national citizenship and suggest that further growth and diversity are required in citizenship education. This can be achieved by providing the skills, knowledge, and values required to function in a multileveled polity (Law & Ng, 2009). However, most studies fail to explain the complexities within and between the different levels. For example, Law and Ng (2009) explored perspectives of students on multilevel citizenship between Shanghai and Hong Kong and found distinct differences in the implementation of citizenship education. Hong Kong students were taught to build global awareness, and Shanghai students focused on national history. The findings indicated that Shanghai students were more open to learning about cultures, whereas Hong Kong students were not concerned with global events and "promoting peace in the world" (Law & Ng, 2009, p. 878).

An earlier approach to citizenship is tackled by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). They propose that citizenship and civic education are about "what good citizenship is and what good citizens do" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 3). In their two-year study, they drew from the qualitative and quantitative resources from ten different citizenship programs and later narrowed their focus on two of the programs. They derived three conceptions that can strengthen a good

society: (1) the *Personally-responsible* citizen, (2) the *Participatory* citizen, and (3) the *Justice-oriented* citizen.

*Personally-responsible* citizens are responsible and maintain integrity, honesty, self-discipline, and obedience. Typically, they focus on personal and individual work by paying their taxes, recycling, donating blood, following the laws, and supporting those in need by contributing to charitable organizations. *Participatory* citizens actively engage in the community and within their social groups. They value active participation and partake in leadership initiatives in the community. They generally understand the government, know how to run meetings, and are found organizing charitable events. The last and least common is *Justice-oriented* citizens. They critically assess the status quo, challenge political ideologies, and explore ideas to bring about change in society for vulnerable citizens. If *Participatory* citizens organize food drives, then *Justice-oriented* citizens are likely to examine the roots of hunger. Encouraging *Personally-responsible* citizens (i.e., aim to maintain loyalty and obedience), however, can conflict with the development and actions of *Justice-oriented* citizens.

Concerning the topic of Chinese citizenship, Leung et al.'s (2014) study in Hong Kong suggested a fourth conception into Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typology called *Patriotic* citizenship. They argue that in a democratic and a totalitarian state, the meaning of patriotic citizenship is interpreted differently. In a democratic system, the citizens are loyal to different groups: schools, clubs, communities, churches. Alternatively, in a totalitarian state, "the government attempts to destroy all intermediate forms of loyalties so that the individual loyalty is in the hands of the state" (Leung et al., 2014, p. 20). To gain a deeper understanding, in the following sections, I will examine the differences between definitions of the "West" and "East,"

the history of citizenship policies, and students' perspectives on citizenship. The four typologies will guide the present research study.

**Conceptions of "Global" Citizenship**

Citizenship is further complicated by an increasing focus on the "global" as a sphere of citizenship, supplanting the traditional "national" focus of many years (Goren & Yemini, 2017). As the world is becoming more connected, it is undergoing many global and local changes. Citizens of various countries can now travel conveniently and explore cultures, nations, and opportunities to develop their global identities and perspectives (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). These changes, however, have consequences. Political, social, national, and religious fragments constantly pose threats and challenges towards a collaborative and unified civilization (Tidikis & Dunbar, 2019). Policies that used to focus on bounded communities and on creating functional members in the community are being dismantled by globalization.

To better prepare students to meet such global trends, many nations have started to adjust curricular contents via targeting and strengthening their global citizenship education. The education systems act as the medium of enabling citizens to both nurture and develop their skills to become active members of society (McCowan, 2009). Advocates of global citizenship education suggest this overrides patriotic citizenship and focuses on the greater good of humanity. Social prejudices and local divisions will be suppressed, and humanity will be a common theme and interest among all citizens (Niens & Reilly, 2012).

While global citizenship brings interconnectivity and promotes sharing and respecting cultures, Niens and Reilly (2012) suggest it is not practical nor desirable. If citizenship requires people living in a space, abiding by the rules and laws of a governed body, then who governs global citizens? Who keeps them accountable for their actions? Since the inception of the United Nations in 1945, its focus has been on helping the poor and vulnerable, but recent events brought

forward by Mothers of Srebrenica and Haiti Cholera victims have raised questions. According to Rashkow (2014), the UN has been consistently accused of wrongdoing and hides bad publicity to maintain its good citizenship status. Furthermore, Niens and Reilly (2012) questioned global citizenship's universality, claiming it is focused mostly on Western interests and not challenging global interests (global environment, social issues, and human values). Teachers have also expressed concerns over the resources provided to them, "feeling ill-prepared to address controversial issues" and "worrying about global stereotypes that may pave the way to further divisions" (Niens & Reilly, 2012, p. 115).

Oxley and Morris's (2013) typology further highlights differences and commonalities among various conceptions of global citizenship. They identified eight conceptions and grouped them into two types: the cosmopolitan and the alternative. A visual representation is presented in Table 1. The cosmopolitan types focus on social organization, which includes the economic, moral, cultural, and political approaches to global citizenship. The alternative, also known as advocacy types, tend to focus on a multitude of perspectives, namely the social, critical, environmental, and spiritual. The political conception focuses on the relationships between the state and the individual. Moral conception examines human rights and ethics. The economic conception explores ways to develop internationally, and the cultural concentration focuses on items that bring citizens together (e.g., language, art, etc.). On the other hand, the social conception focuses on civil society, whereas the critical conception examines societal challenges. The environmental conception raises awareness for global sustainability, and the spiritual conception focuses on the connections between citizens (e.g., love, emotions, etc.). While the typology might appear comprehensive, McCowan (2009) believes that there are many challenges and unpredictable outcomes that accompany the implementation of any type of citizenship

program and that "there are serious doubts about our ability to measure the programs' 'success' in a way that encompasses the diverse facets of citizenship" (p. 19).

**Table 1**

*Global citizenship typologies*

| Citizenship Conceptions | Cosmopolitan | Alternative (Advocacy) |
|---|---|---|
| Types of Citizenship | Political | Social |
| | Moral | Critical |
| | Economic | Environmental |
| | Cultural | Spiritual |

**Chinese Features of Citizenship**

When one thinks of the East and West, China is often portrayed as collectivist and the West as individualistic. Tu (2011) argues that there is not just one system that fits all, and it is important to acknowledge alternative ideologies. While the West thinks of themselves as patriots and everyone else is a nationalist, Bislev and Li (2004) argue that these terms have different connotations in Chinese. Patriotic citizenship in a Chinese context is understood as *aiguo zhuyi*, loosely translated as "love-country-ism," whereas nationalism is *minzu zhuyi* and is defined as "nation-ism or ethnic-group-ism" and is rarely mentioned when describing China (Bislev & Li, 2004, p. 25). The Chinese definition of *minzu zhuyi* (nationalism) can be interpreted as being synonymous with ethnic nationalism in the West; this is different from nationalism—described as a "nation-state" (Bislev & Li, 2004, p. 25). Modern nationalism in China is frequently described in terms of patriotic citizenship, and its meanings are deeply rooted in historical contexts. According to He (2017), China, as we know it today, has been composed of the Han

dynasty, accounting for 92% of the total population. The remaining 8% are made up of the remaining 55 non-Han ethnic groups. Some of the larger minority groups have the ability to be labelled as nations: Tibetan and Mongolian. While many of the founders of the People's Republic of China came from the Han dynasty, they quickly came to realize the importance of avoiding any challenges that may arise from nationalism *minzu zhuyi* or ethnic nationalism and focused on creating cohesive and united citizens. The harmony between the states not only flourished and contributed to the success of the nation, but it also promoted collaboration and the creation of the "market-based economy" (He, 2017, p. 4). The market allowed citizens to share and exchange resources and human power based on the market supply and demands.

When we discuss the idea of citizenship, it is important to understand that there are several Chinese words rather than a single word that directly translates into English. Jakimów (2012), describes the three most important citizenship words: "*gongmin* (public people), *shimin* (city people) and *guomin* (people of the state)" (p. 663). The term *min* means the people, and its origins date back to the Confucianism era, which promoted the idea of creating a harmonious society instead of individual rights. These ideas were similar during the ruling of dynasties. The relationship of the emperor and its citizens was perceived as an extension of the parent-child relationship, and this is a strategy still enforced in China to maintain a harmonious relationship between its citizens and the country.

Wang (2015) believes Confucianism "cannot contribute to developing ideas of liberal citizenship" (p. 1) and further divides Confucianism into illiberal/liberal and relates it to thin and thick citizenship. Thin citizenship focused on the individual's rights protection against the state. In contrast, thick citizenship focused on the individuals' responsibilities to participate and support the community. Liberal Confucianism promotes human rights, whereas illiberal

Confucianism sees itself as obligation-oriented and does not focus on the individual. However, Wang (2018) suggests Confucianism could act as a means of maintaining harmony within the evolving markets by embracing the virtues of Confucianism ideologies known as *junzi* (君子). The teachings promote selfhood by becoming reflexive, relational, and dynamic. Its teachings foster an appreciation of differences and understanding of others' worldviews. These ideologies might be highly controversial in the West, yet the West and East could learn to collaborate harmoniously from Confucianism ideologies. Tan (2020) believes "Confucian citizenship education debunks the perception that Confucius and Confucianism necessarily promote authoritarian leadership" (p. 10). Furthermore, Confucius promoted active citizenship and guided his disciples to create policies for the greater good when in a leadership role. While the perception of China and Confucianism is often associated with absolute authority, Elstein's (2009) analysis of *The Analects* book reveals the opposite. Confucian disciples might appear as subordinates and obedient, yet there is no such evidence in the text. Confucius may hold more knowledge, but he is a human and has imperfections. The disciples may not hold his knowledge, but are seen as equals, are engaged in discussions, and allow for everyone to learn and improve their knowledge over time.

According to Tan and Chew's (2008) interpretations, some Confucian practices are starting to emerge in Singapore's new Character Citizenship Education (CCE) to unite its diverse citizens, Chinese, Malay, Indians, and others. They include harmony to promote social cohesion and advocacy of values by focusing on the relationships and roles of family and community. In Confucianism hierarchies, the self is discussed in the context of social interaction and one's ability to follow the cultural norms of "etiquette, protocol, and convention" (Gow, 2017, p. 105). According to Fei et al. (1992), these interactions are in line with the Differential Mode of

Association. It is a social network that links citizens' moral values in different places through clear standards. The relationship can determine how citizens should act, their status level, their roles and responsibilities, their relative status to others, how others should interact with them, and others' roles and responsibilities towards them. Thus, the development of citizenship is considered not to be inherent but rather is developed. Confucian ideologies and practices have also made significant contributions to the Chinese core socialist values. The core socialist values are divided into national, societal, and citizens. At the citizen level, it includes patriotic citizenship, dedication, integrity, and geniality; at the societal level is freedom, justice, equality, and the rule of law; at the national level are prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony. These values are considered to be stronger together than when viewed independently. By understanding the citizens' characteristics, the Chinese Communist Party integrated common-sense beliefs from Confucianism into their platform to further expand their values in society. The Chinese Communist Party examined Confucian virtues and actions and connected them to core socialist values. Three of the core socialist values of citizens are directly related to the Confucian virtues of friendship, honesty, and respect; however, additional advertising campaigns of core values were presented in posters around the country.

## Chinese Citizenship Policies

### *1904 – 1978*

Citizenship education has been continually debated, especially in China. In Liu's (2011) review, since the Qing government in 1904, the aims of good citizenship were addressed by radical and conservative forms. Citizens needed to respect the public, maintain loyalty to the emperor, and read the book *Guomin bidu*. Civic education took the form of moral cultivation and was taught alongside Confucian classes. This lasted until 1912 when Imperial China came to an

end, and the Republic of China's first minister started to focus on creating modern citizens. Confucian and Western approaches started to emerge, and textbooks were moving away from Confucianism. In 1917, the word *Guoming* body was replaced with *Gongming* body summarizing the shift from Imperialism to the Republic, focusing on despotism, monarchy, and republicanism. By 1922, the word moral education was replaced with citizenship education. Their moral education was expanded and started to include personal development into the program, "local self-government, industrial labor, poverty, gender inequality" (Liu, 2011, p. 446). A major shift was undertaken in 1928-29, under the Nationalist Party, led by Chiang Kai-shek. They revised civics classes and organized them by "Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People" (Liu, 2011, p. 446). The left-wing ideologies were forced to go underground. Over the next decade, the Nationalist civic education became similar to youth training camps of fascist governments. They focused on cleanliness, fitness, loyalty, and creating routine practices. Citizenship emphasized the collective rather than the individualistic. The notion of citizenship development took another hit during the Anti-Japanese War and the Domestic War that followed in 1946 (Zhang & Fagan, 2016). In 1949, the Nationalist Party was overthrown, and the establishment of the People's Republic of China emerged. It was regarded as a socialist government with one party to its citizenship education (Tu, 2011). The political ideologies were structured based on Marxist-Leninism ideologies, Maoism, and anti-American imperialism (Tu, 2011; Zhong & Lee, 2008). The value of citizenship education acted as a national goal by propagating ideologies of "collectivism, patriotism, nationalism and self-sacrifice" (Zhong & Lee, 2008, p. 63). However, Zhang and Fagan (2016) believe that due to the reintroduction of low wages and capitalism during Mao's era, the common people did not understand the

Communist Party's meaning of civic engagement and participation. Citizens' individual rights were viewed "as poisons to the socialist highest goal of mass mobilization" (p. 122).

***1978 – Present***

In 1978, the Chinese government decided to create an Open-Door policy for its market. Citizens could exchange goods and resources with other provinces based on economic demands. It subsequently stimulated a citizenship curriculum reform. It reintroduced the concept of economic development as a nation and the abolishment of the proletariat. By 1985, the government released curriculum documents on "Moral Education and Political Theories" to strengthen the socialist cause and open the discussion on class and social issues among university students. While there was strong opposition towards adopting a modern citizen, in 1991, the government introduced the "Outline of Moral Education in Secondary Schools" (Zhong & Lee, 2008, p. 64). It advocated the teaching of socialism and collectivism, students' attitudes and behaviours, and motivational approaches. In 1996, the government wanted to not only teach young citizens but also adults. The Tiananmen Square political event on June 4, 1989, where university students asked for personal rights and more engagement with social development, was viewed as a failure by the Chinese government. Thus, they also introduced the two-class policies that summarized Marxist Theory and are still utilized today (Zhang & Fagan, 2016). They also started to focus on "individual growth rather than the ideopolitical socialization" (Zhong & Lee, 2008, p. 65). Ideopolitical socialization referred to "the cultivation of ideomoral quality (*sixiang daode xiuyang*)," which ensured teachers taught life philosophies and ideologies aligned with the

socialist ideologies and nurtured communist values in students (as cited in Zhong & Lee, 2008, p. 64).

Since the Open-Door policy in 1978, China has worked on modernizing and adopting its policy to address the needs of its citizens. The 2001 Report by the Premier of the State Council addressed the importance of "promoting spiritual civilization, improving democracy and the legal system, and strengthening national defence" (Zhong & Lee, 2008, p. 67). They revised the 1996 curriculum and implemented courses for democracy and character education (Shimbo, 2009). They focused on developing their understanding of the law and democracy, and individual psychological health. Additionally, there was an effort to help develop students' understanding of the law, China's constitution, and how to maintain public order. Democracy refers to the students' understanding of the Chinese election system (i.e., its role and functions) and negotiated democracy, which focuses on the transition from the authoritarian government towards a democratic system. Furthermore, in 2002, the government released guidelines and content on mental health education with the aims of developing students' character, optimism, and adaptation skills (Zhong & Lee, 2008).

After a comprehensive national survey in 2006, the government introduced the "Consensus on Citizenship Education" to teach students at all levels (Pan, 2011). Their objectives highlighted the importance of developing local and national knowledge, world civilization, and international affairs. While citizenship education remained consistent through the grades, their focus adjusted according to each grade. For example, Grade 7 focused on personal growth, Grade 8 on the relationship between the different levels of government, and Grade 9 on national citizenship. The government has frequently suggested Chinese citizenship is a mixture of principles from "socialism with Chinese cultural traditions" (Pan, 2011, p. 287).

Zhang and Fagan (2016) believe that despite the many adjustments in the latest 2012 proposal, with a shift from loyalty to social responsibility and involvement in public affairs, their practices did not change much and continue to focus on "socialism, collectivism and patriotism" (p. 123).

Most recently, the Chinese Communist Party, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, developed a series of core socialist values in hopes of attaining the Chinese Dream. It promoted a secure social order, shared common beliefs, economic development, and consensus among its population, not just in China but also abroad. Shortly after Xi gained power, he introduced two goals. The first focused on developing a prosperous nation, and the second on establishing the core values of "prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony" by 2049 (Gow, 2017, p. 106). The core socialist values were designed in conjunction with the Confucian moral superiority by focusing on self-cultivation. It demanded citizens to self-regulate their emotions in public and be disciplined. The campaign aimed to increase the government's intervention in education, media, religion, and other organizations. These goals foster positivity and unity across the nation, but no one can predict for certain the accomplishment of such goals, especially after the retirement of Xi Jinping. Most importantly, his success is also likely to impact international and BCOS educational citizenship programs that aim to develop engaged citizens rather than knowledge transition and following authority (Ye, 2019).

## Citizenship Engagement

### Canadian Curriculum and Engagement Factors

Citizenship curriculum varies across continent, country, provincial, and city levels. However, when we observe the Canadian curriculum at the government level, there are a set of policies and programs set in stone to ensure citizens can develop their citizenship. According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2021), citizens are recommended to participate

in the community, vote during elections, volunteer in charitable organizations, protect the environment, help neighbours, engage in current and meaningful conversations, respect neighbours, and welcome new citizens. For new Canadians, it provides free access to parks, museums, and other locations to help them explore the culture. A list of volunteer opportunities is also posted on the website to get them started in the community.

At the provincial level, the BC Ministry of Education is responsible for educating students to be good citizens. The BC Ministry of Education (2018) focuses on intellectual, human, social, and career development. Those goals are to be accomplished through quality teaching, leadership, student-centred education, a healthy learning environment, a future-oriented approach, and measurable outcomes. Teachers will engage in collaboration to incorporate technology and experiential learning in the classroom. Students will be surrounded by an inclusive environment that promotes flexibility and freedom of choice. The curriculum will prepare students to become lifelong learners and guide them to develop 21st-century employment skills. Best practices are encouraged to meet the learning goals and provide constructive feedback to all students. Students will also be surrounded by a safe learning space where they can learn how to be physically active and make healthy choices. Souza and Damaceno (2017) also believed that the integration of arts and science further develops citizenship perspectives. The arts aim at building students' subjectivity and science provides students with objective skills. The integration of science and arts creates a dynamic and flexible language that all citizens can understand.

In theory, it all sounds great, yet various factors affect the engagement level of the students with the curriculum. Research-based on the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, the research team led by Torney-Purta et al. (1999) analyzed the

civic citizenship engagement in multiple nations. They explored students from ages 10-14 and developed the octagonal model. The model was constructed based on the ideas of contemporary psychologist Bronfenbrenner and the cognition theory of Lave and Wanger (1991). The model placed the individual at the centre and society at the outer layer. At the individual level, students are influenced by face-to-face interactions with various social groups, such as family members, the school, peer groups, and neighbours. The outer layer was constructed by Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem—it accounted for institutions, economic, religious beliefs, and education structure. Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) believed the higher the education level of the parents, the more likely they were to engage with the community and outside of their home or school. Thus, they were more likely to participate in sports, engage in charitable events and go to family events.

Gilligan (1982) believes gender plays a significant role in the type of citizens we develop. Daughters are more likely to experience a relationship with their mothers and develop more empathetic values. In contrast, mothers are less likely to connect with their sons, indirectly pushing boys to explore their masculinity and develop their independent skills. Recent feminist movements have focused on bringing equality to these views and challenging the assimilation of male dominance (Lombardo & Verloo, 2009). However, the development of equal rights can be challenging to achieve when individual voices are not promoted in society (Woodman, 2012). Other researchers have also highlighted the importance that extracurricular activities, gamification, and school culture play in the development of civic engagement (Saha, 2000; Spitz et al., 2018). Traditional citizenship development has focused on active engagement, gamification, and digital citizenship, especially in the last decade, and this has sparked the attention of many scholars. Gamification is defined as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 10). Bourgonjon and Soetaert (2013) believe that

when games are effectively designed, they can bring out elements of active citizenship. Complex tasks such as science projects and the integration of technology have been shown to effectively contribute towards citizenship among the new generation (Spitz et al., 2018). Society has now evolved from industrial to informational and has provoked companies and governments to become more creative when thinking of ways to engage with the younger generation in a digital world. A study by Splitz et al. (2018) utilized concepts of *Pokémon Go* that required the participants to go on a scavenger hunt and created an app with similar features to increase civic engagement towards healthy eating. At the end of the study, participants' awareness had increased, and some changed their behaviour towards certain food consumption. Additionally, a study by Weaver and Lewis (2012) found participants engaged in the game *Fallout 3* made frequent moral decisions in the game as if in real life. Lastly, Bourgonjon and Soetaert (2013) believe video games fulfill similar functions as a theatre and can expose participants to various cultural ideas while participating in ongoing debate practices.

**Chinese Citizenship Engagement**

Research by Watkins and Biggs (1996) suggested that they are two paradoxes of Chinese learners. Firstly, Chinese students are not exposed to the same standards of education as in the West, such as classroom environment and sizes, yet they appear to outperform the West in mathematics and science. Secondly, they are usually described as passive learners, yet they show high levels of understanding. Passive learners could be attributed to the teaching approach rather than being a different type of learner (Lee, 2009). Chinese teachers play an authoritative role in students' learning process and are viewed as the main holders of knowledge (Wen & Clément, 2003). Students are expected to submit to authority. However, that limits their ability to interact with others and the teacher. The English language is something new to the Chinese learners and taking risks may lead them to lose face if they cannot communicate well. Losing face stems from

the Confucianism ideologies of the self and refers to the fact that individuals should be aware of how to conduct themselves with others. Students are taught from a very young age to self-regulate their behaviour and to avoid any disapproval in public. As such, students are not aware of their citizenship education in China (Ye, 2019). The Chinese government's approach incorporates core competencies into citizenship education by shifting towards "knowledge transmission rather than the cultivation of civic behavior" (Ye, 2019, p. 518).

Tu (2011) explored perspectives of university students in civic participation and found that participation in civic engagement can take many forms and shapes depending on the intended outcome of the program. The study took into consideration their backgrounds, university education, discipline, and gender. An overwhelming amount of data in the study highlighted students' love for China. Students were also more likely to participate in civic activities for personal gains, or they were simply following others blindly. This does not come as a surprise considering China's *Patriotic* curriculum education in the past. Civic engagement in the study covers a range of activities, and almost half of them participated in activities, and the other half were faced with leadership, financial, and recruitment challenges. Many students were also concerned with the social injustices, women's rights, social class, and education access. Zhang (2015) further examined students' views and found that students believed if the government was good, there was no need for a democratic system. These beliefs were attributed to economic development, human rights, and the efficiency of the projects within the country. One participant stated: "democracy needs an economic foundation. How we can talk about democracy if 1.4 billion people live in hunger?" (Zhang, 2015, p. 222). According to Ye (2018), systems like the *hukou* allowed the government to maintain a disparity between its peasants and urban privileges. Peasants were primarily kept in the countryside and were not involved at all

with urban economics. However, with ongoing strategic developments from the government, the socioeconomic inequalities have been shrinking over the years, and students can gain greater access to education.

Leung et al. (2014) investigated 51 secondary school students' (ages 13-16) in Hong Kong. They examined their perspectives on the school's support methodologies in regard to promoting a good citizen, the types of activities organized, and policies implemented. They found students felt it was important that their schools taught them how to be good citizens and to become active participants by engaging in activities. Yet, the schools' implementation strategies and organized activities were not methodically organized. Implementation strategies included specific units specialized towards citizenship and their organized activities (i.e., engagements in clubs, extracurriculars, and classes). One of their significant findings suggested that *Personally-responsible* citizenship was the most important type of citizenship, followed by *Justice-oriented*, *Participatory*, and then *Patriotic*. It was interesting to note that students viewed *Justice-oriented* citizenship as being more important than *Patriotic* given the government's curriculum designs in the past. However, that may not necessarily be true, as Hong Kong holds different perspectives with citizens from Mainland China. Hong Kong aligns itself with a capitalistic system, and Mainland China supports a social system. The two systems can coexist within the Chinese political framework of "One Country, Two systems" and function autonomously (Leung et al., 2014, p. 22).

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## Methodological Choice

The methodology of this study is a qualitative research approach and is described by Creswell and Creswell (2017) as:

> An approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to generate themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of data… a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation. (p. 4)

This approach allows the faculty, the researcher, and the audience to better interpret the issues in the study. The researcher focused on collecting data in a natural setting when gathering the participants' experiences to formulate a deeper meaning, which helped to "develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 182). While quantitative research uses data to analyze the questions at hand, qualitative research focuses on analyzing the situation through words and providing a deeper understanding of the question being investigated (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Qualitative research is very descriptive and utilizes words and pictures rather than numbers to convey its message. Other forms of data collection include field notes, participant interviews, documents, or a combination of them. Most importantly, "The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.16). Qualitative research allows the researcher to be responsive and adaptive to collect and analyze the data to gain a deep understanding of participants' responses and build concepts. The researcher follows an inductive process, maintains a questioning stance, is a meticulous observer, has a high tolerance for unknown variables, asks relevant questions,

and is comfortable with writing. It also allows the researcher to have a more purposeful and non-random sample selection by targeting a specific population.

**Research Design**

A qualitative research approach was selected to explore the descriptions of participants' citizenship perspectives while engaged as active participants in school activities. The aim of this study focused not only on exploring participants' experiences and how they transform into consciousness but also "understand(ing) or comprehend(ing) meanings of human experience as it is lived" (Polkinghorne, as cited in Laverty, 2003, p. 22). Essentially, it was inspired by phenomenological research in which structurally describes, dissects, and interprets the experiences of people in their life (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). More "often these studies are of intense human experiences such as love, anger, betrayal, and so on" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 26). Having lived in China, it provided the researcher with a certain understanding of the Chinese students' experiences. To fully examine the topic of interest, the researcher had to explore his own biases and learn how to put them aside in hopes of providing a more in-depth analysis of the data. This approach allowed the researcher to investigate questions that may not be written in public records or discussed in Chinese schools. Therefore, it allowed the researchers to gain a holistic picture while considering the multiple viewpoints of the Canadian Offshore Schools' citizenship education and what constitutes a good citizen. To fully understand citizenship perspectives from BCOS students, in-depth semi-structured Zoom interviews were conducted with Grade 11 and 12 students to investigate any possible gaps in the literature.

**Participant Selection and Recruitment**

Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "selection made on this basis alone is not very credible" and may not provide rich

information (p. 98). However, for the purpose of this study, I was interested in targeted populations at specific locations that were also accessible during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the information may not be generalized to other populations, it may offer new emerging trends in the field. Participants were drawn from students in Grades 11 and 12 who attended BCOS in Mainland China. Even though participants came from two grades, the BCOS programs only offered Grades 10 to 12. Participants were required to be leaders within the school environment, including but not limited to athletics captains, student union members, and student-initiated clubs. Participants were Chinese citizens and had good communication skills in English. Before the commencement of the study, the plan was reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the research ethics board at Lakehead University (see Appendix A).

The researcher contacted potential superintendents to obtain approval and conduct the research with their student population. In the letter, the researcher included the research purpose, recruitment procedure, privacy, and contact information (refer to Appendix B for a copy of the letter). In doing so, it informed and provided superintendents with an opportunity to review the research and determine if it was appropriate for their student population. Upon receiving confirmation to conduct the research study from the superintendents, the researcher further sent an information letter to school administrators informing them of the study (see Appendix C). The information letter contained all the responsibilities of the school administrator and their role in the study. The administrator was responsible for sending recruitment posters to their students via email. The recruitment poster and email of the body can be found in Appendix D and E. The researcher obtained permission from administrators before approaching and speaking with the students. Participants expressed interest in engaging in the study by responding to the email address provided on the poster. Those students then received, via email, a potential participant

information letter and a consent form informing them of the purpose of the research study (see Appendix F and G). Participants could indicate their interest by emailing or calling the researcher. The researcher utilized the Automated Readability Index to accommodate English-as-a-second-language students by simplifying the reading level of the texts to that of Grade 7 (WebFX, 2021). Participants and their legal guardian(s) were required to sign the consent form and to email it to the researcher to ensure they understood the research process and their rights as a participant before the commencement of the Zoom interviews. The consent form outlined that subjects can drop out at any given time, do not have to answer any questions if they are uncomfortable, and that they are giving knowledgeable legal consent for their participation in this research study. If participants felt any stress throughout the study, they could seek the support of the nearest psychologist or call the hotline service provided to them in the Information Letter (a suggestion to call 12345 hotline).

**Data Collection**

Upon completion of the ethics consent forms, the participant received the interview questions via email (see Appendix H). The researcher communicated with the administrators and participants to establish the most convenient time to conduct the Zoom audio recording interview only, without causing any disruptions to the participants' learning and the school schedule. A quiet and private room was established during breaks in the school schedule to allow the participants to express their opinions freely. The data was collected using one-on-one semi-structured interviews following a general interview guideline (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interview questions are "less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 110). Additionally, open-ended interview-guided questions allowed "the researcher to respond to the situation at hand" and were

constructed based on Leung et al.'s (2014) research instrumentation and the collaboration of the faculty advisor's recommendations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 111).

Interviews were estimated to be approximately 40 minutes; however, additional time was permitted if participants needed more time to express their opinions. All steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the BCOS participants in this study. Our Zoom meetings required a password to provide a layer of privacy. However, given the possibility that third-party agents, the Chinese government, and other technologically proficient individuals may have had the skills to monitor our interviews, it was not possible to guarantee full confidentiality and anonymity. Specific school names and locations were not identified nor published in the study. Participant anonymity was used throughout this research study by assigning each individual a pseudonym. The computer containing the participants' data was also password-protected to ensure the information was not accessed by an external party. The research student asked participants research questions individually to ensure anonymity within and outside of the study. If participants had any further questions about their confidentiality, they could contact the researcher freely. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

**Data Analysis**

All the interviews were verbatim transcribed with the assistance of online software Trint. For the first transcription process, the researcher uploaded the audio on Trint to distinguish the speakers and correct any transcription errors that might occur by the software during the transcription process. Due to English language comprehension challenges and grammatical errors, repeated words were removed to facilitate the researcher's understanding of the responses while maintaining the authenticity of the interviews. The researcher also numbered each line on Microsoft Word and analyzed the documents with the assistance of ATLAS.ti. The study

followed the step-by-step guidelines and recommendations of Merriam and Tisdell (2016); however, it incorporated mainly the works of Löfgren (2013) because it was simple to understand and could be easily carried throughout the data analysis. Transcription and coding were conducted in a six-step process. The researcher browsed through the transcriptions, made labels and codes, created categories/themes, labelled and decided which codes, themes/themes are the most important, organized the findings, and wrote the final findings.

The analysis process began in sequential order from the first to the last conducted interview. The online software Trint was utilized to transcribe the documents and convert them into a document format. Before coding, each participant's audio recording was listened to at least twice, and initial codes and labels were made. The documents were then uploaded on Atlas.ti to be coded and observed for themes.

**Researcher Bias and Assumptions**

The researcher was an employee of the BCOS, and participants were specifically chosen and recruited only from other school system populations. While the researcher was wearing a different hat, he might have had previous interactions with the students within the study. Participants' perception, citizenship-specific terminologies, and definitions might have altered their perspectives on the topic of interest, and hence the researcher chose to recruit participants from other schools to mitigate power inequalities and labelling. In the researcher's opinion, there were no other conflicts during the research process.

**Participants' Profiles**

The next section focuses on descriptions of the participants' age, school interests, personal views, background, and the factors that contributed to their enrollment in BC schools to better understand the context and environment of the participants. Since most students are under

the guidance of their parents and reside in China, their names have been replaced with pseudonyms. Additionally, the schools' names have been numbered to avoid any possible recognition of their identities. All participants were enrolled for the first time in a fully integrated English program in Grade 10 at a BC school, live in boarding schools, and aspire to attain an international postsecondary education abroad. Participants' background information is summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Participants General Background Information*

| Participant | School | Grade | Age | Gender | School Engagement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bob | BC School 1 | 12 | 19 | Male | Student Union, Public Speaking, Tutoring, and Athletics |
| Candy | BC School 1 | 12 | 17 | Female | Rubik's Cube, Library Volunteer, and Student Union |
| Eris | BC School 2 | 12 | 19 | Male | Student Union, Floor Hockey, and Computer Programming |
| Flora | BC School 2 | 12 | 17 | Female | Horseback Riding and Model United Nations |
| Gia | BC School 1 | 11 | 17 | Female | Cello, Model United Nations, and Tutoring |

Bob attended BC School 1, which is situated in a suburb of a major international trades city in China. Bob was born in a small city several hours from the school and began studying at an American school from 10 years old and switched to a Canadian international middle school.

He found the Canadian curriculum to be more inclusive and allowed him to explore career pathways, rather than Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Levels that focus on tests and exam-based assessments. Later, Bob enrolled in a BC high school program in Grade 10. Most offshore schools commence their BC programs in Grade 10 (Government of British Columbia, 2021a). He believes attending a BC school allowed him to focus on class participation, assignments and plan for his future career. It also provided opportunities to study at top universities around the world.

Bob never lived or settled anywhere outside of China and has visited predominantly countries in Asia. During his free time, he enjoys competing in public speeches, playing tennis and golf. Most notably, he favours discussing politics and economics with the teachers during tutorials and school hours. He describes himself as sociable, outgoing, and enthusiastic about developing a deeper understanding and acquiring new knowledge. His parents and teachers believe he possesses good leadership qualities and is an active learner. To further develop his perception of the world, he volunteers his time with the Student Union, Terry Fox Run, and helps children in underprivileged societies.

Candy went to BC school 1, in a suburb location of a major city, in China. Candy was born in a small city far away from her school. She visits her hometown twice a semester to see her parents and younger siblings. When deciding which school to attend, Candy's parents were a major influence and wanted her to leave the small town to experience the opportunities that come with attending a BC school in a major city. As a result, her parents and Candy chose a BC school that provides her with an international secondary school experience rather than a Chinese education and allows her to relocate and pursue an undergraduate degree abroad. She has never lived outside of China but has travelled to the UK during summers to improve her English-

speaking skills. Since her enrollment at a BC school, she finds it boring and has nothing to do other than play with Rubrik's cube, complete homework, and watch movies in her free time. She is usually found volunteering her time at the library by collecting old books and donating them to others. Most of her friends think she is a very sociable person because she has a lot of contacts on social platforms. She does not agree, however, and believes she is a shy person.

Eris enrolled at BC school 2, in a developing zone near his city. He was born and raised in the central part of China and has visited Australia and Singapore. When deciding which international school to attend, there were not that many options for Eris. There were only two types of schools in his city: a BC or a Chinese school. Chinese schools focused on SATs and tests, whereas BC schools concentrated on providing a full western type of experiential education. For Eris, the decision was not easy, and, as such, his parents played a significant part in his decision to join a BC school. Eris enrolled at the international school in Grade 9 and started his BC program in Grade 10. He has hopes of going abroad and enrolling in a biomedical engineering program.

During his spare time, Eris enjoys preparing for university abroad by designing computer programs and creating 3D models. Despite not having a hockey arena, on Wednesdays, he tries to learn floor hockey. He describes himself as a "typical science guy" who is smart, emotional, shy, and trustworthy. Due to his high standards and GPA, his classmates are always seeking to be part of his group during programs. Apart from science courses, he spends a lot of his time conversing with his social studies teachers. Their topics of conversation include perspectives of West vs. East governance, policies, and propaganda strategies. During his time at school, he is involved with the Student Union and has had lots of opportunities to improve his public speaking, problem-solving, and organizational skills through the organization of major school-

wide events, meetings, and collaborations with school leaders. While this can be very challenging for him, it allows him to get out of his comfort zone and think outside of the box, "especially when you act as the president of the union, you have to think of the bigger picture".

Flora's BCOS 2 is located in her hometown. She has had the privilege of travelling to North America and Australia but has never lived outside of China. When she graduated from middle school, her parents explored their options and decided to send her to BC school in the town. She is in her final year and is hoping to get the opportunity to study abroad. Since she is a local resident in the town, she has many benefits. She can spend her time horseback riding, socializing with her friends, and listening to music. She sees herself as an optimist and hardworking individual. She believes when you show your happiness, it "makes others feel good"; while doing your homework makes you a hardworking person. To improve her English-speaking abilities, she is a leader of the Model United Nations club at her school. This also helps her become more knowledgeable and understand different perspectives, especially when attending competitions.

Gia is enrolled at BCOS 1 and is currently in Grade 11. She considers herself to be a local resident of the city, despite being born in a different town. She has never lived abroad and has only travelled to the UK. BC school was not her choice. The Chinese *hukou* system rigid policy requires students to take their secondary school and college exams at their registered *hukou* residency (Zhou & Cheung, 2017). As a result, it was either she returned to her hometown or enrolled at an international school. Gia's low academic grades, parental guidance, her perception of the BC curriculum as challenging, and the opportunities to explore extracurricular programs, made it a primary option for her to enroll and pursue her university aspirations (i.e., to study abroad in the future).

During her free time, she enjoys playing the cello and teaching her social studies teacher Mandarin Chinese. She describes herself as a rational and open-minded individual. This allows her to be flexible and analyze situations more critically. Gia volunteers her time by teaching English to students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in poor areas during her holidays. Additionally, she is a leader of the Model United Nations club at her school. These experiences have helped her see the world from a different perspective and, as she states, “gives me a new mind like how to cope with these problems.”

# Chapter 4: Findings

## Introduction to Findings

This chapter describes the participants' citizenship perspectives. The categories below were constructed from my interviews with Offshore BC students. BCOS students studied in Chinese schools before enrolling in Grade 10 and engaging with the BC curriculum. The following sections are organized in methodical order according to our initial questions for this study. In the first section, I reflect on the methodology utilized in the research study. The second section explored Canadian and Chinese curriculum perceived differences. The third section was based on school structures and policies that address curricula. The fourth section elaborated on the student motivation factors towards citizenship engagement benefits and explored the various contributing factors that hinder participation in citizenship activities or programs. The fifth section described the driving forces towards citizenship development. The last section focused on Chinese citizenship perspectives of BCOS and the emerging themes. Although each section relates to a specific question, they are all interconnected with each other. While most participants were represented in each section, some of them had richer data than others. The data collected was based solely on a single interview with the participants. Quotations are utilized throughout the sections to ensure participants' voices were captured. It is important to remember that participants were second-language speakers, and when compared to native speakers, their understanding was similar to a Grade 7 student. Some participants were also having difficulty expressing their thoughts in English, and questions were rephrased to their English language skills during the interview.

## Reflections on Methodology

A qualitative research study allowed the researcher to capture some participants' lived experiences and perspectives on citizenship in one-on-one interviews. Participants were able to express their thoughts and displayed emotions of love, anger, curiosity, and doubt on their citizenship experiences throughout the interviews. The researcher was able to interpret the findings and understand them in relation to Canadian and Chinese education. However, a few participants had challenges expressing and finding the right words to describe their experiences. In turn, the researcher had to fill in the gaps based on the responses of the participants without affecting the authenticity of their voices. Richer data could have been obtained in the research study if the participants had higher English language skills. COVID-19 also made it difficult for the researcher to conduct in-person and follow-up interviews with the participants to gain a deeper understanding of their responses. Participants and legal guardians were aware of a third agent or Chinese government monitoring the interviews, as such, they might have felt uneasy to fully express their opinions through the Zoom interview. Future studies should focus on pre-arrange follow-up interviews to better understand participants' responses with low English language skills and interviews should be conducted in-person to create a space that can allow participants to speak freely.

## What are the General Perceived Differences between Canadian and Chinese Curricula?

### *Canadian Curricula*

At times, education can be seen as out of touch with reality, with students potentially finding it difficult to make connections between homework and the real world. Teachers may frequently feel the need to be in front of the class and teach by the book rather than let students

explore and investigate their own questions. However, Bob and other BCOS participants had a different perspective.

> As for the Canadian education, it's practical. It's flexible. It is not solely exam-based… It seeks [to explore] the students' potential. Like, you don't have to be perfect in every subject. You can be talented in STEM subjects, but not in English. That's OK. You can be brilliant in fine arts, but also [in] another subject. That's also fine. So, in Canadian education, what I find out is that it encourages individualism; it encourages innovation, and the need to explore different talents. (Bob)

Bob defined success based on individual interest rather than focusing on STEM subjects. For Bob, everyone can be successful in the future based on their talents and skills. Students at BCOS could plan their future pathways and simultaneously explore a variety of activities or hobbies. From their perspective, the curriculum allowed teachers to take a holistic approach by paying attention to their interests and did not solely rely on examinations. Rather than referencing the curricula, they frequently spoke about the educational system as an entity. This was an important point to take into consideration because it was so frequently mentioned in their discussions and dominated the conversation throughout the interviews.

When asked about the benefits of Canadian education, they frequently described it as flexible, explorational, project-based, and open-minded. The flexibility allowed them to explore their interests. Students could enroll in a variety of courses such as fine arts and career education, along with STEM and English courses. Participants were exposed to various types of teaching practices, which allowed students to showcase their knowledge of the examined topics. Those included presentations, seminars, group projects, and activities. As Eris states:

> But, here we got more varieties of the form of homework, like we've got [opportunities to do] presentations, we got a lot of group works, we have to learn how to communicate and how to collaborate with others. Otherwise, you're going to be the one who finished all the work, which is also happened to me because the students just don't do their work. But I think it's kind of [an] experience you have to come through and after this, you could improve yourself. (Eris)

Eris enjoyed engaging in various types of projects in a BCOS. He experienced challenges with other students not contributing to group assignments. However, he acknowledged it was important to go through challenges in projects because they are more directly related to real-life projects and citizenship development. Eris recognized that, in the future, he might not be able to do all the projects by himself, especially if it is a big project that may require the assistance of various individuals with different skills. Participants continuously emphasized the curriculum benefits and having more "free time" and valued the relationships they built with their teachers. In turn, these relationships helped participants develop their social skills and build their confidence which are important for building their citizenship engagement. Students had the freedom to decide how to use the extra time. In comparison, the Chinese examination system did not allocate time for students to build their personal and citizenship skills. For example, Candy had an additional six hours a day to communicate with her friends or relax, and Flora took advantage of that time and was highly involved with Model United Nations. She was able to explore other citizens' perspectives, and deeply understand the issues at hand.

However, no system is perfect. When participants were asked about the challenges with the BCOS education, they did not hold back their thoughts. Most participants were local citizens, specifically ESL students, and struggled with the language. This is not a surprise given the fact

the participants were not fully integrated into English language school before attending BC schools.

> I believe it's still language barriers, and especially when you're just transferred to a full English environment. [When] I was in primary school [at] public school, I was not actively [communicating in] English. After [enrolling in BCOS] I even can't really understand what my teacher was saying about. So, this might be the biggest challenge for me. (Gia)

Most of the students in BCOS came from the Chinese Educational system and most likely had limited exposure to English. As such, the use of examination-based assessments did not promote the development of their English communication skills. They were particularly frustrated during their first year in BCOS, as they had difficulty understanding and communicating with their teachers. Participants even blamed the Chinese education system for failing to fully prepare them to communicate in English. However, they did recognize that being in BCOS provided them with the opportunity to regularly practise and integrate their English skills. As a result, they noticed overall improvements in their abilities to express themselves in English to a point where they could gossip with their classmates and teachers.

While language barriers were frequently mentioned in participants' interviews, Flora believed mindset could play a significant role in understanding teachers' backgrounds and teaching practices in the classroom. How could one student understand metaphors when they do not understand the culture and their practices? I vividly remember when I was teaching Grade 10 students, I tried to elaborate on a life lesson with the metaphor "early bird catches the worm" and a student immediately responded with, "what if you are that early worm?" From that point onwards, I was very cautious about utilizing metaphors with my students. I had to maintain a

flexible mindset when conversing with them; otherwise, they would not understand the Western culture and me. This was not any different from Flora's response.

> It's like a different mindset because it's still a language, but I like my teachers, especially like my foreign teacher. They won't think the way how Chinese think. So, sometimes I just can't understand why. They teach certain things in a certain way and they are speaking a certain way. This is something that I met some problem with. (Flora)

Flora was clearly experiencing similar issues with her foreign teachers. She faced challenges understanding their mindset and language. Not only were there cultural differences but also understanding the language added an additional layer of challenge in communicating with her foreign teachers and impacted participants' understanding of citizenship.

Most participants in BCOS were in boarding schools, away from their parents and would have to do their laundry, dishes, cleaning, and scheduling, while still exploring their future pathways. At times, this could be exhausting, especially if you just left your parents and have to problem solve issues daily. While discussing levels of independence with Bob, he believed Canadian education was not as cohesive, which made understanding the university application process harder.

> The challenges the Canadian system is that in England, in Britain, they have A-level system which is widely acceptable in the Commonwealth system. In Canada, you have the British Columbia and Yukon area, you have the Ontario education… and each different provinces, according to their legislation, can set different education standards and that, I think this is just my opinion, is less united than other countries. When you are looking at a university application website, you will see that when you click in Canada, there's all different provinces. For example, British Columbia. The entrance requirement

> is this and that, this province entrance requirement is this and that, and sometimes confusions might exist. And I think that the challenges for the Canadian [it's] the legislative part and that's the general part. (Bob)

The various provincial practices and legislative structure made it extremely difficult to understand how to proceed. According to Bob, A-levels are recognized worldwide, whereas the provincial legislative differences prevent Canadian education from having a cohesive system that is recognized everywhere. Students often have to figure out how to apply to various universities across Canada on their own. The entrance and course requirements change from province to province.

### *Chinese Curricula*

While the BCOS has contributed in many ways to students, it is important to take a look at the benefits and challenges of the Chinese education system, too. When I interviewed the participants, they spoke highly of the solid foundation in mathematics, science, cultural differences, speed of thought, and examinations. However, there were various challenges, including competitive environments, class sizes, and content-based educational systems, which limited students' future pathways and citizenship engagement. Yet, they did acknowledge that many of these challenges rose from the high population. When we compare a city in China with a city in Canada, they are not even comparable because the city of Shanghai has over 26 million people alone, whereas Toronto has approximately 3 million.

When discussing the benefits of the Chinese education system, participants recognized the importance of being disciplined with their studies. Chinese students are known to focus on mathematics/science. This stereotype was confirmed by Bob and Gia, and they went on to provide further insight on this topic.

> It really lays a very good foundation, especially in secondary education, and really lays a solid foundation for students. For example, I'm not being stereotypical, but you can see from the statistics that Chinese students perform better in math contests. They do better in like physics, they have really sound knowledge in these subjects. And that is partly because they receive practice, tons of practice in their daily life. This is an advantage because, well, you gain knowledge through practice. You have this certain skill of solving problem-solving questions effectively, efficiently, and so through a large amount of practice. (Bob)

Gia provided additional insight:

> A Chinese education do lay a very firm foundation of study as this can be witnessed from students who transferred to a BC curriculum after they graduated from the middle school, like in Chinese education. So, like they know a lot like they literally know a lot and sometimes the class we learn like in grade eleven or twelve they already learned in grade nine. They learn things deeply, but the BC curriculum is more comprehensive. It's not. I mean, just basically [Chinese education students] know more than us, especially for science subjects. (Gia)

Bob suggested that repetition and practice might not cater to a holistic education, but it appeared to hold some strength for BCOS students. In its way, it gave them a competitive edge by allowing them to learn content in the earlier years of their education. Gia believed content taught in Grade 11 BC classes is usually covered in Grade 9 Chinese classes. Both participants felt that this opportunity allowed them to identify and solve questions efficiently and effectively. This appeared to play a significant role during tests and exams when time is a constraint.

Studying a language is not about being able to speak, read and write only. The Chinese have a famous proverb: “To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world” (Wayne State University, 2021). Through it, you can understand cultural differences and beliefs, government structures, laws, and values. None of the participants have ever resided in other countries, but by attending BCOS, they had the opportunity to appreciate their own cultural beliefs.

> I'm going abroad and I'm starting to better understanding of my own country. This is a kind, of course, that could give me an opportunity to learn more about my own culture, learn more about Chinese government policies, something like that. (Eris)

By attending BCOS, Eris was able to reflect on the differences between Canadian culture and simultaneously start to question and understand his Chinese culture. Participants did not hesitate to discuss the Chinese educational challenges within public schools. Due to the high population, participants were not able to value their education as much as in the BCOS curriculum. Teachers did not have time to concentrate on students in the classroom and would often give them tests or exams. Students had to spend a lot of time studying for those tests and exams. University Entrance exams added an additional stress. Students’ dreams were shattered if they did not spend most of their day studying and preparing for these tests. As a result, participants did not feel they were building their critical thinking and innovations skills needed to develop their citizenship skills.

When I observed participants’ responses closely, they were concerned with their learning and would question the importance of the curriculum. While they understood the system was not perfect due to the high population, they often questioned it and turned to their parents for answers. In the classroom, most students would refrain from asking questions and preferred

listening to the teachers. Bob believed Chinese students are very intelligent and are trained to think efficiently under pressure, yet not being fully engaged in learning limits students' innovation and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, Eris was very dissatisfied with his education and spoke of his experience in the Chinese public school. He did not conform to Chinese values and would look elsewhere for answers.

> It's like you have to listen something you don't want to listen. Like, they keep telling us to be patriotism, like to love your country. You also need to love the Chinese government, also need to love Chinese parties… It's like some of my classmates, they did pretty well with those courses, and they accept the Chinese government's value. But for me, I'm not 100 percent accept some of the Chinese government's values. But, I started to like trying to understand what they did for this country and what they are going to do for this country. I also talked to my parents or the other elderly people in my families and they tell me that Chinese government acts some of their way is actually because we got so much population, we've got 1.4 billion people in this country… Anyways, it's complicated, but I'm still trying to understanding what the Chinese government trying to do and what this world going on. (Eris)

For Eris, looking for answers meant speaking to his elders as to why the government kept pushing them to love their country and become *Patriotic*. Eris's questioning approach exhibits characteristics of *Justice-oriented* citizenship; focusing on understanding the root of the issues in society rather than of a *Patriotic* citizen. Most of his elders did not question the issues, blamed the high population, and felt this was the government elite to solve. Within China, the high population had negative cascading effects on the students' future dreams and goals. With so many students wanting to attend a university, space becomes limited, and thus competition

increases. As a result, Chinese students were only focusing on how to obtain high grades, do well on exams, and get accepted into a good university. They no longer had any free time to engage in sports or socialize with peers. Parents would only congratulate their children when they obtained high grades. Before choosing their dream university, they would have to complete a university entrance exam called the *gao-kao*. Gia described it as a "super-hard" exam, and those who obtained low scores were pushed aside into the art programs. According to Candy, art programs are thought of as "low knowledge level," and acceptance into these programs was easier. Science courses are thought to stimulate objective thinking while art allowed students to think subjectively. When the curriculum brushes aside the arts, it indirectly tells students not to value the freedom of expression, storytelling, songs, and the very things that connect communities and citizens.

The pressure for students to perform well was also felt by their teachers. There were fifty to sixty students in each class, and teachers did not have time for all of them. They had to be strict and inflexible to maintain classroom management and prepare students for *gao-kao*. Their teaching practices were hindered and shifted from active learning to test-based assessments. That one-to-one interaction, student engagement, and questioning of the material that is so valuable for learning was brushed aside. Bob stated:

> These things are very time consuming. Teachers need to plan [lessons], students need to discuss critical thinking must spark. So, with the intensified examination system going on in China, teachers don't want to, "waste their time," to do group works and assignments and posters. The time spend on one poster is approximately the time spent on three test papers. So why not just do the three test papers? (Bob)

Bob felt that teachers prioritized exams and considered discussions as a waste of time. On the opposite end, without the critical thinking skills, Bob was left concerned about the future implications on society. The development of citizenship requires critical thinking skills, communication, and interacting with others to solve the issues of tomorrow. However, citizenship skills cannot be developed if there is no time allocated for students.

**What Curricula Address Citizenship Within BCOS?**

One of the main components of BCOS focuses on providing students with more time to explore their hobbies and develop as citizens (Ministry of Education, 2018). When participants were asked how they developed citizenship in/out of the classroom, their examples varied from participant to participant. Their understanding of being a good citizen was developed by participating in classroom activities, engaging in school events, and following school regulations. A set of policies were set in place to guide students towards becoming effective participants. Those policies were constructed by the BC Ministry of Education, students' perspectives and were aligned with the school's goals. Students, teachers, and administrators worked together to design programs that met the needs of the students.

Developing citizenship in and out of the classroom was not easily accepted by students. According to Bob, students frequently complained about collaborating with their classmates, but he believed it was necessary to find a way to collaborate to ensure they became good citizens. They needed to utilize their communication skills to solve problems rather than relying on their own. Candy also added:

> When I was middle school, I never tried that kind of before. So, I do finish all the homework individually, which means I lose the chance to communicate with others and lose the chance to lead people to do something. And I like have this group experience. I

> find it that finally, I have the sense of the group that I want to lead [and become] better. (Candy)

For Candy, attending middle school in a Chinese public school meant focusing on one's individual homework. Collaboration was not promoted and that meant she did not have the opportunity to develop it. By attending BCOS, she got opportunities to connect with others and lead a group of students as well.

Gia also believed that the teacher's oral direction of right and wrong guided their understanding. For example, if a student disrespected a classmate, they were called out for this inappropriate behaviour. Since most of the students resided in the dormitories of the school, the school regulations allowed them to develop good habits. Students were responsible for cleaning their dormitory and classrooms. Gia believed the school rules were equivalent to the laws in the real world. If one does not know how to stay clean, how can one take care of the environment? Similar analogies were used with cheating. If one cheats on a test, what will happen if one copies a patent and claims it as their original work? Good habits were also developed by volunteering in the community, running charity events such as Terry Fox Run, and helping those in need, especially the elderly. By doing so, they were able to contribute to the development of the country.

Students' engagement is not the only factor contributing to their development. According to the participants, the BC Ministry of Education has designed a curriculum to further develop their citizenship participation and understanding. Eris believes there are six core values implemented by the classroom teacher. Additionally, posters are placed around the school, displaying them on the walls/classrooms. He was unable to recall all of them, but he said some

included “communicating, creative thinking, critical thinking.” Volunteer hours are also part of their graduation requirements.

> In order to graduate, not only the BC Education Ministry requires 30 hours of voluntary work, [but] our school also encourage us to go out and do some volunteering teaching; to volunteer in the subway stations, to take care of the cats and dogs and puppies and our school. Normally, we’ll organize one to two more charity and volunteering activity per month. (Bob)

Bob’s school encouraged students to complete more than the required volunteer hours. However, helping others should not become a chore. It should motivate students to become active participants in their citizenship development and help those in need. Students learn to appreciate what they have and empathize with the less fortunate. When students engage with the community, they can see the world through a different lens. Career Life Education and Career Life Connections played a significant role for Bob and Eris in learning about careers and being responsible citizens. Bob said in those courses, “students must take Career Life Education and Career Life Connections, which I think is necessary because they learn how to become an adult and a citizen.” On the other hand, Candy went even deeper suggesting that school philosophy played a significant role in respecting others, building friendships, and developing time management skills that would ultimately help them in the development of the country and not just as citizens. Gia added the school philosophy allowed them to advocate for those in need, especially if they were facing any issues or conflict with others.

The last contributors to the citizenship development were the students themselves. Most participants believed the school consulted students and regularly sent out surveys to improve their citizenship programs. Students had the opportunity to create various clubs with the

agreement of a teacher and the principal during the first semester of the school year. Upon collection of the various clubs, the Student Union would organize a club fair to promote all the clubs, and students could sign up according to their interests. Students were assigned a classroom to hold their meetings or clubs in.

> The only time I went that conference, [when it was] about life or events they want me to do. [It is] kind of something like the propaganda for the student union because the principal just simply wants me to show how well the student union did to the other… Other than that, for the BC policies, we students we [were invited to] do interviews with people [that] came from Canada or came from the other international schools, but I don't think students can affect a lot of international BC courses policy. (Eris)

However, according to Eris, the administration team would only consult or invite students to meetings to showcase their strong qualities to everyone else. Students were also interviewed by the BC government to discuss policies, but he did not believe this influenced BC courses and policies.

**What Motivates Students to Engage in Citizenship Education?**

Every participant had a unique experience, and when we discussed the different factors that can help students participate in citizenship activities, they all had different responses. Their responses were geared towards making connections, gaining experience and opportunities, feeling a sense of accomplishment, and having support from various personnel. Only one participant stated that the question could only be answered by an adult. This is important to note. While most of the participants were very confident in their responses, adults may play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of the programs, and as a result, I called this section internal versus external factors. Internal indicates the components needed for a person to

design a successful program, and external means require the assistance of others. Internal and external factors created a supportive environment and impacted students' citizenship understanding, development and engagement.

When we observe the internal factors affecting participation in citizenship activities, interviewees realized the importance of fulfilling their personal needs to further develop themselves. Flora recognized the importance of attending activities to ensure she can get further ahead in her life.

> Also, for make friends and gain more knowledge and more experiences which can be written on your resume, when you are finding a job, or when you apply the university is also a good experience and that's all. (Flora)

She suggested having friends would broaden her network and allow her to gain more experiences. These experiences can also be recorded on a resume for future jobs. Bob reiterated the importance of not helping others for personal gains but rather for the sense of achievement while engaging in community volunteer programs.

> I think it's the sense of achievement, the sense of helping others and a sense of satisfaction when you know that somebody's life improved or when you know that the society, the community where you live improves. You will naturally have a sense of satisfaction, you appreciate what you have worked, you appreciate the effort you've made, and you say to yourself, oh, all the work deserve this. This result deserves all my work and I will do this again. (Bob)

For Bob and the other participants, engaging in activities that have measurable outcomes led them to be more likely to be enthusiastic, give back to the community, and maintain these helpful habits. On the other hand, there were external factors influencing the outcome of the programs;

community contributions and social support were continuously mentioned. Participants had wished the programs were geared towards their personal needs rather than being generic. While Eris was unaware of the factors affecting citizenship programs' participation, he acknowledged that it is complicated, yet "you have to understand what do you want like for… Like one of my classmates, he just want to be a cook." Bringing new ideas to the table could enrich the programs and further connect the students. Flora suggested having sports competitions as another form of engagement. Students can experience life outside of school while competing against others. However, Bob added that not every program is going to be successful, and adults need to attempt to explore new avenues to enrich the programs. These programs take time to be effectively designed and appeal to the masses.

The adults in the school, family, and neighbourhood all contribute to the students' ability to achieve their goals and inspirations. There is a famous African proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child." In this case, it appears to be supported by the participants. Candy believed that "lots of citizenship are more popular for the adults, not the students". This is not a surprise considering how the Chinese government focuses on knowledge-based education rather than helping students become active participants in their school and communities. Gia stressed the importance of family and teachers play in their citizenship engagement.

> At least in China, like student who are in international school or private school are usually quite wealthy. So, their family do have like a company and their father usually is a businessman and they can provide a lot of opportunity towards the children. (Gia)

The socioeconomic status of the parents contributes significantly to the citizenship development of the students. Parents whose children attend international schools are usually wealthy, and some of the families have their own companies. They can afford to send their children to

cultivate experiences outside of the classroom or school. In contrast, poorer students rely on the education they obtain from public schools. Internal and external factors can greatly benefit citizenship development. Internal factors satisfy the needs of the students while fully engaging with the community and making a difference. External factors can bring more tools to the table for students to explore. Programs should focus on the greater masses of students while also tailoring them to their needs. Teachers and administrators need to come together to design effective programs. When students participate in various activities, they may not realize they are simultaneously learning how to become better citizens. When participants were asked about the benefits of engaging in citizenship activities, they all were very insightful and personal. Through the discussions, they indicated they developed their skills, built new friendships, gained new experiences, felt a sense of satisfaction, and acquired new perspectives. Only Eris was not sure of the benefits of engaging in citizenship activities.

As Table 2 illustrates, Bob was heavily involved with the student union and volunteer programs within and outside of school. His experiences helped him develop different types of (personal) skills that are not fostered in classroom settings. He learned how to build his organizational skills by communicating and collaborating with different members of the clubs and student unions. It challenged him to become a better leader. Gia believed it helped her develop a growth mindset. On the other hand, Eris acknowledged his attendance in multiple events and activities, such as the student union and school performances, yet he did not believe it helped him in any way to become a better citizen. If anything, he felt he was just making propaganda for the school by engaging in a variety of school activities and events.

> I also did some propagandas for the school like to go to the meet with other parents to say what they did in our school and how [I] did at international school, but that's in grade 10.

> And that do give me experience about how well that went. But, it might won't help me.
>
> It's certainly became a part of me, but it won't help me to become a better citizen. (Eris)

In contrast to Eris, Candy believed citizenship activities helped her gain experience and increase her social circle. Her extended social circle would allow her to acquire new knowledge from her friends or the adults involved in those activities and avoid any future mistakes. Such experiences also exposed the participants to different perspectives, which ultimately helped them formulate their own opinions. Gia's experience in the debate club demonstrates how continual involvement in activities can shape one's view.

> At first, I think [a] debate [allows us] to write down a lot of things because you won't get the topic before the debate competition. And I first had opinion, I think that debate is only to read what you wrote on the paper and to just debate others saying. After I participated, I found that it's not like this. It's totally not like this. If others show their point of view, and you need to stand your position to argue with that point of view. And it's also can make you happy by comprehensive thinking. Yeah, it's not, you may not see just one side of a thing and I think you'll understand that other thing has every single side you need to understand. (Gia)

At first, Gia did not understand the importance of engagement in clubs, but with time, she was able to appreciate the acquired knowledge and developed her views during her research and competitions. Initially, the debate competition was just a speech for her, but with time she started to acknowledge the importance of learning how to defend her perspective and appreciate others' points of view too. When one is exposed to the external environment or society, they are better able to understand how the world functions, and "it helps you to better adapt [and shape] your life as an adult." Additionally, Flora believed being a student in the school plays a part, but it is

not everything. Whereas Bob believed when you grow and become a better person, you should also feel a sense of accomplishment.

> You feel proud when you see that your social work is worth your effort, that things, that good outcomes, really you produced outcomes that are satisfactory. So, I think in general, it's really helpful to do citizenship developments. (Bob)

When students contribute to society, they should not do so for any personal benefits but rather for the collective good, for the knowledge that someone else's life has been positively impacted by the contribution. The Chinese core socialist values focus on the collective good rather than individual interests. Students should understand the importance of citizenship engagement and the positive impact on oneself and others. Otherwise, participants might not grasp the big idea and may not grow up to become genuine contributors. Some participants might get involved to improve their skills, for the sense of satisfaction obtained from helping others, and for the overall experience.

**What Barriers Impact Citizenship Learning?**

Each participant gave their perception of contributing barriers towards engagement in citizenship activities. As indicated in Table 3, their answers were divided into three categories: personal, psychological, and financial barriers. Personal included their free will, level of interest, and benefits; psychological factors encompassed adaptation challenges, video games, and homework. Finally, financial resources included monetary contributions and lack of opportunities. While all factors are discussed, some were mentioned by multiple participants.

**Table 3**

*Barriers Impact Citizenship Learning*

| Personal | Psychological | Financial |
|---|---|---|
| Free will | Adaptation Challenges | Monetary contributions |
| Level of Interest | Video Games | Lack of Opportunities |
| Benefits | Homework | |

Participants believed students' interest levels could greatly increase their engagement in activities if they could choose and clearly understand the benefits. As educators, we might comprehend the positive impact of students engaging in citizenship development activities, but students might not fully understand them. For example, Candy was unable to clearly describe the benefits it brings to students.

> Also, the benefits of those citizenship activities are not as clear as that. Not like [working] hard in school, [or] I will gain a high grade, but the citizenship activities brings to us the tiny benefits that will help us but [are also] not clear to see. (Candy)

Most participants found the benefits of citizenship activities challenging to understand. Similar to Candy, Bob and Eris had difficulty explicitly stating the benefits. The school administrations should concentrate on minimizing the misconceptions students hold about citizenship activities and design flexible programs that cater to students' needs and explicitly state the benefits of their engagement in citizenship activities.

In addition to personal factors, participants believed psychological factors also hindered students' participation. Candy thought students might not be interested in attending activities due

to challenges with adapting to their new environment and thus, are more likely to play video games. Interestingly, the biggest factor in this section is homework. It was mentioned by three participants. The feeling of being constantly under pressure due to final exams and/or tests kept them away from attending the activities. Bob perfectly explained, “I think… they overload, overwhelm [students with] homework [and] exams. Students in China don't regularly attend activities because, well, they're too busy.” It is common for Chinese students to feel overwhelmed with homework and put all their energy into their studies instead of actively participating within their communities.

The last factor is financial support. Eris stood out by being frustrated with his school culture, which was evident in his responses. He characterized his school as forceful and did not obtain any monetary support when attempting to design purposeful events. Eris said:

> The BC principals can't. He didn't have any money to give us to split. He only had a little amount of money. Like, for one event, he only can offers us like two hundred [dollars]. Less than 1000 yuan which is almost like less than 200 Canadian dollars. So, to organize an event for the whole schools, which is sometimes pretty frustrated, I think. But, at least I tried I think. (Eris)

He continuously mentioned the negative impact the school administration had on his development. When he would seek support to facilitate events for students, he was met with pushback and a lack of financial support by the school. Gia also adds that the schools are not doing enough to provide students with opportunities to find citizenship activities. When they do find them, there are typically limited resources available to create a positive experience and understand its purpose.

Regardless of personal, psychological, or financial reasons, participants focused more on factors that could be improved than on those going well. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the quantity and quality of the programs. With more attention placed on details and the creation of flexible programs, students will be more likely to participate. Administrators will need to reconsider financial resource allocations to improve student participation in citizenship activities.

# Chapter 5: Analysis

Following the qualitative research proposed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the goal of this chapter is to understand the experiences of BCOS students in Mainland China as they lived them. The researcher focused on collecting interview data in the natural setting to formulate deeper meaning and develop a picture of participants' citizenship perspectives. Due to participants' low English language comprehension, the researcher continuously adjusted questions during interviews to analyze, understand, and build concepts. In this chapter, I discuss the BCOS curriculum to the Chinese system, citizenship development, citizenship concepts and the various factors that impacted participants' engagement levels. I then analyze my questions based on participants' reflections and the current literature review. Figure 1 captures the analysis of the findings.

## Understanding the Differences of the West and East

It is important to develop an understanding of BC and Chinese curricula while I attempt to describe how citizenship is structured in BCOS. As illustrated in Figure 1, participants in this study reinforced some common beliefs that are trending in current research, such as participants feeling disadvantaged by attending the public schools in China, and they continuously mentioned the emphasis of the Chinese curriculum on examination results and the high-school tier system. To no surprise, Liu (2018) suggested similar findings. The tough examination-based system had forced the wealthier students to seek other ways of getting to their destination other than the public system. However, participants did recognize the solid knowledge foundation the Chinese educational system provides before entering BCOS. By having a strong middle school foundation, they believe it made it easier for them to attend BCOS since it is not considered to be as challenging as the Chinese Educational system. This is evident in the research conducted on

British Columbia schools by Alexander (2019). Participants in the study believed they were at an advantage when enrolling into BCOS because they already possessed the necessary knowledge.

**Figure 1.**

*BCOS Citizenship Perspectives in Mainland China*

| **Citizenship Typologies** | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Personally-responsible* citizenship<br>*Participatory* citizenship<br>*Justice-oriented* citizenship<br>*Patriotic* citizenship | | |
| ↑ | | |
| **Citizen Development Factors** | | |
| ***School Structure*** | ***Engagement Factors*** | ***Curriculum*** |
| After-school programs<br>Organized curriculum<br>Opportunities for development | Friendships<br>Sense of accomplishment<br>Personal skills growth<br>Socio-economic status<br>Video games<br>Gender | Career life courses<br>Core competencies<br>Free time |
| ↑ | | |
| **Curriculum** | | |
| ***West*** | ***East*** | |
| *Positives*: Holistic, flexible, skill-focused<br>*Challenges*: Understanding teachers and culture | *Positive*: Strong knowledge foundation<br>*Challenges*: Examinations and tier system | |

On the other hand, the Canadian curriculum provides a flexible and holistic environment, which leads participants to feel supported by teachers and staff. The curriculum allowed them to develop inquiry-based skills. Participants did, however, experience some difficulty when transitioning from a Chinese to English-speaking curriculum. Eris and other participants had challenges transitioning from a knowledge-based educational model to inquiry-based projects.

Wang (2017) believes this was due to a cultural difference between the two nations and offshore schools should not be viewed as an education service only. They represent the Western ideologies, values, and beliefs, which are different from China. What might have seemed illogical in Chinese teaching practices was logical in foreign teachers' practices and application methodologies. Students not raised with a Western experience had challenges understanding Canadian values and beliefs. The examination-based system (*gao-kao*) in China and the focus on knowledge-based practices made it difficult for students to understand the impact that arts and project-based learning could have on their education and careers (Wu, 2008). Souza and Damaceno (2017) believe curricula that contain arts and science can develop objective and subjective citizens. The arts allowed freedom of expression, whereas science allowed students to be highly organized. When science and art are combined, they have the power to be dynamic and create a language that is more accessible for all citizens. Projects in Chinese schools were viewed as time-consuming, and teachers did not want to waste their time on them. One project took the same amount of time as three tests, classes contained more than 40 students, and it was difficult for the teacher to cater to the individual needs of the students. As illustrated in Figure 1, students were unable to develop their interests and citizenship with the intensified examination system. Students were more concerned about attaining high grades to gain acceptance into their dream universities and pursue science-based careers. Students that did not receive a high grade in their exams were not able to attend university and were pushed aside into careers that might not have reflected their interests.

**Citizenship with Chinese Characteristics**

While looking back at citizenship perceptions and how they have specifically evolved over many years in China, the BCOS has broadened the horizon for students to explore other

avenues of citizenship and has guided them to formulate their perceptions. Firstly, *Personally-responsible* and *Participatory* citizenship perceptions appeared to be common ideologies for most participants. Secondly, Patriotic citizenship was common among most participants and appeared to be strongly associated with Chinese core values. Lastly, new emerging perceptions of *Justice-Oriented* and environmental citizenships are growing among Chinese students.

Throughout my literature review, I discussed the various types of citizens and how Chinese citizenship, unlike the West, can support citizens and prosper as a nation. When describing the East, what is often perceived as totalitarian by the West is not perceived as such by the participants. When I analyzed the data, participants expressed the need to be *Personally-responsible* and active citizens within their nation in hopes of creating an equitable environment for all. This fell in line with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) typologies of *Personally-responsible* and *Participatory* citizens. Examples of *Personally-responsible* citizens included abiding by the laws, being honest, respecting everyone, supporting the elderly homes, paying taxes, taking care of the environment, and having a job. Some of the participants believed that having a job was a way of contributing to society because they otherwise become a burden on the system. Not having a job was also equivalent to being a prisoner because the government would have to fund the prison cells.

*Participatory* citizens were engaged in leadership activities in the community by becoming active members in the Student Union, organizing programs to support students in rural areas, and creating charitable events within the school. However, *Participatory* citizens did emphasize the importance of including every citizen to have long-lasting impacts on society. These concepts directly match the multileveled dimensional framework discussed in Pan (2011), which requires the input from “self, local, national and global” to support citizenship

development by acquiring knowledge and formulating multiple identities, not just with the state, but beyond the broader community. Participants in the study were aware of their self, local, and national responsibilities. However, little was mentioned regarding global awareness. This does not come as a surprise when considering that Chinese citizenship education traces back to the Qing dynasty era. In this tradition, citizens needed to be respectful in public, maintain loyalty to the emperor and abide by the *Guomin bidu*, which means maintaining loyalty to the ruler and following the nation's goals (Liu, 2011). The Qing dynasty was overthrown, but its citizenship education endured. Citizenship ideologies in the late 1940s were designed to create citizens who were loyal to the state, self-sacrificial, socially responsible, and loving of the nation (Zhong & Lee, 2008). Most recently, Chinese core socialist values focus on national interest and not on global responsibilities (Pan, 2011).

A third typology discovered in the study was *Patriotic* citizenship. Participants expressed their love for their country and the actions they were taking towards improving it. Simple to complex actions were taken for the betterment of the nation. One of the quotes that resonate here is from Bob:

> If we combine together, if we group up, we'll be able to generate much, much bigger power, like it's not about multiplication. I often say that two people can generate a power greater than one plus one. (Bob)

From Bob's perspective, a population could be stronger when its population is unified under the same values. The concept of one's love for the country was discussed in Leung et al. (2014). In their study, the category of *Justice-oriented* citizens was more important than *Patriotic* citizens among Hong Kong students. However, in this current study, I found the opposite. All participants in this study were from Mainland China and as a result, exhibited more *Patriotic*

traits. They were not likely to challenge the status quo or political ideologies. They hoped that gaining certain knowledge could help them find avenues to create positive change. The true power for change was believed to lay with the politicians and the government officials. However, one idea that was not popular among Chinese students was the idea of *Justice-oriented* citizens. Participants did not discuss advocating and making changes within the political system. They believed it was better to contribute to a stronger nation together than be divided. The idea of maintaining harmony within a nation has been deeply rooted in historical context. China, as we know it today, is composed on the idea of *aiguo zhuyi* (love-country-ism) and the Confucian ideologies of maintaining a harmonious society (Bislev & Li, 2004; Wang, 2018). While many have advocated for Confucian practices and their positive impact on citizenship, in this study, Confucian practices appeared to hinder liberal citizenship. *Justice-oriented* citizenship and liberal citizenship are interconnected in many ways. Liberal citizenship promotes human right and *Justice-oriented* citizenship challenge the status quo (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Wang, 2015). Participants' love for China and the Chinese government's policies on maintaining a harmonious environment posed a threat to Justice-oriented citizenship development.

Furthermore, participants believed for one to be a good citizen, they must be a good person. Chia and Zhao (2020) noted that in the East, morality and citizenship are viewed synonymously. Participants continuously described a good person as being respectful, honest, friendly, and having wisdom. The qualities the participants identified with being a good person fall under the umbrella of the Chinese core socialist values. These values were divided into three levels: the citizen, the societal and the national levels (Gow, 2017). At the citizen level, the values included "patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship" (p. 104). These values were specifically designed to maintain a harmonious environment between citizens in hopes of

achieving the Chinese dream of developing a prosperous country. Without dedicated citizens, such goals could not be achieved, and this was evident in the participants. They wanted to be part of the Chinese Dream and contribute to their country's development. The Chinese Communist Party accomplished its vision based on the "differential mode of association." According to Fei et al. (1992), this approach allowed people to connect in multiple ways, from friends to the community. It outlined clear moral expectations for every person in specific contexts. It also outlined the "Confucian hierarchies in Chinese social relations; the self is defined in terms of its relationships with others, necessitating adherence to culturally bound codes of etiquette, protocol, and convention" (Gow, 2017, p. 105). Their principles and values were guided by the Chinese core socialist values, which followed the Confucian way. The idea of a good citizen was not inherent, but rather it was something that you develop over time between people, context, and government agencies.

**The Development of Western Citizenship in BCOS in China**

Citizenship has developed differently in the East from the West. The Chinese government utilized the Chinese core socialist values from citizens and from the societal to a national level to educate their citizens. Conversely, the Canadian government is guided by the Westheimer and Kahne (2004) typologies; *Personally-responsible*, *Participatory*, and *Justice-oriented* citizens. These differences are also evident in the implementation strategies of citizenship from the BC Ministry of Education and the Canadian government.

As illustrated in Figure 1, participants were able to become *Personally-responsible* citizens. Participants found it important to take into consideration their future planning and to have free time to explore their interests. This aligned with the BC Ministry of Education's (2018) *Vision for Student Success* policy. It focuses on educating citizens by developing their

intellectual, human, social, and career perspectives. Participants' career development was continuously supported in BCOS and they felt guided towards their university and adulthood transition by Career Life Education and Career Life Connections courses. According to the BC Ministry of Education (2021), Career Life Education was first introduced to the students in Grade 10 and focused on career choices, decisions, networking, balance, and lifelong learning. Career Life Connections is mandatory in Grade 12 and expands on career development, decisions, reciprocal relationships, and a sense of wellbeing. The affirmation course acted as a guide for the students, especially since most students resided in boarding schools and needed some additional guidance in terms of their future pathways.

Participants continuously re-emphasized the importance of having more free time at BCOS than in the Chinese schools. I would argue that having more free time allowed them opportunities as *Participatory* citizens. They participated in social responsibility programs that helped people in need and explored perspectives of other cultures by engaging in discussions with their classmates and foreign teachers. They felt included in the process; they could engage in meaningful discussion freely and pursue their interests outside of the classroom. Characteristics of *Participatory* citizens are similar to the educated citizens of human and social development outlined in the *Vision for Student Success* policy by the BC Ministry of Education. Educators focused on a sense of social responsibility, acceptance of others' beliefs, and an appreciation of fine arts. Free time also allowed participants to develop their collaboration skills and core competencies by becoming critical thinkers rather than passive learners who memorize facts for the purpose of tests and exams. Chinese students are taught to submit to authority and not question teachers' knowledge. Policies in 1996 had started to focus on individual development rather than ideopolitical socialization (Zhang & Fagan, 2016). However, that was

not the case in our study. Teachers' ideologies and practices in the Chinese school nurtured communist values to the students. According to Wen and Clément (2003), submitting to authority does not allow the students to reach their full potential and interact with their peers and teachers. To some extent, the BC Ministry of Education attempts to foster lifelong learners that can engage in discussion with other citizens. According to the BC Ministry of Education (2018), becoming a lifelong learner is part of the core competencies. Core competencies include skills such as learning how to reflect on personal and social beliefs, being critical and creative thinkers and understanding how to communicate effectively. Surprisingly, these skills are also required for being a good citizen. The Immigration Canada website (2021) explains that good citizens should "engage in respectful and meaningful conversations with peers about current events." Participants were able to engage in meaningful discussion throughout their social studies course and during class discussions, projects, and assignments. Some participants went as far as creating debate clubs to strengthen their understanding of current social issues.

It is important to note that even though participants emphasized collaboration and building their core competency skills, they still experienced challenges understanding more diverse expressions of citizenship. This does not come as a surprise, however, considering the participants had grown up as *Patriotic* citizens with beliefs tied to the Chinese dream of developing a prosperous nation (Leung et al., 2014). Chinese *Patriotic* citizens' views did not align with Canadian *Justice-oriented* citizens typology in Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and global citizenship goals in Oxley and Morris (2013). By being loyal to the government, and believing in the Chinese dream, participants in the study were new to the idea of *Justice-oriented* citizenship. While *Participatory* citizens engage in helping others in need, *Justice-oriented* citizens tackle social injustices and devise possible responses; they seek to question why certain

inequalities exist and take appropriate actions towards change (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Although BCOS participants started to develop their analytical and independent skills to express their thoughts and act on social inequalities, they were still relatively *Patriotic* and loyal to the Chinese state. Oxley and Morris (2013) believe that *Patriotic* citizenship and loyalty to one state is morally unacceptable and does not foster global citizenship. According to Alexander (2019), the student population of BCOS is mainly of Chinese descent. Having a homogenous population and a government that reinforces *Patriotic* values does not help develop students' global citizenship. In our study, participants did not bring forward examples that would fit in Oxley and Morris's (2013) global citizenship typologies.

**School Structure**

The school structure also influenced citizenship development among the students. As illustrated in Figure 1, participants believed after-school programs, the curriculum organization and opportunities for development impacted their citizenship. Participants felt it was important for the school to support them with their after-school programs. Some students believed they did get consulted on various after-school programs such as the student union, sports, club fair, and school-wide events. However, one student even believed it was all a façade for the school's publicity. When asked whether it was the Chinese or BC curriculum, the participant believed both programs focused on propaganda rather than quality. Participants in Leung et al. (2014) also noticed an overall lack of structure — perhaps this is not coincidental. Citizenship development might be an important area, but for it to improve, it requires full support and a methodically organized curriculum. Ye (2019) had an alternative suggestion: citizenship can develop through knowledge, skills, and attitudes to prepare adults to engage in the real world or take the form of social interactions to build personal preferences, awareness, and success pathways. In this case,

according to the BC Ministry of Education (2018), participants in BCOS focus on developing their social and human aspects. This approach might not be very rigid, but it allows them to take the initiative for their citizenship development.

At times, students can develop their citizenship by experiencing challenges and learning how to overcome them. Eris was experiencing challenges and was not getting the financial support to run school-wide events. However, without even realizing it, Eris was building his *Justice-oriented* citizenship by questioning the usual way things run and finding alternative ways to solve issues. In a way, Eris was acting against the traditional approach of Chinese citizenship that focuses on maintaining loyalty and being obedient to the state. Zhang and Fagan (2016) believe China has undergone many citizenship education transformations, but its objectives of maintaining social order and obedience have remained the same. In contrast to Eris, Gia believed activities such as Model United Nations shaped her perspective by learning how to respect others' beliefs. These worldviews are in line with Confucianism practices. Wang (2015) suggests that students can learn how to live in a harmonious environment by considering others' worldviews and becoming relational, which entails being able to relate to others and form meaningful relationships.

As illustrated in Figure 1, gender contributes to citizenship engagement. According to Gilligan (1982), the differences between Eris and Gia might be attributed to gender differences that arise from gender identity rather than citizenship. During the initial three years of caretaking, mothers are considered to be the main caregivers. During that time, mothers are more likely to connect with their daughters than their sons. As a consequence, daughters are more likely to perceive themselves as their mother and formulate their identity with attachment. In contrast, mothers see their sons as opposites, which indirectly pushes boys to find their masculinity and

develop more individualistic characteristics. Gia's and Eris' perspectives appear to fit this model, with Eris wanting to go against traditional approaches and Gia focusing on understanding others. The traditional approaches followed by Gia connect to Pan's (2011) multileveled dimension of a good citizen in China, which requires its citizens to connect with self, local, national, and global communities. Gia was more likely to obey and follow government citizenship practices by focusing on her relationship with the state and others, while Eris's questioning of the government practices did not allow him to connect easily with the government citizenship curriculum. Woodman (2012) believes gender differences are attributed to a lack of human rights in China. Gender equality is unlikely to exist in a society that suppresses individual voices and does not have appropriate supervisory and legislature to protect women's rights.

**Contributing Factors of Citizenship Development Engagement**

Many factors can contribute to a student's engagement level in citizenship activities. When I asked the participants to state some important reasons for their participation in citizenship activities, they believed they wanted to gain new experiences, perspectives, friends, personal skills and to feel a sense of accomplishment. While the participants' beliefs were noted, there are also external factors that could foster their citizenship development. Participants also noted some of the potential barriers that prevented students from engaging in activities.

Similar to Tu (2011), our participants believed citizenship activities could benefit one's personal development. By engaging in citizenship activities, they could make new connections that could help them learn organizational skills, strengthen their resumes, and understand other people to avoid any future conflicts. To engage in those activities, every participant had various influences that shaped their decisions. Citizenship developmental factors were aligned directly with Torney-Purta et al.'s (1999) model suggesting students' citizenship development is shaped based on their inner and outer circle. The inner circle included their families, school, informal

and formal curriculum. The outer circle expanded to the country's values, international position, political factors. However, the model rather than focusing on their interconnections, they divide the holistic process of citizenship development into two circles. At the end of the day, the student's had the power to select the activity regardless of the external factors. Those external factors had to also connect with the student, who otherwise would not be interested. A participant recognized the importance of citizenship development, yet they also believed that it could not be generic. Citizenship development had to be connected to each student's interests (sports, career, and community engagement).

Not all students can engage in activities. According to Ye (2011) and as illustrated in Figure 1, social inequalities have divided students from low to high socioeconomic statuses. Low socioeconomic status students may not have the same opportunities as higher socioeconomic students. Participants believed that the wealthier students would still develop their citizenship due to their parental support outside of the school, while those of low-socioeconomic status had to rely on the school structure, which was not always supportive. Saha (2001) believes the formal curriculum delivered by the school is not enough to teach students citizenship engagement. Students are more likely to engage in civic affairs when they are engaged in extracurricular and community programs. Students from higher socioeconomic statuses are more likely to engage in out-of-school programs than students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Ye, 2011). As previously mentioned, Eris was facing financial limitations that prevented him from running school-wide activities and received no additional support from the school. In Eris's case, the school appeared to support the Chinese traditional model of citizenship engagement by focusing on knowledge cultivation, loyalty and following rules. Schools should be doing more for all students, especially since they are private schools and not public schools. Leung et al. (2014)

found that participants believed it was important for schools to teach the students how to be good citizens and to create a methodical structure to engage them. Similar findings were also found in this study. Participants wanted to be educated about citizenship program benefits and commonly believed misconceptions that prevented them from engaging in them.

In this study, one factor that emerged that has not been carefully examined in the literature was the students' use of video games and the associated impact on citizenship. Participants believed that students were increasingly concentrated on playing video games and therefore not interested in engaging in other citizenship or community development activities. However, according to Bourgonjon and Soetaert (2013), "Video games appear to fulfill similar functions as traditional media such as theatre and media" (p. 7). Video games could act as a great citizenship educational tool and encourage students' participation in activities. Yet, for the media to reach its fullest potential, it must not treat video games as an isolated form but utilize game design elements (similar to *Pokémon Go*) to engage participants in citizenship initiatives and include cultural artifacts that can empower change (Spitz et al., 2018).

**Overarching Questions**

Participants in this study felt disadvantaged by getting educated in a public school due to the tough examinations and the inability of the teachers to assist them. Even though, the Chinese system provided them with a solid foundation in mathematics and science. The Canadian curriculum allowed them to be flexible, develop their interests and critical skills. Some participants found it challenging to transition from a Chinese to English school only and were not as confident communicating with others in their first year.

The BC Ministry of Education focused on preparing students for the real world through their Career Life Education and Career Life Connections courses. Participants were able to build

on their collaboration skills by engaging in frequent discussions and group projects in their classes. Unlike during their earlier Chinese education, the participants had much more time to focus on their hobbies. The school also created after-school programs to allow them to learn and grow in areas of interest. These programs were criticized, however, for their lack of variety and minimal budget.

Students' engagement factors were directly related to the environmental setting of the school. Participants were influenced by their interests, the formal and informal curriculum, and their families. Yet, at the end of the day, it was left up to the participants to determine if they wanted to contribute to their citizenship development. In other words, students are placed at the centre of their citizenship motivation. It is also important to remember that not all participants had every opportunity to develop citizenship. Personal reasons, psychological factors, and a lack of financial resources acted as barriers to participation in citizenship activities. The participants' socioeconomic status and gender might also have affected their ability to engage. Studies have shown that participants who were mainly focused on their homework came from lower socioeconomic Chinese backgrounds in comparison to those students that partook in multiple activities outside of school. Female students' citizenship engagement has been linked towards building empathy and males focused on developing independent skills.

The lack of time and examination educational practices made it challenging for participants to engage in Chinese citizenship activities. BCOS's flexible curriculum provided them with time to explore their interests and develop their citizenship understanding. Participants felt it was important to follow the rules, engage in citizenship activities, and support the Chinese socialist values. Their perspectives were linked to Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) *Personally-responsible* and *Participatory* citizenship typologies, however, one participant embodied *Justice-*

*oriented* citizenship characteristics contrasting Leung et al.'s (2014) study in Hong Kong, where participants valued *Justice-oriented* citizenship. Yet, overall, the participants in Mainland China stressed the importance of *Patriotic* citizenship. Lastly, socioeconomic status, video games and gender played a role gender played roles in engaging participants' engagement in various citizenship activities.

**How do BCOS participants' citizenship perspectives map onto Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) citizenship typologies?**

Education is not only about passing on knowledge to students; it is also about how they engage with others to become good citizens. At times, this can be taken for granted that students in the Chinese Education system are taught to be passive learners and listen to authority rather than interacting with others. When reviewing participants' citizenship perspectives, their views were diverse: some followed the Chinese values passively and some questioned the government's approach. Three major themes emerged from the findings. Most of the participants believed in being *Personally-responsible*, *Participatory*, and *Patriotic*. *Personally-responsible* citizenship was defined as a way of caring about society, laws, and the environment. *Participatory* citizens were active participants in the community; *Patriotic* citizenship was seen as being proud of the government. *Patriotic* citizenship, in this context, was also linked with having good personal values, which is different from the common misconceptions about totalitarianism. Only one participant appeared to have some characteristics of a *Justice-oriented* citizen. *Justice-oriented* citizens challenge political ideas and question the status quo. However, citizens can develop multiple citizenship types by engaging in a single activity. For example, if an individual decided to hold an event to fundraise for Black Lives Matter, they are developing

their *Participatory* and *Justice-Oriented* citizenship. The emerged themes interact with each other rather than representing the themes individually.

Firstly, two out of the five participants mentioned a very important factor towards being *Personally-responsible* within the country. When citizens follow the law, they indirectly contribute to the government (i.e., paying their taxes, bills, working, and maintaining a clean environment). When citizens do not follow the rules, they become a burden to the country. Flora said:

> If you offend the law, you are not only troubling yourself because you may get hurt at the same time if you are in the prison, the country also need to pay extra attention on you to spend money on you in order to keep you in the prison. (Flora)

Not following the rules was compared to driving under the influence of alcohol. When a person is not in the right state of mind, they cannot make wise decisions. Not making wise decisions can impact the quality of a good person. How could a person be good if they do not care about the law, the people around them, and society as a whole? Flora's definition of a good person did not only pertain to their duties but also their behaviour. "And second, is also [being] friendly to others, not only to your family, [or] other citizens, but also to foreigners who come to your city."

Bob strongly believed in *Participatory* citizenship and was also supported by the other participants when they were asked to elaborate on their perspectives further. A *Personally-responsible* person was described as someone that cares about the community, society, and the world around them. Sometimes those individuals could be found volunteering their time in the community and in different institutions to support those in need for the improvement of society. Examples included fundraising for a cause, donating clothes, and implementing programs to help

those around them. Bob also believed changes could not be done alone, requiring the support of multiple individuals to promote positive growth in the communities.

> It's definitely the group of people, the society, this responsibility, this sense of a society is it's never going to be like one person and one person only. It's going to be, it must be the society as a whole, and everyone in the society contributing to the development of the community, the society, the world. A person's influence is limited on the great entrepreneurs [and] politicians are exceptions. But most people, we as an individual, our influence is very limited. So, if we combine together, if we group up, we'll be able to generate much, much bigger power. It’s not about like multiplication. I often say that two people can generate power greater than one plus one. And it's more than that. And the more people participating in social movements, social contributing to the society, the better the society will be. So, it's always about the people, not a person. (Bob)

He believed politicians and entrepreneurs had the most influence in society and everyone else was just an average citizen. In his perspective, an average citizen could not contribute greatly to the community and society. However, Bob believed that bringing people together and combining their strengths could have a significant influence on the community.

In comparison, Candy focused on the government and believed one should be proud of their government and their efforts towards making changes. She felt this is connected with one’s overall personality. For example, if someone is considered a good person, they are more likely to contribute to the development of the country or the government. During the interview, she said:

> For example, I have one teacher [who] is like an aeronautical engineer in China. Last year, like 2020, China launched a spacecraft to Mars, but my teacher did some contribute to that mission. He participated in [one] specific part of that mission. I think that [makes

> him] a good citizen, because he helped the country in specific things to make the mission better. (Candy)

Her example is one of many that focus on the collective, social contribution and the citizens' efforts to maintain societal harmony. She adds that to contribute to the government's growth efforts, citizens must develop personal (unique) skills. However, Eris had a different perspective and believed many follow the government blindly and do not attempt to question it. Eris exhibited characteristics of a *Justice-oriented* citizen rather than a *Patriotic* citizen.

> People might find out the truth about some things and I don't know what the Chinese government keep doing… Which I am a little bit confused, or I don't pretty understand of these things. The result of what Chinese government has did is that China is getting stronger and stronger, and its people do have better and better life. But at some points, they hide some truth from the peoples and the majority of the people, I think didn't think that the possibility of the government also could be wrong in some cases. (Eris)

He suggested citizens should develop independent and critical thinking skills. These skills will allow citizens to distinguish truth from lies and better understand the government's wrongdoings. Being able to question and find answers is an important factor of *Justice-oriented* citizens. They seek to uncover the roots of the issue rather than follow others blindly. When interviewing Eris, he was consistently challenging the Chinese government values and wanted the truth rather than the lies he felt they portrayed in the media.

Participants in BCOS held varied views on citizenship. Some focused on personal responsibility, while others wanted to actively contribute to the community around them or strengthen their analytical skills. To my surprise, the emergence of *Justice-oriented* citizenship was only noted in one of the participants. Yet, most of them believed in building a better future

for themselves and their country. Duties as simple as paying your taxes could make you a good or bad person (within a societal perspective).

# Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

When I reviewed previous literature on citizenship perspectives and typologies, I found several areas I was hoping to explore during the interview with students from BCOS in Mainland China. Through the analysis of the data, Chinese citizenship perspectives were similar across participants, yet distinctively different from Western citizenship development. In the end, I decided to highlight the key findings on citizenship curriculum organizations, the developmental factors, and the typologies that emerged from the findings. In what follows, I summarize and discuss these findings. I also included recommendations for students, schools, and the Chinese Ministry of Education to guide citizenship development at all levels. Lastly, I discuss the strength and limitations of the research and provide recommendations for future studies.

## Key Findings

Education played a pivotal role in the students' lives, and this was also the case for their citizenship development too. Over the years, the BC programs have been criticized for their cultural bias towards Western students and curriculum. However, as illustrated and summarized in Figure 1, this study suggests the opposite. Flexibility within the BC curriculum allowed the participants to be creative and pursue their interests in arts or science. Arts fosters the development of subjective citizens and science creates objective citizens (Souza & Damaceno, 2017). The BC Ministry of Education (2018) created the *Vision for Student Success* policy to develop citizens' intellectual, human, social and career aspects. It allowed students to be actively engaged in the process of citizenship engagement rather than having a rigid and methodically organized curriculum (Ye, 2019). Core competencies were embedded in the curriculum to create lifelong learners and strengthen individual skills to cope in the 21st century global economy rather than relying on memorizing facts for tests. Chinese Education incorporates core

competencies into citizenship by shifting towards knowledge transmission (Ye, 2019). It provides participants with a head start in mathematics and science, but the lack of arts fails to promote citizenship engagement and behavioural changes. Participants experienced challenges in the Chinese examination system and felt they would not gain acceptance into their dream university if they did not spend a lot of time studying. They also did not feel adequately prepared for the real world. As such, the BCOS provided an alternative route to pursue their goals.

The BC Ministry of Education has clear expectations for developing citizenship, but that cannot be done without the support of the school administration. Students can also assist in the process of developing citizenship by fully immersing themselves in it. My second key finding, similar to Leung et al. (2014), was that I found four types of citizenship typologies: *Personally-responsible, Participatory*, *Justice-oriented*, and *Patriotic* citizens. *Personally-responsible* citizens abided by the law, paid taxes, and had a job. *Participatory* citizens were engaged in leadership activities in the community and created charitable events within the school. Only one participant demonstrated *Justice-oriented* citizenship by focusing on getting to the root of an issue and questioning Chinese education. Comparing Leung et al.'s (2014) findings with this study, *Patriotic* and *Justice-oriented* citizens were viewed differently in Mainland China than in Hong Kong. This could be because Hong Kong's government policies are aligned with a more capitalistic system, and Mainland China supports a social system. Participants in Leung et al.'s (2014) study favoured Justice-oriented citizenship and this difference could be attributed to "One Country, Two systems" (p. 22). *Patriotic* citizenship characteristics associated with Chinese core socialist values were also highlighted by the participants, such as harmony, patriotic citizenship, building a prosperous nation and dedication to the Chinese dream. Chinese core socialist values were guided by Confucian practices of harmony and social cohesion within the nation (Gow,

2017; Zhong & Lee, 2008). In contrast, Oxley and Morris (2013) believe special obligations are morally unacceptable and are a threat to global citizenship. To no surprise, global citizenship features and examples were not brought forward by participants. Participants' Patriotic values, desire to follow the Chinese dream, and maintain loyalty to one state did not foster the development of global citizenship.

Finally, participants' engagements were influenced by inner and outer circles as discussed in Torney-Purta et al. (1999). The inner circle was composed of family, informal and formal curricula, and school, whereas the outer circle was influenced by the government and political values. Participants from higher socioeconomic families were able to gain more citizenship experience in comparison to students from lower socioeconomic families such as gender and video games appeared to affect the type of citizenship engagement. Females were more likely to develop empathetic characteristics whereas males build on independent skills under the current Chinese government structure. Participants were also concerned that students engaged in video games were distracted from citizenship activities.

**Discussion**

After the interviews were concluded and the data were transcribed and analyzed, I reflected on the participants' responses. I found the participants' responses on the Chinese education system, BCOS citizenship perspectives, and factors impacting engagement to be particularly interesting. Based on the literature review and personal experiences, I was aware that students wanted to receive a better education by attending BCOS, but I did not have a deep understanding of their experiences and perspectives. I found myself sympathizing with participants and understanding the challenges they were experiencing in Chinese schools. They were unable to have discussions in the classroom, the courses were primarily focused on exams,

and they had no time to explore their interests. Growing up as a student in the West, I never had to think about exploring my interests because I simply had the time to do them. I fondly remember playing football every day after school for hours. I was saddened to hear participants' challenges with excessive homework in Chinese public schools and the highly competitive educational system structure to enter university.

During the interview process, I learned that the phenomenological research approach allows the researcher to explore, understand and interpret participants' lived perspectives. However, my preconceived notions of citizenship made it difficult to understand the participants. I found myself going back and forth with the literature review and findings to better understand and interpret the data. At times, participants' lower-than-expected English language communication skills made it difficult to communicate the questions and understand their responses. This played to my benefit at the end. The level of discussion in the interview process increased, and I was able to ask more questions. By asking more questions, I was better able to interpret the data and relate it to previous studies. The participants did not hold back and spoke of the challenges they experienced with the curriculum, school, and education system both in BCOS and Mainland China. I found the data from participants' citizenship perspectives and the factors impacting their engagement to be particularly fascinating. To my surprise, participants loved China and wanted to be part of its success. In their responses, they provided evidence and examples of real-life successful contribution stories acknowledged the challenges of living in a highly populated country, and continuously re-emphasized their desire to return to China after university to support its social development and alleviate poverty. They believed that the BCOS courses, the school structure, and engagement factors contributed to their citizenship development. When I was teaching in China, Career Life Education courses were not viewed as

highly important. From the administrators' perspectives, anyone could teach them. Yet, students in this study believed that Career Life Education courses played a significant role in their citizenship development and future career. Participants felt that being a good citizen was as simple as having a full-time job and not being a burden to the system. BC programs were continuously criticized for not catering to students in the East, but this was not a concern in this study. Participants felt they were getting the best of both worlds. By being enrolled in a BC program, they were able to pick up new perspectives and compare them to their Chinese values. Social classes allowed them to discuss global issues, extracurricular activities focused on building a balanced lifestyle, and Career Life Education guided their future pathways.

Lastly, I was surprised to hear that participants were concerned about video games and that gender played a role in citizenship. The literature notes that gamification, like Pokémon Go, can positively contribute to students' citizenship development when they are well-structured (Deterding et al., 2011). In this study, the lack of structured video games may have negatively affected participants' engagement in citizenship development. I also did not realize the impact parental support at an early age and the lack of human rights in a government's legislation can have on the child's development.

## Recommendations

### *Students*

Students continuously described the BC Curriculum as flexible, as it catered to their needs and goals. Students had extra time to focus on extracurricular activities and socializing

with peers. To further support their citizenship development, below are some recommendations for BCOS students in Mainland China.

1. Students can become *Participatory* citizens by exploring their interests and engaging in them fully during their free time. For example, students can get involved in: Model United Nations, Student Union Affairs, Sporting Events, Social Support Groups, and Community Outreach programs. These programs allow students to develop their perspectives and expose them to real-world challenges.
2. Students should focus on their human and social development by actively engaging in classroom discussions to broaden their perspectives and to learn how to translate meaningful discussions into actions. Social Studies and Career Life Connections were some of the courses that were mentioned by the participants; however, every course should aim to encourage this type of classroom engagement to help students form meaningful connections. For example, mathematics can be used to learn how to become an engineer and build better facilities, transportation systems, or resource management practices.
3. Although financial support is controlled by the administration, students can learn other ways (e.g., fundraising) to gain the support needed to host their events. In turn, they will develop core competency skills by becoming independent, resourceful, and *Participatory* citizens.

***School***

The BC Ministry of Education has created curricula that support the development of citizenship within the schools. These curricula, however, could include more extracurricular

opportunities that help encourage student development and citizenship. Below are some recommendations for schools to consider when developing their programs:

1. Classroom discussions and projects within Social Studies, Career Life Education, and Career Life Connections appeared to have a great impact on the students. Thus, schools could focus on enhancing such courses to further promote *Personally-responsible* citizenship.
2. Extracurricular activities should appeal to students' needs and interests; otherwise, students might not participate in them. Schools will need to continue finding ways to advertise and promote the programs by making them more accessible to students.
3. Schools will need to provide financial support to student-centered programs. These programs are more likely to create an equitable financial support system, appeal to students, and have a greater impact on their *Justice-oriented* citizenship development.

***Ministry of Education***

The BC Ministry of Education and the Canadian Government have set clear expectations for being a good citizen. However, there is a lack of educational unity among BCOS and Chinese Education.

1. Chinese Education will need to integrate *Justice-oriented* citizenship into their curriculum to strengthen students' understanding of human rights and advocacy for those in need.
2. Chinese Education will need to further incorporate global citizenship typologies similar to that of Oxley and Morris (2013) to teach students how citizenship extends beyond their own country, not merely being good *Patriotic* Chinese citizens.

**Strengths and Limitations**

Previous related studies relied on university students' retrospective accounts, did not include data from secondary school students in Mainland China, nor did they involve students from Mainland China, yet their results yielded different perspectives than this research. The participants in this study were enrolled in BCOS secondary schools in Mainland China at the time of the study, and as such, were able to relate and engage in discussions of the research topic. Participants also varied in terms of gender, age, and stage in the BCOS programs.

Even though the students from this study provided me with a lot of data, the study mostly recruited students currently in leadership positions. As a result, I was unable to explore the perspectives of those students who did not regularly engage in leadership activities. More detailed data could have emerged if background information was collected methodically from participants before or during the interview process. For example, it would have been interesting to explore students enrolled in Grade 10 courses, however, I was unable to include participants from those categories due to curriculum changes in the schools. Even if I was able to collect this data, the researchers' questionnaires would have required further adjusting since the participants in both Grades 11 and 12 were experiencing challenges understanding the questions prepared for a Grade 7 reading level.

**Future Studies**

This study was able to gain rich data from BCOS students in Mainland China secondary school students. Future studies could focus on recruiting participants that are currently in leadership activities, as well as those students who are not. A broader sample would also help improve generalizability. Participants could also be recruited from earlier grades in secondary school (i.e., Grades 9 and 10). While I took into consideration participants' perspectives on the

citizenship curriculum, it would be interesting to also include the administrator's perspectives and views of BC Ministry of Education officials. The questions should be further adjusted to a Grade 5 or 6 level to assist with participant comprehension. Lastly, further studies will need to be done to explore video games and their impact on citizenship.

**Closing Remarks**

As an educator and a leader within the community, I always focused on developing students' leadership skills. This project evolved from investigating leadership to exploring citizenship perspectives in Mainland China. My goal has always been to be an active participant in citizenship development, and this research study has opened my mind to endless possibilities to accomplish this goal. At the same time, this research study also opens the conversation for future research projects.

The research questions enabled me to explore citizenship perspectives from BCOS Mainland students, curriculum citizenship approaches, and its connections with the West citizenship typologies. Participants believed that the Chinese education system does not allow students to develop their citizenship due to the lack of time and consistent focus on examination-based practices. On the other hand, BCOS allowed participants to explore their interests and engage in more citizenship programs. BCOS students' citizenship was influenced by their engagement level, the curriculum structure, and the school support system. Given participants' critiques, it was interesting to hear their love for China and their desire to return after attending university and contribute to its development.

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## Appendix A: Research Ethics Board Approval

**Research Ethics Board**
t: (807) 343-8283
research@lakeheadu.ca

November 05, 2020

**Principal Investigator**: Dr. Gary Pluim
**Student Investigator**: Erald Vero
Faculty of Education (Orillia Campus)
Lakehead University

Dear Dr. Pluim and Erald:

**Re: Romeo File No: 1468262**
**Granting Agency: N/A**
**Agency Reference #: N/A**

On behalf of the Research Ethics Board, I am pleased to grant ethical approval to your research project titled, "A Qualitative Study: Understanding Chinese Citizenship Perspectives through Canadian Offshore School students in Mainland China".

Ethics approval is valid until November 5, 2021. Please submit a Request for Renewal to the Office of Research Services via the Romeo Research Portal by October 5, 2021 if your research involving human participants will continue for longer than one year. A Final Report must be submitted promptly upon completion of the project. Access the Romeo Research Portal by logging into mylnfo at:

https://erpwp.lakeheadu.ca/

During the course of the study, any modifications to the protocol or forms must not be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. You must promptly notify the REB of any adverse events that may occur.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kristin Burnett
Chair, Research Ethics Board

/sw

## Appendix B - Research Committee Information Letter

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Research Committee Information Letter**

Dear _____,

I am writing to request a permission to access students at British Colombia Offshore Schools (BCOS) for the purposes of conducting a research project investigating citizenship experiences of students in Mainland China. The title of the study is: *A Qualitative Study: Understanding Chinese Citizenship Perspectives through Canadian Offshore School students in Mainland China*. I am seeking potential participants who are grade 11 or 12 students, good communications skills in English and leaders within the school community.

The intent of this research holds two purposes. Firstly, it is being conducted to fulfill the requirements for the Master of Education at Lakehead University. My thesis supervisor for this research is Dr. Gary Pluim from Lakehead University and may be contacted at +1 705 330 4008 ext. 2626 or at gpluim@lakeheadu.ca. Secondly, the research study may provide insights into students' own educational experiences, help assess the impacts of BCOS citizenship curriculum development, and the cultural implications associated with it.

Participants will receive a recruitment poster, an information letter, and a consent form that must be signed by their guardian and return it to the researcher. Upon collection of the consent form, the researcher will collaborate with the school administrator to find a quiet and private room for the participant to engage in the study. The information will be gathered through Zoom audio recorded interviews (30-40 minutes). If necessary, a short follow-up discussion will be conducted to clarify any content from the interview.

All information collected by the participants will remain confidential. School names and locations will be also confidential and will not be made known in the publication of the research. All audio-recordings and transcriptions will be safely stored within Lakehead University for 5 years. However, upon participants request the findings may be shared via email and a copy of the M.Ed thesis will be available at Lakehead University Library. At the end of the study, a copy of the research results will be sent to you via email.

If you are interested in being part of this research or have any questions about the proposed study, please contact me at +86 131 6021 8713 or by email at evero@lakeheadu.ca. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at +1 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Sincerely,

*Erald Vero*

## Appendix C: Administrators Information Letter

Lakehead UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Administrators Information Letter**

Dear _____,

I am Erald Vero, a graduate student at Lakehead University, Canada. I would like to request the participation of students from your school in a study that I am conducting on citizenship perspectives of students in British Colombian Offshore Schools in Mainland China. The study may provide insights into students' educational experiences, help assess the impacts of BCOS citizenship curriculum development, and explore the associated cultural implications. I hope to recruit 4-6 students for this study, and I plan to conduct the interviews during 2020-2021 school year. I am seeking students who attend grade 11 or 12, communicate well in English and are leaders within the school community.

**What is involved for your school?**

- School personnel would be asked to send a recruitment email to students. I will provide the text of this email, and a poster to be attached.
- School personnel would be asked to provide a private, quiet room with adequate Wi-Fi connection for me to contact the participant for a 30-40 minutes interview at a predetermined date, time and location.
- Staff should be available via email to connect with the participant in an occurrence of any technical issues.

**What are the benefits and honorarium to your school?**

- Upon request, I will provide you with the findings of the study
- The findings may contribute towards curriculum development of the BCOS programs.

**Included in this email you will find the complete project information including;**

- Recruitment Posters
- Information Letter
- Consent Form
- Guided questions for the participants

**Ethics Information**

This study has received approval from Maple Leaf Educational Systems Research Committee and its CEO to pursue this invitation to school administrators to request the participation of their students in a 30-40 minute interview.

This study has also been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at +1 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

If you are interested in being part of this research or have any questions about the proposed study, please contact me at +86 131 6021 8713 or by email at evero@lakeheadu.ca.

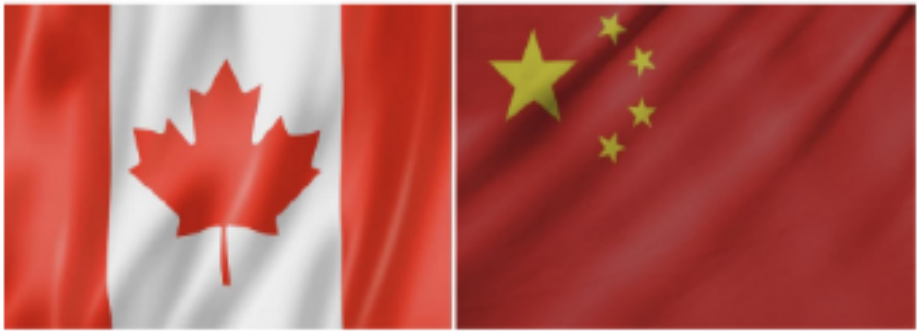
Sincerely,

Erald Vero

**Appendix D: Recruitment Poster**

Lakehead UNIVERSITY

# Understanding Chinese Citizenship Perspectives through Canadian Offshore School students in Mainland China.



**Are you Grade 11 or 12?**
**Do you speak and understand English well?**
**Are you a leader at school?**

Participants will engage in *a 30-40 minute* discussion.

For more information or to join the study contact:

*Erald Vero*
+86 131 6021 8713
evero@lakeheadu.ca

**This study has been reviewed by Lakehead University, and received ethics clearance through Lakehead University Research Ethics Board.**

## Appendix E: Body of Email for Administrators

Lakehead UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Body of Email for Administrators**

Dear students,

As a student at a British Columbia Offshore Schools you are invited to participate in a research study run by Erald Vero, a student from Lakehead University in Ontario Canada. A poster with information about the study is attached. If you would like to participate in the study, please contact Erald. His contact email is found below and on the attached poster. You are not required to participate in this study and whether you do or don't, your school marks or relationship with BCOS will not be affected.

Please contact Erald with any questions at evero@lakeheadu.ca.

## Appendix F: Participants Information Letter (2 pages)

Lakehead UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Participants Information Letter**

Dear Potential Participant,

Thank you for contacting me after seeing the Poster about my study. This letter will provide you with more information to help you decide if you would like to participate in the study. As part of my Graduate Research at Lakehead University, I am looking for students who are in the following:

- BC Program
- Grade 11 or 12
- Understand and speak well in English
- Leaders within the school

Taking part in this study is voluntary. Please read this letter carefully to understand the study. After you have read the letter, feel free to ask any questions.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a study. It will explore citizenship at British Columbia (BC) schools in China. The title of the study is "A Qualitative Study: Understanding Chinese Citizenship Perspectives through Canadian Offshore School students in Mainland China". This study has no sponsors or funders.

**WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE COLLECTED?**

If you agree to take part in the study, an interview date will be discussed between us. I will send you the questions before the interview. Topics may include your citizenship activities at BC schools, personal interests and experiences with Canadian and Chinese education.

You might be asked questions about topics which are difficult or may upset you; you do not need to answer any question if you do not wish to. If you do not wish to answer a question, please say 'no comment' during the interview.

Your words may be directly quoted in the M.Ed Thesis. At the end of the interview, you can decide if you would like to delete or change any of your responses. You also have the right to take away data consent. You can take as long as you need to do this.

**WHAT IS REQUESTED OF ME AS A PARTICIPANT?**

The information will be gathered through audio-recorded interviews (30-40 minutes). Due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, the interview will be on Zoom meetings. If necessary, an additional short chat via Zoom may occur after the interview to clarify any answers.

**WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARTICIPANT?**

Your input is voluntary and are under no duty to participate. You are free to withdraw at any time without any bias or negative effects. Your decision to participate will not in any way affect your school grades.

Lakehead UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND BENEFITS?**

The research study is of minimal risk. You may feel uncomfortable speaking about your personal views of difficult topics. However, I will be careful when asking questions to avoid any stress. If such situation does arise, I will suggest you visit the nearest psychologist or call the hotline service "12345". By being part of this study, there are no direct benefits and it may give you an opportunity to reflect on your own citizenship practices.

**HOW WILL MY PRIVACY BE MAINTAINED?**

Zoom interviews might be monitored by unknown third-party agents and Chinese government. While 100% privacy cannot be guaranteed, the following measures will be set in place to maintain your privacy:

- Your name will be replaced and analyzed by a fake name.
- Any possible identification information will be removed.
- Before the Zoom meeting, a passcode will be sent to you, a waiting room will be set up and you will be required to log in with an approved email address or Zoom account.
- The computer that has the data will have a password.

**WHAT WILL MY DATA BE USED FOR?**

The study will be reviewed by the Dr. Gary Pluim and a Faculty of Education committee at Lakehead University. The study will also be presented at the Comparative & International Education Society conference. You can request a summary and a copy of the results by emailing or calling Erald Vero.

**WHERE WILL MY DATA BE STORED?**

Data collected from this study will be stored in the researcher's office for a minimum period of five years with Lakehead University in the Faculty of Education at the Orillia, Ontario, Canada campus. If you wish to access the data, you must seek permission from Erald Vero and can only view your own data.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

If you are interested in participating in this study or have any questions, feel free to contact me (the researcher) or research supervisor.

Researcher: Erald Vero
Office: +86 131 6021 8713
Email: evero@lakeheadu.ca

Supervisor: Gary Pluim
Office: +1 705 330 4008 ext. 2626
Email gpluim@lakeheadu.ca

**ETHICS REVIEW AND APPROVAL:**

I have completed a course on ethics involving humans and gave a copy to my supervisor. This study has been reviewed and approved by Lakehead University. If you have any questions on the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at +1 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

## Appendix G: Consent Form for Potential Participants

Lakehead UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Consent Form for Potential Participants**

**MY CONSENT:**

I agree to the following:

- ✓ I have read and understand the information contained in the Information Letter.
- ✓ I agree to participate in an interview through Zoom.
- ✓ I understand the risks and benefits of the study.
- ✓ I am a volunteer and can drop from the study at any time and may refrain from answering any questions.
- ✓ That the data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a minimum period of 5 years.
- ✓ I understand that the findings will be made available to me upon request.
- ✓ I understand that all steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. For example, our Zoom meetings will require a password to provide a layer of privacy. However, given the possibility that third-party agents, the Chinese government, and other technologically proficient individuals may have the skills to monitor our interviews, it is not possible to guarantee full confidentiality and anonymity.
- ✓ I authorize the use of audio recording for the during the interview.
- ✓ All of my questions have been answered.

By agreeing to participate, I have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| Participant Name | Signature | Date |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Legal Guardian Name | Signature | Date |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Researcher Name | Signature | Date |

Please sign and return this form to Erald Vero. A copy of this consent form will be provided to the study supervisor. For further information concerning the completion of this form, please contact:

Erald Vero
Lakehead University
Office: +86 131 6021 8713
Email: evero@lakeheadu.ca

## Appendix H: Guiding Questions

Lakehead UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**Guiding Questions**

1. Let's talk about your background, tell me a little bit about yourself, how old are you and what city were you born?
2. Have you ever lived outside of China? If yes, Where?
3. What are some of your interests at school?
4. What sparked you interest to attend a Canadian International School?
5. What were some of the challenges and benefits between the Canadian and Chinese education?
6. What constitutes a good citizen?
7. How might others describe you as a person?
8. How does the Canadian curriculum shape you as a citizen inside and outside of the classroom?
9. What type of school policies are set in place to foster a citizenship development? How are they implemented?
10. What are some of the benefits in engaging in citizenship activities?
11. How does the school consult students on school policies?
12. What type of activities are you attending that help you grow as a citizen?
13. What hinders students' participation in citizenship activities?
14. What helps students participate in citizenship activities?