

**Conceptualizing and contextualizing digital citizenship in urban schools:
Civic engagement, teacher education, and the placelessness of digital technologies**

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...a new perspective of citizenship has entered the public narrative that feels so different that we have given it its own name: *digital citizenship*. This term arises from the need to reconsider who we are in light of the globally connected infosphere in which we find ourselves. That is, given that citizenship seems to be directly related to behavior and social organization, and given that the Digital Age facilitates new kinds of both, we need to update our perspectives about citizenship to provide a more complete picture of who we are.

(Ohler, 2010, p. 2)

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.

(Foucault, 1986, p. 3)

Introduction

Mobile devices and wireless access to the World Wide Web have enabled citizens now more than ever to engage global cultural, political, and social movements. And yet, although Canadian youth actively use digital media in their daily lives, evidence suggests that many remain disengaged from the provincial school curriculum. For immigrant youth, who are sometimes unable to identify with course material because of existing cultural biases in the curriculum, or limited experiences with different Canadian literacies, the challenges are much greater (Ng-A-Fook, Radford, Norris, & Yazdanian, 2013). Here in Canada, Ottawa continues to be a major hub for receiving immigrant and refugee families. Depending on the countries of origin and economic status, many immigrant youth are welcomed into urban schools in high-density neighbourhoods. For example, between 2016 and 2017, urban schools in Ottawa have welcomed more than 2000 Syrian refugees to their communities (CBC News, 2015). Yet, how are school boards, teachers, and students taking up different forms of citizenship at the schools that serve youth from first generation immigrant communities? What can teacher education programs do to better serve such communities?

These questions are at the heart of a multi-year, SSHRC-funded project we are undertaking, entitled: *Developing mobile media spaces for civic engagement in urban priority schools*. This research brings together two different areas of citizenship education research that have been previously explored in this journal. On the one hand, Lightman (2014) has recently discussed the unique positionality of transnational youth in Canadian urban schools. These youth maintain regular contact with their

home nations, creating complex patterns of belonging within multiple transnational communities. On the other hand, Fournier-Sylvester (2013) has explored the pedagogical role of online discussion spaces in engaging students who are less inclined to participate in classroom discussions. Notably, Fournier-Sylvester found that second-language speakers were one of the groups who participated to a greater degree online than in-class. In very different ways, Lightman and Fournier-Sylvester indicate the complex intersectionality that exists between citizenship education, digital technologies, and diverse student populations. Our research attempts to bring these different areas together, situating them in relation to the evolving concept of *digital citizenship*.

This essay is an initial attempt to situate our project, conceptually and contextually. In this regard, it performs a similar function to Daniel and Antoniw's (2016) paper in the previous edition of this journal. Like that paper, we put forth an overview of a complex multi-year and multi-site project, in order to set up a context for other forthcoming publications. At the same time, however, we have written this introductory paper to illustrate a specific set of problems we encountered in relation to what we are calling the "placelessness" of digital citizenship. In what follows, we describe the context and purpose of the project. We introduce the policy contexts that contribute to the reproduction of placelessness within schools and digital citizenship curricula. Finally, we present the emerging conceptualization of digital citizenship that guides our project as we continue to recursively re-imagine it moving forward as teacher educators and educational researchers.

Engaging digital citizenship in urban schools

In 2008, cognizant of the challenges faced by schools in urban settings with a significant percentage of new Canadians, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) established the Urban Priority High Schools (UPHS) initiative. The goal of the UPHS initiative is to help urban secondary schools develop the necessary supports and resources to meet the needs of their students and communities. The core curricular aims of the UPHS initiative are to create safe schools, increase student achievement, and build sustainable community partnerships (OME, 2012). One such partnership was established in 2012 between the University of Ottawa and the urban priority high schools in our two local school boards. This partnership resulted in the Urban Communities Cohort (UCC), one of five different streams that Bachelor of Education students entering the University of Ottawa Faculty of Education can choose to join. The primary goal of the UCC is to prepare teacher candidates for the increasingly diverse multi-ethnic, multi-lingual youth they will encounter in 21st century classrooms.

Extending our work in the UCC, our SSHRC-funded research project seeks to further open up critical learning possibilities for educators (pre-service and in service) to foster and support youth civic engagement in a digital world, and for urban students to increase their own digital literacies through media practices that will allow them to become agents of social change. Furthermore, we seek to understand how teacher candidates, who themselves are often from backgrounds different from their students in urban schools, are able to work within community-based networked spaces to develop culturally responsive learning experiences for urban students that will enhance their civic engagement as active Canadian citizens. Working within these diverse contexts, this project aims to break down subject silos, enabling interdisciplinary learning through pedagogy that situates the lived curriculum in multiple contexts within and beyond the classroom.

The initial purpose of our project was to develop "spaces" in urban schools that were originally conceived as physical spaces – specific classrooms in specific schools that would be equipped as digital media labs for civic engagement. However, after working to establish a "space" in our first urban high school in year one, the school board has decided to close this particular school, in response to their structural deficit. The closure of this unique urban school in itself points

to the unstable nature of the “spaces” in which urban students live and work (Butler, Kane, & Morshead, 2017). At the same time, we recognized that limiting our work to one classroom was too restrictive to enable the type of broad civic engagement we hoped to achieve. The project, therefore, was reconceptualized to support a diverse range of digital citizenship projects that were co-planned and implemented by our teacher candidates and their associate teachers. To a certain extent, we have uncoupled the composite concept of “digital citizenship.” In turn, teacher candidates are undertaking innovative pedagogical and research projects that engage digital technologies and citizenship separately or in various combinations.¹

Nonetheless, despite the many productive ways in which our teacher candidates took up digital citizenship in their schools, by the end of their first year we found their understanding of the *concept* of digital citizenship to be surprisingly limited. When asked how they understood the term in year-end interviews, most teacher candidates stated frankly that they had heard the term a lot, but still were not sure what it meant. Those who tried to present a definition mostly resorted to statements about online etiquette. We have come to realize that this is in part a result of the policies that inform the work done in schools. In one local school board’s policy documents the following definition for the appropriate use of technology is put forth: “Digital Citizenship refers to the norms of appropriate and responsible behaviour with regard to technology use” (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, 2012, p. 1). Such school board policies reflect Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) personally responsible citizen, or a “good” citizen that can follow the rules. In fact, the local school board has adopted Ribble’s (2015) conception of digital citizenship, which includes the following nine elements: 1) Digital Access; 2) Digital Commerce; 3) Digital Communication; 4) Digital Literacy; 5) Digital Etiquette; 5) Digital Law; 7) Digital Rights and Responsibilities; 8) Digital Health & Wellness; and 9) Digital Security (self-protection).

Ribble’s conceptualization of digital citizenship is included in school board policies and documents. Moreover, it often appears in posters around the schools. Although many of these elements are important curricular topics, we find the implied understanding of *citizenship* within Ribble’s conceptualization to be problematic. If digital citizenship is a list of skills and attributes, as he seems to suggest, then citizenship likewise is implied to be a de-contextualized set of skills and attributes. This decontextualization of citizenship is an emerging pattern in educational policy, which various citizenship education scholars have critiqued in their research (e.g. Bickmore, 2014; Hébert, 2009). Iacovino and Nootens (2011) describe this well in their critique of the Quebec curriculum:

The ‘community’ is presented as an abstract entity that requires a kind of toolkit based on ethical individualism in order for students to situate themselves within its boundaries.

Citizenship is akin to a vocation, something you learn to do, not as a member of a particular nation or culture, not through the lens of conflicting national identities, but as an individual

¹ As one example of such a project, a teacher candidate in the school that was closing coordinated students to develop a mural to commemorate their school. Students from across the school participated in multiples stages of the design and creation of the mural. While this was primarily a *citizenship* rather than a *digital* project, students also used digital media to document the process. The final step in the mural project, was the installation of the mural on the walls of the school that most of the dislocated students will attend next year. Other examples include: a team of teacher candidates guided a group of students in designing and building a website to help students access services in the local community; a teacher candidate led senior music students in creating digital music compositions as a form of social commentary; and another teacher candidate used Twitter to mobilize information about a student-led fundraiser for a children’s hospital.

endowed with faculties associated with critical thought. (p. 225)

A similar pattern can be seen in a recent policy document from the Ontario Ministry of Education (2016), which describes “local, global, and digital citizenship” as “the set of competencies that relate to students’ identity both as individuals and as members of their community, society, and the world” (p. 17). This description occludes the nation-state, which plays an unavoidable role in determining, defining, and limiting notions of citizenship. Such a conceptualization suggests the existence of digital citizens who are connected vaguely to the entire world but have no specific and situated belonging within a political community.

We continue to reimagine our project in response to these emergent conceptual limitations. In part, this has involved an ongoing development and clarification of how we are conceptualizing digital citizenship in our research and teaching. In the following sections, we discuss our attempt to situate digital citizenship within the spaces of student learning. While this emphasis on space is in part a response to current policy regimes, we also recognize that the danger of decontextualization is inherent in digital technology itself. We proceed with an awareness that the mobility offered by “digital citizenship on wheels” – as we had conceptualized our project in the past – had the potential to create a placelessness to citizenship education that itself may undermine the goal of fostering more engaged, active citizens. At the same time, the trajectory of our project reminds us of the unavoidable physicality of technology. While it is easy to idealize “digital spaces” as ethereal and disembodied, such spaces invariably need to be accessed within and through physical spaces. For students in urban communities – many of whom are “marginalized” in various ways and may lack socioeconomic resources – urban schools can provide technological access and a safe physical space within which digital engagements can be conducted.

What is digital citizenship?

While schools have become an important context within which youth can be supported to engage in their local community and in the wider national and global society, research has revealed that provincially mandated Civics courses fall short of helping to foster active citizenship. Civics classes are highly variable in practice, with some focusing on fostering tolerance of others, others on character education (stressing altruistic virtues like volunteerism for disadvantaged groups), and still others promoting one type of democracy in spite of the diversity of students’ experiences (Media Awareness Network, 2011). Such courses may encourage students to become kind and compassionate people, but they do not necessarily prepare them to engage citizenship on behalf of the public good (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Civics courses are especially problematic in urban high schools, particularly those serving large numbers of immigrant and refugee youth. For instance, a study of Quebec and Ontario high school students found that although participation in Civics courses had a slightly positive effect on political knowledge and willingness to participate, effects on minority students were marginal (Claes, Hooghe, & Stolle, 2009). Language barriers in the form of limited English proficiency have also been identified as leading to a lack of civic engagement (Ramakrishnan & Lewis, 2005). Moreover, the cultural biases that emerge in Civics courses may alienate students (Butler, Ng-A-Fook, Vaudrin-Charette, & McFadden, 2015). With growing evidence that Civics courses are variously failing to impact student civic engagement, it is critical to examine how we can support students, especially minority students, to develop as active citizens.

The civic, political, and societal engagement of citizens is at the core of any democracy, and increasingly, citizenship practices are enacted digitally, including in urban schools and communities. The rise of (socially) networked technology (or social media) has led to the emergence of the concept of *digital citizenship* within educational policy and scholarship. The use of this concept, however, is often vague and problematic. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2016), for instance,

positions digital citizenship as an important 21st century competency, yet only offers the following reductive description: “Digital citizenship requires greater awareness of the importance of respecting and protecting privacy and information, given the volumes of information to which we have access through digital networks” (p. 18). This kind of educational conceptualization of “digital citizenship” appears to be nothing more than polite adherence to the status quo – which prominent scholars in our field have described as a superficial and limited enactment of citizenship education (Banks, 2008a; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Nonetheless, digital citizenship remains a potentially valuable component of citizenship education, particularly for diverse populations of migrant, immigrant, and refugee students in urban schools, who express their citizenship through complex transnational networks, often utilizing digital media (Abu El Haj, 2009; Banks, 2008a; Lightman, 2014).

Digital citizenship has been defined in a variety of ways. Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal (2008) approach it as a policy problem, defining digital citizenship as “the ability to participate in society online” (p. 1), encouraging “what has elsewhere been called social inclusion” (p. 1). Greyell and Becker (2011), meanwhile, situate digital citizenship more pedagogically, stating that it is “the quality of an individual’s response to the digital communities of which they are members” (n.p.). Similarly, Heick (2013) offers the following definition for educators to consider: “[t]he quality of habits, actions, and consumption patterns that impact the ecology of digital content and communities” (n.p.). What is at stake is the role of formal education in the promotion of certain kinds of participation, where “citizenship” itself is still a “contested concept” and there is little agreement on what citizenship should encompass in terms of participation, or what it means (Beck, 1996; Osler & Starkley, 2003).

Some research documents a larger social problem about how people act as “bad” digital citizens, trolling websites, bullying one another, and promoting extreme (often hate-filled) views (Gibbs, 2010). Other research laments that people in general are unable to distinguish fact from fiction online – asserting that President Obama is born in Kenya, for example – and that “facts” such as these cause individuals to choose political allegiances based on doubt, even fueling whole movements like the “birthers” (Berinsky, 2012). Hargittai, Fullerton, Menchen-Trevino, and Yates-Thomas (2010) explain that young adults often place responsibility on the webpage or browser to provide accurate information. Some school boards – including our local boards – are addressing this problem head-on by creating programs designed for students to become caring and responsible “digital citizens” in Ribble’s (2015) sense of the term.

If, as Cohen (1999) has proposed, citizenship can be expressed variously through social, political, and legal avenues, then a concept such as digital citizenship must account for a broad range of citizenship activities. In this sense, Mossberger et al. (2008) propose that: “Digital citizens are those who use technology frequently, who use technology for political information to fulfill their civic duty, and who use technology at work for economic gain” (p. 2). Embedded in this description is the understanding that digital citizenship is not strictly a new form of citizenship, but set of new technologically-enabled contexts in which older forms of citizenship are re-imagined and given new expression. In *Being Digital Citizens*, Isin and Ruppert (2015) take this further in arguing that “what we are saying and doing through the Internet is dramatically changing political life” (p. 2). They propose: “[t]he most significant space for thinking about the politics of the Internet and the political subject it has given rise to – the digital citizen – is the space between the inscription of rights and their enactment” (p. 179). Taken together, these various educational researchers present a complex and nuanced conceptualization of digital citizenship. Nonetheless, as we discuss in the next section, we found our teacher candidates largely unprepared to engage with this complexity.

Teacher education and the placelessness of digital citizenship

We are still in an early stage of our project, and have only collected a small sampling of our data. Our ongoing data collection involves interviews with our teacher candidates and their associate teachers, along with focus groups with their practicum students. We are also collecting artifacts for analysis – lesson planning and assignments from the teacher candidates, and work samples from their practicum students – as evidence of ways in which the teacher candidates have created culturally responsive entry points for student engagement. While the focus of this essay is our conceptual approach to our project, we are presenting several specific findings from our early data collection here, as they illustrate the complexity of some of the issues we have been discussing.

At the end of the first year of the first cohort of teacher candidates in our program (2015-2017), we engaged some of these teacher candidates in one-on-one interviews, which addressed, among other things, their understanding of digital citizenship. Digital citizenship was a key concept with which we had asked teacher candidates to engage, and they had taken digital citizenship up practically in their schools through many self-directed and student-centred projects. Nonetheless, to our surprise, they continued to be unable to provide a clear definition. One student, for instance, responded directly: “I don’t know if I can because I still don’t understand what digital citizenship means.” Another student stated: “Digital citizenship sounds like being responsible with your social media, like with Facebook and Twitter and things like that. But I don’t know how you reconcile that with the reality in the classroom. Just because I can’t define it.” These responses are quite typical, and point to central pedagogical issues to which our project will need to respond going forward.

These concerns have been reinforced by the responses to a survey we disseminated to all teacher candidates in our Bachelor of Education program in September 2016. The response rate to this survey was quite low (25% of a possible 297 first year Anglophone teacher candidates) – which in itself raises important questions about the digital citizenship of our teacher candidates, both in the sense of their digital competencies and their level of engagement. Towards the end of the survey, we asked a series of open-ended questions allowing teacher candidates to provide their own definitions of some of the key terms in our research, including “citizenship” and “digital citizenship.” Of the 76 Anglophone teacher candidates who responded to the survey, 46 provided answers to these questions. We find these responses informative in spite of – or even because of – the low response rate. The conceptualizations of our key terms presented in these responses are problematic in several ways, and yet they are coming, in theory, from a small subset of our most digitally competent and/or engaged students.

In order to present this data in the broad qualitative sense in which we are using it, we have generated Wordles to illustrate the responses. The full list of 46 responses to each question was used verbatim, other than minor edits to remove capitalizations, punctuation, and typos. Since we are using “digital citizenship” as a composite term, we also merged each use of it into one word. The Wordles visualize the data by portraying each word that appeared in the responses, with the size of each word correlated to the number of times it was used. In this way, it enables the broad patterns in the data to be interpreted in a more intuitive and qualitative manner than other possible approaches, such as a list of percentages. This approach also suits the data, as the responses were typically brief, often containing a single word or a list of unrelated terms. The Wordles are presented below in Figures 1 and 2. The specific questions our teacher candidates were responding to can be seen in the description below each Figure.

As we discussed previously, we connect our teacher candidates' superficial conception of digital citizenship in part to the policy context of the schools, which advocated an approach to digital citizenship involving a list of skills and attributes. Nonetheless, the survey results, which illustrate the responses of students just entering the teacher education program, also show that some of these attitudes are more widespread and longstanding among our teacher candidates. In particular, the contrast between the "citizenship" and "digital citizenship" Wordles points to the decontextualization of citizenship in the latter term. For whatever reason, the teacher candidates can articulate both affective and substantive elements when talking about citizenship (Figure 1) but cannot seem to identify the substantive elements of the nation-state when imagining digital citizenship. The lack of clarity concerning the role of the nation-state in these conceptualizations of digital citizenship may lead to miscommunications for teacher candidates working within urban schools with large numbers of transnational, refugee, and immigrant students, whose substantive experiences of citizenship may well be very different from those of our teacher candidates. Further, other research reminds us of the importance of transnationalism in shaping the civic and political participation of urban, immigrant, and refugee youth (e.g. Abu El-Haj, 2007, 2009; Bondy, 2014, 2015; Kennelly & Dillabough, 2008; Lightman, 2014).

Taken together, these issues raise important questions about how we might more adequately address digital citizenship in our pedagogy in the teacher education program. Returning to the year-end interviews we discussed previously, the inability of the teacher candidates to define digital citizenship in any way other than as a matter of online etiquette frames for us the pedagogical problem going forward. One of our teacher candidates reframed the issue in an interesting way, and presented us with a new theoretical challenge. When asked to define digital citizenship, this teacher candidate stated:

See that was something that I did and I feel that I still have trouble completely understanding. I think someone needs to draw it for me. Again, visual. Obviously defining the two and putting them together for me is somewhat hard.

This teacher candidate's response points to an important conceptual and pedagogical issue in relation to digital citizenship. Attempts to illustrate digital citizenship have largely resorted to a list of skills and attributes arranged in different configurations, as in Ribble's (2015) work. How might digital citizenship be illustrated in relation to both the substantive and affective aspects of citizenship education in urban schools? In the following section, we take up this conceptual challenge.

Negotiating citizenship across classroom, community, and digital spaces

As we have illustrated so far in this paper, digital citizenship is both a challenge and an opportunity for urban education. The ubiquitous presence of digital technologies in our lives creates new opportunities for self-expression and self-definition of urban and minority communities, but also for reactionary politics. As Radford (2017) reminds us, digital citizenship "has the power to bring people together in the name of prejudice and divisive politics as much as social justice" (p. 6). Consequently, it is important to maintain a local focus on urban students' cultures, schools, and communities (Banks, 2008b; Butler, Kane, & Morshead, 2017). Evidence from research in both Canada (e.g. Hébert, Wilkinson, Ali, & Oriola, 2008) and the United States (e.g. Abu El-Haj, 2007, 2009; Bondy, 2014, 2015; Myers & Zaman, 2009) demonstrates that immigrant and minority youth negotiate their beliefs about and enactments of citizenship within, across, and among multiple intersecting affiliations, many of which are digitally mediated. In taking up digital citizenship in urban schools, therefore, we have striven to maintain a focus on the ways in which students are

often situated within multiple, overlapping, and interconnected *spaces*.

A recent review we conducted of the teaching of 21st century skills across the curriculum drew on the work of a number of Canadian and international scholars and district school board policy documents to situate 21st century learning more effectively in alternate spaces (Kane, Ng-a-Fook, Orders, & Radford, 2013). This study concluded that technological and community engagement can be complementary facets for school unity; indeed, social media can be a way to engage more effectively within and across different (marginalized) communities (Beggs, Shields, Telfer, & Bernard, 2012). Williamson (2013) further explains: “Rather than the educational spaces of schools with their classrooms and textbooks, learning happens in many formal and informal spaces, including home, school, community, and online spaces” (p. 111). Recognizing these alternate contexts for 21st century learning reminds us that the classroom is a context as well, with its own logic and its own specialized skills. As a result, we conceptualized the classroom, the community, and the digital realm as three interconnected and interrelated spaces in which 21st century citizenship education is put into practice.

This conceptualization of three interrelated spaces was the initial conceptual framework for our digital citizenship research project. Having reached the two-year point in our project however, we are finding this initial conceptualization inadequate to our conceptual and pedagogical purposes. As we discussed in the previous section, our teacher candidates continue to struggle with conceptualizing digital citizenship, and, in at least one case, specifically requested a clearer visualization of what digital citizenship means *as a citizenship practice*. In response, we have been working to redevelop our initial conceptualization. After multiple iterations, we have settled on a three-dimensional model, to highlight the importance of relationality and space. The new model we have been developing is illustrated in Figure 3.

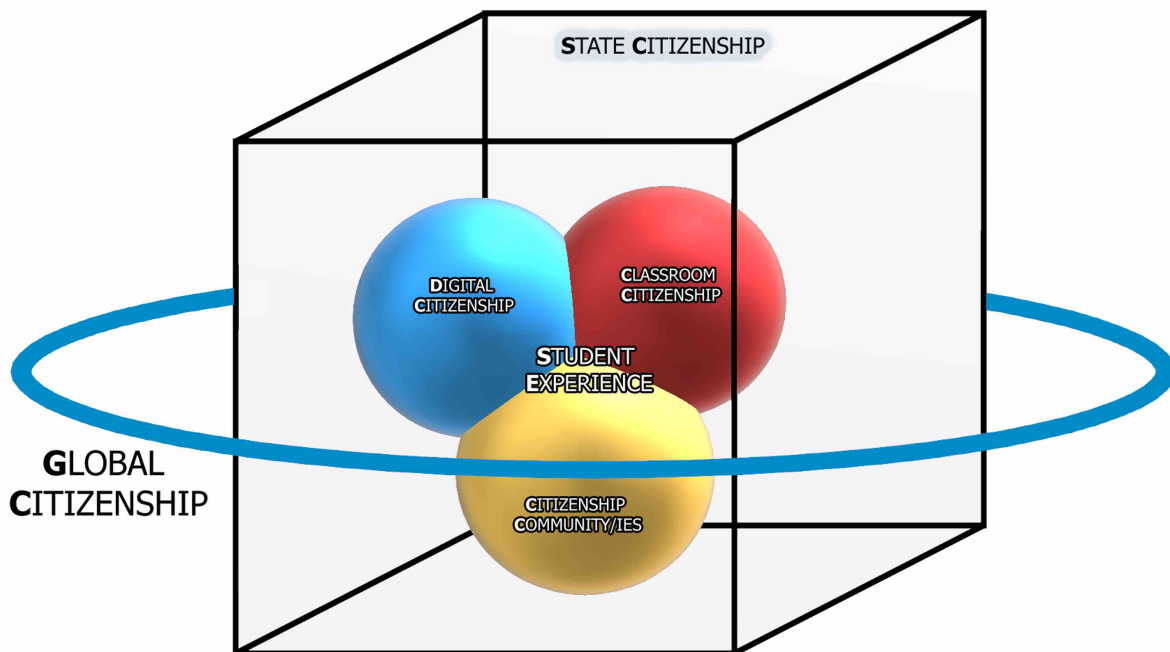


Figure 3 – Situating digital citizenship as a citizenship practice

In this model, the three interconnected spheres in the center maintain the primary insight from our previous model regarding 21st century learning, with student experience located in the intersecting spaces of the three spheres. Translated into the realm of citizenship education, the interconnected realms of classroom, communities, and digital technologies remain central, as these are the three primary contexts through which students will *experience* citizenship. “Community” here is used quite broadly to indicate an organic network of people with thick interpersonal connections. While the primary sense is the local community, particularly the neighbourhood, it can also apply to more distributed cultural communities – though highly distributed cultural communities are often digitally mediated and therefore would be situated in the overlap with digital citizenship (Banks, 2008a). Any broader experience of citizenship, whether within the nation-state or within transnational or global networks, will ultimately be mediated through these three primary realms, whether by learning about systems of government in the classroom or by engaging with transnational cultural communities through digital technologies. Even the relatively direct experience of voting in national elections is mediated through the electoral riding system in a parliamentary democracies like Canada – which is intended, at least officially, to map onto the local community. These three contexts overlap significantly within a common space of student experience, and many expressions of citizenship will engage with more than one of them. In our experience, the importance of this interconnectedness between the classroom, the community, and the digital realm is particularly relevant in urban schools. Urban students are already engaged in these interconnected and interrelated spaces, and urban schools are in a unique position to bring together these spaces within a broader vision of civic engagement.

The model presented in Figure 3 goes further, however, by situating digital, community, and classroom citizenship within the larger frameworks of state (the cube) and global citizenship (the outer sphere). We have illustrated state citizenship as a cube rather than a sphere to represent its different character. While the other realms of citizenship are all more affective, state citizenship alone is a structural and substantial form of citizenship, enshrined in political and legal rights and responsibilities (Cohen, 1999). Nonetheless, it is also distant from student experience, as is illustrated by the (partial) transparency of the cube. State citizenship is both a pragmatic reality and a vague abstraction, and the cube in our model is both opaque and transparent, partially porous to students’ more expansive experiences of global citizenship. *National* citizenship is not explicitly situated in our model – while it overlaps with state citizenship on the terrain of the nation-state, nationhood is also a feature of many cultural communities within and across states (Kymlicka, 2011).

As an expression of the relationality of citizenship, we conceive of the spheres and cubes in our model as being in constant motion, shifting their relationships to each other and to the spaces within which they are contained. Within this flux, students engage in expressions of state and global citizenship through the mediation of their daily experiences of digital, community, and classroom citizenship. While all three of these are important, we believe there is a particularly strong connection between digital and global citizenship. If, as Anderson (2006) argues, the emergence of citizenship in the nation-state depended on the national news media to create an imagined community, then the emergence of global citizenship in recent decades is equally dependent on the imagined community enabled by the international networks of digital technologies. Our model remains a working conceptualization of digital citizenship in progress.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented an initial conceptual and contextual account of our five-

year SSHRC-funded project, *Developing mobile media spaces for civic engagement in urban priority schools*. Through this project, we are working with teacher candidates to develop pedagogical and research projects related to fostering digital citizenship within urban schools. As discussed, we conceptualize digital citizenship as a range of digitally mediated practices of civic engagement, situated alongside the community/ies and the classroom as central to students' experiences of citizenship. We have also discussed the developing context of our project, and drawn on some initial findings, to illustrate the complex ways in which the enactment of digital citizenship is played out within these overlapping spaces.

As we move forward with this project, our ensuing data collection and analysis will enable us to further develop the initial conceptual and contextual account of our project presented here. However, our initial analysis so far points to important curricular and pedagogical questions and directions for citizenship education, particularly in relation to digital technologies and urban schools. Our goal is to examine how we, as teacher educators and educational researchers, can create spaces to disrupt taken for granted notions of citizenship and of digital citizenship, and advance opportunities for teacher candidates and for students within urban schools to engage as active citizens in the intersections of school, community, and the digital realm. While we have encountered significant challenges, particularly around our conceptualization of digital citizenship, we have also seen important pedagogical successes. We, and our teacher candidates, have had some success with student-led initiatives within urban schools under the umbrella of an applied digital citizenship project called Students for Change. The mobility promised by "digital citizenship on wheels" has allowed for multiple projects across multiple spaces as we seek to respond to a civic curriculum of placelessness.

As we continue to conceptualize and contextualize digital citizenship in our teaching and research, we are reminded of the two opening quotations. On the one hand, Ohler (2010) points us to the fact that we are already unavoidably engaged in the digital realm, and that we must adapt our understanding of citizenship to this context. On the other hand, Foucault (1986) reminds us of the importance of keeping our engagements with digital technologies grounded in the situated contexts of interpersonal relationships. We do this mindful of the need for us, as educators, to acknowledge the need for co-creating spaces for urban youth to navigate their sense of belonging, while also supporting their capacities for active civic engagement on behalf of the public good.

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