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A critical reading of *The National Youth White Paper on Global Citizenship*: What are youth saying and what is missing?

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Abstract
In the recent *National Youth White Paper on Global Citizenship* (2015), a selection of Canadian youth identified their vision for global citizenship education (GCE). The document articulates the Canadian youths' vision for global citizenship and outlines changes that need to be implemented in order for that vision to be achieved. Drawing on critiques of modernity and of liberal multiculturalism coming from postcolonial, decolonial, and feminist anti-racist scholarship, this article explores how young people imagine their positionalities as Canadian citizens and agents of change in the world. We aim to describe how the White Paper can be used both as a call for deepening critical engagements in education as well as a bridge for discussions of GCE in ways that move conversations into new realms. This paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, we analyse the 2015 White Paper, written collaboratively by Canadian students. It is the first document to focus exclusively on youth perceptions of what action is needed and what problems need to be addressed. We summarize the Canadian youths' articulation and understanding of GCE and identify the major themes addressed. The second section articulates the calls for action that the Canadian youth deem necessary for their vision of global citizenship. As they demand an emphasis on criticality in their formal education, we consider how we can listen to and respond to these

calls. The third section presents a critical analysis of the document with a view to paving the way for collaborations to push discussions even further. The fourth section highlights how we can build on the White Paper to move discussions about GCE in new and different directions. We aim to address how the White Paper can be used to further the conversations in ways that explore how the youths' calls for actions can open up the possibilities for critical GCE.

Keywords: global citizenship, Canadian youth, *National Youth White Paper*, civic engagement

Introduction

In 2015, the Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Research, the Centre for Global Education, and TakingITGlobal collaboratively facilitated a discussion among a thousand Canadian youth with the intention of encouraging these representatives to voice their vision for global citizenship. From this group, 400 students from various schools across Canada were invited to collaborate to produce a document that represented their 'voice on the relationship Canadians should have with the rest of the world' (White Paper, 2015: 1). As such, *The National Youth White Paper on Global Citizenship* (accessible at https://goo.gl/m0Frc6; hereafter referred to as the 'White Paper'), produced by Canadian youth and published on 20 March 2015, is a powerful tool for educators, researchers, and policy-makers to represent where Canadian youth are positioned, in terms of their understanding of global flows and relations, where they would like to be, and what educational changes they believe need to be made for them to truly embody global citizenship.

In our use of postcolonial, decolonial, and anti-racist feminist scholarship, we emphasize the need to move beyond ethnocentric, depoliticized, ahistorical, paternalistic, and 'decontextualized technical knowledge devoid of ethical considerations and philosophical curiosity. This stance favours historicized, politicized, and contextualized forms of knowledge production that highlight systemic analyses and complicities in the reproduction of injustices. It also entails exhuming political meanings and interlinkages in cultural and political texts' (Naseem and Arshad-Ayaz, 2016: 12).

In this respect, we point out key ideas, issues, or elements of importance that Canadian youth raise in the document about what global citizenship is and what they want it to be. We focus on their emphasis on equity, inclusion, consideration of difference, and a desire for a shift in perspective. In the second section, we build upon the vision that the Canadian youth have articulated and identify the key calls for change and/or action that they make in terms of education for effective global citizenship, in line with the vision that they put forth. In the third section, we present a critical analysis of the document intended to highlight contradictions, paradoxes,

and limitations with the purpose of paving the way for collaborations to continue to push the discussions about global citizenship education (GCE) further. We focus on the tensions in different conceptualizations of global citizenship in order to explore how these tensions can be navigated and serve to bridge discussions about courses of action in GCE. In the fourth section, we grapple with the questions of how the White Paper can be used not only to outline specific calls for action, but also as the groundwork from which conversations about GCE can be pushed even further.

Recent GCE literature sheds light on how various discourses shape the type of GCE practised (Stein, 2015; Andreotti and Pashby, 2013; Khoo, 2011; Shultz, 2007; Andreotti, 2006). The distinction between 'soft' and 'critical' global citizenship, for instance, demonstrates how different understandings and agendas correspond to different interpretations of global citizenship with implications for how the concept is taken up in practice (Andreotti and Pashby, 2013; Andreotti, 2006). 'Soft' global citizenship is premised on the 'empowered individual' and her/his compassion and ability to make a difference and improve the conditions (of poverty) facing 'Other' people around the world. This type of global citizenship 'proposes the idea of a common humanity heading toward a common "forward"', in which a privileged few are responsible for the many in a quest to achieve 'modernity' and 'progress' for all (Andreotti and Pashby, 2013: 425). A 'critical' global citizenship, however, aims to move beyond the benevolent discourse of 'helping others' and instead promotes 'the acknowledgement of complicity in harm and the need to think "otherwise" about our collective present and possible collective futures', suggesting that one universal 'way forward' is the root of inequalities and injustices (ibid.).

Each understanding of global citizenship is 'rooted in specific discourses about what is real and ideal' (Andreotti and Pashby, 2013: 422). These different discourses that shape how global citizenship (education) is currently framed and practised are further elaborated upon by Stein (2015), who maps different positions of global citizenship along entrepreneurial, liberal-humanist, and anti-oppressive lines, as well as illustrating another possible (incommensurable) position. An entrepreneurial position understands global citizenship as a way of enhancing students' abilities to participate in the global market. This position on global citizenship has been well-critiqued (see Abdi *et al.*, 2015; Pashby, as cited in Jorgenson and Shultz, 2012: 4; Giroux, 2004). A liberal-humanist interpretation of global citizenship tends to emphasize intercultural understanding and contact, as well as 'a commitment to critical self-examination, recognition of ties to other humans, and the ability to imagine oneself in another's shoes' (see Nussbaum, as cited in Stein, 2015: 245). This interpretation of global citizenship advocates for greater inclusion in existing systems and is based on the recognition of a 'universal humanity' (Stein, 2015). Such a notion of a common humanity (and a common ethical identity), which both

justifies and requires global citizenship in its liberal-humanist form, draws heavily on Eurocentric-Enlightenment ethics without attending to the complicity of the Eurocentric-Enlightenment in the colonization and exploitation of people. This perspective also almost never engages with modernity as a problematic historical frame. Beyond the descriptions of entrepreneurial and liberal positions, Stein (2015: 246) maps an anti-oppressive global citizenship position that focuses on identifying and analysing unequal power relations and advocates 'for more equitable distribution of resources, cognitive justice, and more horizontal forms of governance, and aspires to radical transformation of existing structures'. Such conceptualizations can be found in the works of Rhoads and Szelényi (2011) and Mohanty (2003).

The final global citizenship position, which Stein (2015: 243) maps, is an 'incommensurable' one that deals with 'engagement across onto-epistemological difference'. This position does not focus on inclusion into dominant frames of global citizenship, but rather promotes the questioning of, and attention to, colonial assumptions that structure the 'common humanity' underlying liberal-humanist, and some anti-oppressive, frames of global citizenship. This calls into question the epistemic context in which the notions of 'global', 'citizenship', and 'education' are understood. It points to epistemic racism inherent in the articulations of GCE that results in an absence of other perspectives, voices, and positions – especially from the colonized populations and knowledge systems (Maldonaldo-Torres, 2007). This perspective asks for attention to epistemic as well as ontological colonial differences in understanding what global citizenship (and education) could mean, alternatively (Andreotti, 2011; Rizvi, 2009; Maldonaldo-Torres, 2007). In light of the attention accorded to different understandings and implementations of global citizenship (education) in the recent literature, we feel it is important to examine what discourses or positions of global citizenship the 2015 White Paper draws on. Our response to the White Paper is an effort to offer an interpretation of the type of global citizenship as articulated by the youth as the (desired) norm and how this conceptualization of global citizenship might foreclose others.

How Canadian youth understand global citizenship

The Centre for Global Citizenship Education and Research, the Centre for Global Education, and TakingITGlobal brought together 400 young students from across Canada in a 'Virtual Town Hall' to discuss youths' perspectives on and vision for GCE, using digital technologies (YouTube, Twitter, mobile phone voting, Google Docs, H.323 Video Conferencing, discussion boards, blogs, etc.). On the basis of the deliberations prior to and during the Virtual Town Hall, the youth participants produced *The National Youth White Paper on Global Citizenship* (2015). The document is an attempt by the Canadian youth to address issues related to their obligations, rights, and responsibilities as global citizens. It is an exploration of whether GCE can

help in transforming power inequities and, if so, what types of policies and practices will facilitate global citizenship (see the article by Shultz, Pashby, and Godwaldt in this issue for a detailed description of the process and methodology).

The 2015 White Paper is the first national document to explicitly include youth in the conversation about their understandings and needs in relation to GCE. The fact that young people are being asked about where they would like their education to take them is important and necessary to ensure that the education in which youth engage aligns with their perceived changing needs in a complex, plural, and interconnected world. Youth narratives can help policy-makers and educators focus on making education relevant to the context and experience of young people, and their involvement in the production of this document is a crucial step in that direction. As stated in the White Paper, while 'Millennials' are 'currently the largest living generation, Canadian youth believe that they do not, or cannot, have an impact on the world' (White Paper, 2015: 6). Asking Canadian youth about their vision for global citizenship will go a long way in assuring them that they do have the power to change things. By taking seriously and responding to the suggestions made in the document by youth about changes they would like to see in their education, educators can affirm that they do have the power to speak and have their voices heard. One of the suggestions made by the youth in the White Paper is that there should be support from educational leaders and organizations for intergenerational discussions 'to inform and challenge adults while magnifying the youth voice' (ibid.). The youth's request demonstrates their desire to have their needs heard and put into conversation with other perspectives in the field of education.

The young participants distinguish between actions based on the pursuit of equality and actions based on the pursuit of equity; they opt for a commitment to the latter and the White Paper reflects this as a consistent theme throughout. The youth build upon this foundation of a need for equity by articulating that inclusion is necessary for the type of global equity that they envision as the goal behind global citizenship:

> *As global citizens, we, the students, recognize that if a fair and equitable global society is to be attained, all perspectives must be accounted for and considered. Today, global power remains concentrated and centralized, leaving many people with very little influence … Equity, the idea of being just and fair, takes into account the differences amongst people within the global community and it is towards that which we should strive. However, that same equity will not be obtained until the voices of people in undermined groups are considered and valued.*
>
> White Paper (2015: 2)

This excerpt demonstrates the centrality of the concept of equity in the youths' vision of global citizenship. It is important to note that the youth recognize how

not all ideas or perspectives are valued equally in conversations concerning global citizenship and, in fact, articulate how ideas that originate in the 'periphery' are often ignored or undervalued due to global power inequities. The youth acknowledge the marginalized position of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. They assert that dominant mainstream voices should be prevented from monopolizing important discussions on a global scale and that, to do so, requires including and affirming marginalized voices. They argue that the mainstream perspectives are often 'blind to the realities of a suffering that is foreign to them, thus skewing their perspective of what is fair and equal' (White Paper, 2015: 2). The youth therefore express that to take other perspectives into consideration requires implementing a framework for greater influence by people who are positioned outside of dominant perspectives in schools, communities, and government. Beyond this suggestion for structural change, the youth also highlight individual empathy as an attribute much needed for people to be open to the voices and perspectives of others.

Emphasis on equity and the acknowledgement of inequity in terms of what voices are heard is one of the key strengths that the White Paper presents and it demonstrates the youths' significant awareness of the dominant narrative that structures and informs global relationships across difference. In fact, the White Paper acknowledges that:

> *The legacy of colonialism has left a deep scar that will take centuries to heal. [T]he image of a Westerner going overseas to help 'those less fortunate' remains ingrained in our collective societal psyche and perpetuates the notion that Westerners are fundamentally different – or even superior to – people in developing nations. This can only be solved through better education of students here in the West.*
>
> White Paper (2015: 6)

This is a crucial admission and acknowledgement and it suggests an understanding of global citizenship that must deal with, and speak to, the history of colonialism and its ongoing continuities that perpetuate ideas of Western superiority. The document also makes explicit mention of the historical patterns of Eurocentrism and 'salvationism' that have often characterized relationships between the Global North and the Global South. The youth, for example, note that:

> *as with many other western nations, we find ourselves prone to the 'saviour complex.' This is a fault of our historically eurocentric viewpoint; instead of seeing everyone as equals, we are creating a division between the people who need and the ones providing the 'help.' Instead of the idea of one group of people saving another, it should be a collaboration of all involved groups working together, as equals, to address the problem.*
>
> White Paper (2015: 3)

Throughout the document, the youth continue to rely on examples such as foreign aid programmes and 'voluntourism' to highlight the way in which the notion of helping is not always as benevolent as it seems when considering global power imbalances and histories of 'salvationism'. The White Paper's continued acknowledgements of colonialism, Eurocentrism, salvationism, and superiority, on the one hand, demonstrate the youths' desires to identify and address problematic features of the dominant narrative that have historically structured relationships between the Global North and Global South. On the other hand, through identifying such issues, Canadian youth also highlight the fragmented nature of lenses used to describe global citizenship (Peters *et al.*, 2008). In the White Paper, it is clear that Canadian youth envision a global citizenship that is premised on the pursuit of global equity and the inclusion and valuing of diverse perspectives. In light of this conceptualization of global citizenship, these youth make several calls for action within their education.

Youth calls for action

The 2015 White Paper is an indicator of Canadian youths' voice and needs to be taken seriously by educators, policy-makers, and researchers. For educators, this document can be a source of inspiration; it not only reaffirms the need for critical pedagogy that empowers young people, but also highlights the gaps in knowledge about GCE that the youth want to be addressed in conversations and policies about global citizenship. The White Paper asks policy-makers and educators to re-evaluate the capacity of existing structures to facilitate the type of education needed to deliver what young people demand from education today. However, the document is not merely a call for professionals in various roles to respond to the needs and desires of the youth, but also a call for general support for the youth to produce changes themselves and a discussion of what such support might look like.

The voices of the young Canadians expressed in the White Paper call for a foundational shift in perspective to respond to global inequity and its manifestations. They argue in the document that such a foundational shift in perspective is essential in creating long-lasting change. The youth propose that to work towards this shift in perspective (which they see as necessary for the production of effective global citizens who build solidarity, challenge injustices, and promote equity), there are several courses of action that must be taken. They believe that school curricula need to incorporate a focus on changing the dominant narrative on global issues; intergenerational discussions about global citizenship need to be supported; and work needs to be done in both formal education settings and other institutions or organizations to understand other experiences and thus incorporate a multiplicity of perspectives. In order to accomplish these goals, the participants are calling for different forms of criticality to be implemented.

The youth make frequent mention of the need for their education to include critical media literacy so that they are able to challenge the information, which is presented to them as fact, about people from places outside of Canada. They insist that the role of a global citizen is to critically analyse and assess the information they encounter, especially via the mainstream media. They believe this analysis is needed to question preconceived assumptions and norms so that young people are better able to understand and appreciate different contexts and, therefore, enact appropriate and sustainable change. The youth point out that, in Canada:

> *where citizens have faith in the press, we are often presented with narrow viewpoints that emphasize fellow countries' foreign nature. This, in turn, promotes biases and solidifies social, economic, and cultural gaps, exemplified by the stereotype of so-called 'third world countries,' and the poverty which is supposedly inherent to them.*
>
> White Paper (2015: 3)

Such an understanding of the power of media indicates that the youth are sceptical of the biases and binaries promoted in mainstream media, but are hopeful that increasing criticality can improve the situation.

The young people represented in the White Paper call not only for critical media literacy, but also for an increased presence of critical thinking as a skill and learning outcome of their formal education, which can be applied to ideas they encounter from sources other than the mainstream media. This desire and call for action is exemplified in the following:

> *We, the Canadian youth, believe the current elementary and secondary school curricula are lacking in cultural and global studies … we propose that global citizenship education is introduced early in elementary school and later expanded upon in secondary school … We recommend courses such as these, that encourage students to become more civically and global-minded and active, be introduced in elementary school and made mandatory in high school throughout all of Canada.*
>
> White Paper (2015: 7)

Canadian youth envision a focus on critical thinking and GCE to lead to the learning outcomes of global-mindedness and the ability to take action. They insist that curricular changes are necessary for them to achieve their global citizenship vision. This vision entails young Canadians learning from and contributing to a diversity of perspectives, building solidarity, challenging injustices, and promoting equity.

The youth acknowledge that courses like the one proposed above are already in place in some parts of Canada, such as the mandatory Civics and Citizenship Grade 10 course in Ontario and the Alberta Grade 10 Social Studies curriculum. However, they highlight that they would like to see an emphasis in school curricula on changing the

dominant narrative on global issues, and a type of teacher education that encourages the facilitation of discussion and valuing of different perspectives. The participants state that these suggestions are necessary to ensure that 'the dominant narrative with implications of Western supremacy is not the only perspective to which students are exposed' (White Paper, 2015: 7). Therefore, while the youth express a desire for a greater inclusion and valuing of diverse perspectives and voices, they also want to be provided with the critical analytical tools to identify what the mainstream perspective is, and how it operates, so that it can be viewed not as the only way forward, but as one of many.

The call for critical thinking and critical media literacy is a crucial component of the youths' vision for becoming global citizens. The White Paper acknowledges that while action and engagement are important, before participating or undertaking any sort of action, there needs to be groundwork for an education that fosters critical thinking and values contextualization. This demand for an education that instils critical thinking is one of the most important messages conveyed by the youth through the White Paper. It is an expression of the need to think, to understand, to relate, and to contextualize before and/or with action. It is an important reorienting of global citizenship that does not merely rely on understanding or knowing 'the Other', but on understanding the self and also understanding the self in relation to others and the world. Janeen, a student from Edmonton in Alberta, notes that 'without thinking critically or being taught to think critically about our actions, we fail to reach a broader context and therefore we must make room for educating students about reflection and global consequences to local actions' (White Paper, 2015: 8). This outright demand for criticality as necessary to the youth's vision of global citizenship indicates not only their genuine desire to be part of discussions for change, but a significant shift away from the 'soft' GCE identified by Andreotti in her 2006 work on GCE.

Pushing the discussion further: Engaging critically with the White Paper

While we emphasize that the 2015 White Paper is a timely and generative contribution to discussions about GCE, it is important to consider some contradictions, paradoxes, and limitations that are endemic in discussions in this field, and which are inevitably reproduced in the document. We focus on issues related to voice and difference, and the exceptionalism of the Canadian national identity and global leadership reproduced in the text.

The document identifies that the voices that have historically been silenced, underrepresented, and undervalued must be given merit and included in the conversations about global citizenship – yet the construction of an exalted Canadian

voice and identity is still foundational in the document; desires for consensual and affirming forms of 'problem solving' deliberation with 'difference' are perceived as the best and most logical way forward. Centering the national identity in a call for global citizenship brings a high risk of dissociating the creation of the Canadian state and Canadian nationalism from the historical and systemic reproduction of injustices locally and abroad. Thobani (2007) poses critical questions that trouble the unexamined narrative of an idealized Canadian identity of law-abiding, caring, compassionate citizens committed to multiculturalism by raising the following questions:

> *What were the historical conditions that enabled the emergence and crystallization of these particular qualities? What impact have these articulations of national selfhood had on Native peoples, the original inhabitants of the national territory? How were colonizers, settlers and immigrants, who were the subjects and citizens of other states and societies in the first instance, (re)inscribed as Canadians? What disciplinary and regulatory practices enabled the reproduction of this particular kind of human subject?*
>
> Thobani (2007: 5)

Reinforcing the national identity might have been *politically* necessary; however, *educationally*, it bolsters a notion of Canadian exceptionalism that, if not fundamentally troubled, severely limits the depth of criticality that youth have identified as a key educational commitment.

In the same vein, a commitment to deliberation (expressed in the suggestion of discussions among youth of different cultures to encourage communication and collaborative problem solving) enacts a simplistic conceptualization of inclusion that assumes similar or complementary motivations, goals, and aspirations, and mutually intelligible modes of communication. Ahmed (2012) has effectively demonstrated how the very gesture of inclusion can so easily become a silencing act when it comes with the expectation of affirmation of those who have included, creating a debt for those who have been included. She affirms that racism and whiteness are a disguised systemic phenomenon at work, even in practices of 'inclusion', where one social group has the power to define what is normal, natural, and desirable in ways that make this very power invisible – because the power itself is also presented as normal, natural, and desirable. Similarly, Ellsworth (1992) has problematized the neutrality of dialogue as a means of deliberation and working together. When combined with an exalted Canadian identity (however progressive), deliberation is set in very specific terms, foregrounding white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) and rendering radical differences and incommensurabilities unwelcome and unintelligible in the space of deliberation.

The same unexamined trend is at work in the document's representation of the desire and ability of Canadian youth to see themselves as future leaders contributing to global development. The document acknowledges that there have been major historic problems with Western countries assuming responsibility for the development of 'less developed countries' and sets to promote greater equity and inclusion. Nonetheless, the document shows no gesture towards deconstructing the single story of progress, development, and human evolution that youth have been over-socialized and conditioned into, or how the very imaginary of Canada as a progressive nation is dependent on this narrative. In this sense, the document reproduces the prevalent desire 'to transcend affluence without giving it up' (Jefferess, 2012: 19), found (systemically) in initiatives that promise to address global inequities as long as the control of meaning and distribution remains unchanged. It also demonstrates the power of the dominant global discourses in terms of shaping subjectivities and defining the terms of deliberation by restricting what can be said and understood.

The White Paper (2015: 3) states that 'we as global citizens shall strive to make the world a better place no matter how pointless it seems because that is what we believe in and who we are'. Centering global citizenship on the practice and performance of global leadership can be psychologically motivating and locally empowering for Canadian youth; but educationally, it is deeply problematic, as the trope of 'global leaders' depends on 'global followers' made invisible in the narrative. Gandhi (2011) uses the story of 'The Prince and the Pauper' to illustrate how progressive Western subjects tend to see themselves at the forefront of forms of politics, cosmopolitanism, and democracy, which, using the analogy of the story, are launched from an 'ivory castle'. The gesture of the benevolent prince committed to equity, who wanted to gift everyone the privilege of living in his castle, foreclosed an important gift of the poor, which the prince could have never imagined he would need. Gandhi suggests that this gift could represent radically different possibilities for global citizenship that emphasize humility, equality of worth (of peoples, knowledges, and contributions), disarmament, and the centering of the land – instead of 'man' – in the story of our collective existence.

Another example of this line of thinking is the youths' conceptualization of 'help' in the White Paper: 'It must be ensured that constructive help is provided to build change *for* local people, *with* their needs, wishes and best interests in mind, to create meaningful and sustainable change' (White Paper, 2015: 5). Even though the White Paper critiques voluntourism and its negative implications, it does not dismantle the discourse of 'helping' within which it operates. While the desire to help is often linked to good intentions, in order to construct others as being in need of help, and global citizens as dispensers of such help, an 'us' and 'them' binary is required

(Jorgenson, 2009: 50; see also Bruce, 2013). This binary sustains a hierarchy that places Western knowledge as knowledge of universal worth, and local knowledge as having only contextual worth (Andreotti, 2011). In this sense, it would be unlikely for the document to propose that marginalized communities could teach extremely useful things to 'us' Canadians about our own contradictions, or to offer us 'help' to solve some of the local and global challenges we face today.

The White Paper's (2015: 1) founding questions already envisage some presumed answers: 'What are our obligations as global citizens? What are the rights and responsibilities that we have?' If the process started with a different set of questions, we wonder whether the document might have troubled some of the problematic assumptions presented so far. For instance, questions such as who is generally considered to be a global citizen, who is not, and how come? might have prompted the youth to identify the systemic and historical imbalances that create the cultural hierarchies at the heart of unequal distributions of wealth, labour, and worth in local and global contexts. We also wonder how we would engage youth in a critical evaluation of the process so far, by asking further questions such as: How does the document perpetuate the global inequities that it aims to improve through global citizenship? How does the vision presented in the document enable or silence the voices of others in terms of what Canada's relationship with the rest of the world has been or should be? How is the Canadian state, and ourselves as Canadian youth, implicated and complicit in the problems we want to address? This critical analysis of the 2015 White Paper, in the context of the dominant discourse of global citizenship, is important because it speaks to the conflict in the desire for youth to engage in an education that emphasizes criticality (to question and challenge dominant and mainstream ideas that often structure global relationships) on the one hand, and their current limitations to push beyond assumptions of who can be a global citizen and why, on the other.

It is important to notice the inevitable paradoxical nature of trying to address imbalances of power, voice, and agency in GCE while remaining within the framework of modernity that depends on these very imbalances for its continuity. Earlier in this paper, we noted the youths' acknowledgement of the historical patterns of salvationism, Eurocentrism, and the history of colonialism as factors that contribute to a larger dominant narrative about how to engage in encounters across difference. While the White Paper makes note of these patterns and calls for critical thinking and critical media literacy to be implemented into their formal education, inevitably the document also reproduces the same tendencies, as it relies on the same languages and imaginaries to be intelligible to young people, policy-makers, and educators. It is very easy to confuse 'naming' problems with transforming systemic and historical injustices that require an interruption of the satisfaction with

the system as it is, as well as disinvestments in things that give us a sense of pleasure, comfort, certainty, and security (such as an exalted Canadian identity). The greatest challenge, in this sense, is how to articulate the possibility of interdependent co-existence and responsibility beyond global capitalism and relationships mediated by nation states (Arshad-Ayaz, 2011).

Perhaps the emphasis on consensus and unification of the voice of Canadian youth, despite being sound as a political strategy, still serves to contribute to the perpetuation of the binary between global citizens and the 'Other'. The youth perspective is asserted through the repetition of 'We, the Canadian youth' four times throughout the White Paper (2015: 4, 6, 8). The policy attempts to create one voice for the thousand-plus students it represents and how they think they should engage globally 'with the rest of the world'. While this gives power to the youth voice in the political arena, educationally and existentially it also reproduces problematic tendencies. If unequal representation of Canada and its 'Others' is so endemic (as evidenced in its articulation in the White Paper), how can criticality be used to interrupt it? A focus on complicity, self-implication, and self-reflexivity on the part of the youth could have moved the focus in this direction.

The contradictions, paradoxes, and limitations outlined in this section do not undermine the document and its usefulness in the conversation about GCE. Our critique is offered in solidarity with the document's call for deeper conversations about GCE that are critically informed, multi-voiced, and socially accountable. Educationally, we must consider what it is that traps us in the same frameworks, even when we are trying to ask new questions and seek solutions to inequity and injustice that are perpetuated by the very frameworks we are working within (see the discussion on knowledge imperialism and speculative versus productive knowledge in Naseem and Arshad-Ayaz, 2013). Asking these difficult questions requires a type of critical analysis that can open up different imaginaries of co-existence. We must seek and encourage ways of implementing critical GCE, critical thinking, and critical media literacy, as suggested by the youth in the document, while also remaining cognizant of the limits of the discursive space in which we operate. It must also be recognized up front that the task to imagine (and create) the world differently will require more than critical thinking skills.

Building on the White Paper's vision and call for action

Looking forward, the 2015 White Paper serves as a foundational document in moving conversations about global citizenship into different forms and directions. To summarize the youths' calls for action in the document, they request the following: a deep implementation of criticality into their education through changes in the formal curricula that will allow them to challenge and question the dominant narratives

they are presented with about global relationships; support for intergenerational discussions about global citizenship; and a commitment to diversifying the perspectives present in conversations about GCE. The document also serves to move discussions of global citizenship beyond inclusion and pursuits of global equity through a genuine desire to see a foundational shift in perspective that addresses historical patterns of global citizenship engagements, especially in contexts marked by settler colonialism, such as Canada. While the document outlines specific calls for action, it also acts as the groundwork for calls to push the conversations about global citizenship into new realms that embody notions of criticality and complicity. Below are some of the ways in which the White Paper serves to bridge conversations about GCE and move discussions into new realms.

Through the White Paper's emphasis on addressing issues within Canada – and not merely those perceived abroad – it is clear that the document serves to champion a shift from understanding GCE as primarily located in the domain of 'over there', and (re)associates global citizenship with everyday actions and responsibilities. We see, within the White Paper, the type of questioning of mainstream assumptions of what is 'good' and what it means to 'help' as an opening up of discussions, which allow youth to understand their role as global citizens as not merely an identity that they take up when engaging in global initiatives; rather, their very existence is woven by threads of global interconnectivity on a daily basis. The type of educational changes that the youth would like to see in terms of criticality allow us to consider the ways in which we are linked to these grand issues. This would shift the conceptualization of global citizenship from tackling large international topics to engaging in ethical ways that acknowledge our interconnectivity in our everyday actions (Arshad-Ayaz and Naseem, 2015).

In order to encourage Canadian youth to go beyond their understandings of their global relationships, influenced and constrained by the dominant narrative, an exposure of the way the dominant discourse distances Canadian youth from their ongoing and lived relationships with others is necessary. This type of questioning of the dominant discourse could be precisely what is absent in the White Paper. It is also what the youth are implicitly asking that their education system push them to do. To understand one's active role and complicity in the global inequities that occur requires self-reflexivity and the ability to cope with unlearning what one thought (and was taught) was true and universal (Graham and Arshad-Ayaz, 2016). Questioning what is 'normal' and assumed can create uncertain outcomes. We argue that to respond to the Canadian youths' call for critical thinking and critical literacy would require teaching youth how to cope with uncertainty and discomfort, through a pedagogy of discomfort (Zembylas and McGlynn, 2012; Curry-Stevens, 2007; Boler, 1999; hooks, 1994).

We underscore the importance of the youths' call for enhanced teaching of critical thinking and critical literacy, as well as the pursuit of a foundational shift in perspective. However, we argue that such changes should be viewed as tools to seek alternatives and pursue a foundational shift in perspective, not merely as a shortcut to achieving or participating in effective global initiatives. It is our hope that through the steps outlined in the White Paper to produce a foundational shift in perspective, which encourages youth to challenge dominant narratives about successful global citizenship, the document can facilitate the movement of GCE discussions beyond an emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of individuals, and towards an educational recognition of the need for alternative forms of existence that do not rely on a violent and unsustainable (dominant) system.

Conclusions

Through the White Paper, Canadian youth seek to transform what it means to be a global citizen by suggesting what actions constitute their ideal of GCE. While the influence of dominant discourses of global citizenship are apparent in the ways in which the youth understand GCE, it is indeed encouraging to see that they do traverse discursive borders to explore ways in which they could be part of the problem rather than the solution. This is evident in their desire to incorporate a commitment to criticality in curricular and non-curricular facets of their education. Their desire could be read as a demand to open up spaces within GCE to critique the foundational features of GCE itself, and its inherent power imbalances. In this regard, the Canadian students demand more than what 'soft global citizenship' has to offer. Yet, what is also apparent is the power of the entrenched discourses of liberal multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and entrepreneurial global citizenship, which hamper the ability to question complicity in the production of global inequities. Demands such as the need for better intercultural understanding, empathy, and universal humanity are indicative of the marked influence of a liberal-humanist interpretation of global citizenship. Similarly, the influence of the powerful discourse of entrepreneurial understanding of global citizenship is also evident in students' desire to be global leaders and not to question their own marginalization or the dominant model of development. These tensions in the White Paper are reminiscent of the debates in GCE literature, between the proponents of those who understand global citizenship in terms of Enlightenment-driven Eurocentric generalizations of 'human-ness' and 'common-ness' (with white and Europe as standards), and those who call for recognition of colonial difference as a starting point to think about GCE.

The youths' articulation of GCE in the White Paper is both a reflection of the prevalent educational system in Canada as well as a mirror to its blind spots. In the youths' demand for the tools to critically engage with the narratives presented to them about global citizenship and global relations across difference, they are asking

us, as educators, not only to develop new courses, curricula, and materials, but also to prepare the youth to learn with and from the resulting uncertainty, complexity, and discomfort that accompanies the criticality in which they wish to engage.

The Canadian youth articulate in the White Paper (2015: 3) that '[i]nstead of the idea of one group of people saving another, it should be a collaboration of all involved groups working together, as equals, to address the problem'. By implementing the educational actions they call for – such as an emphasis on critical thinking, critical media literacy, and strategies to challenge the dominant narrative on global issues – it is our hope that the Canadian youth will be pushed to imagine forms of global citizenship that challenge the discursive limits within which they operate. By pursuing global education practices that embody a commitment to educating youth to cope with uncertainty, as the result of critical thinking grounded in self-reflexivity and complexity, we hope that Canadian youth will be able to continue to question and to learn to expand the possibilities of their imagination towards a critical, anti-oppressive, anti-colonial global citizenship – and beyond.

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