Citizenship Profiles of Young Canadians

Michel Pagé and Marie-Hélène Chastenay
Department of Psychology and CEETUM, Université de Montréal

Cette recherche a été réalisée avec la collaboration très appréciée d'Alan Sears et d'Andy Hughes de l'Université du Nouveau Brunswick et d'Yvonne Hébert de l'Université de Calgary. Elle a été financée par des subventions provenant du Fonds FCAR, du CRSH, du Programme d'études ethniques du Ministère du Patrimoine Canadien et de Métropolis.

In this short paper, we offer some results of a comparison of young citizens who were studying in colleges or universities in three Canadian provinces during the year 2000: New Brunswick (N = 515), Québec (N = 1195) and Alberta (N = 823), their mean age being respectively 18, 19 and 20. Around two thirds of the samples were females and one third males. The Québec and New-Brunswick samples present an approximately representative number of respondents who have French or English as a first language. Young Canadians of first and second generation of immigration are also strongly represented in all three samples. The same questionnaire was used in all provinces, although we obviously adapted certain questions, for instance, when referring to linguistic policies and to the province's cultural characteristics.

The comparison is based on three broad dimensions: **social identities**, **agreement with equality norms** and **civic participation**, each composed of four factors identified through statistical analysis. This paper will consider those three dimensions together and focus on the identification, through the use of cluster analysis, of the number of profiles of citizenship necessary to give a full account of the data collected. Although the questionnaire provided a large variety of socio-demographic information, the aim was to capture the actual forms of citizenship present in each provincial sample, without basing our analyses and comparisons on the categories thus made available. It ensues that profiles are heterogeneous in their socio-demographic composition. In order to respect the specificity of each provincial context, separate factorial and cluster analyses were performed and the items composing some factor differ slightly between the three samples. The questionnaire used in this research measures the process of identification, attitudes and actual or intended behaviours. Even if it doesn't measure values *per se*, the comparison of profiles reveals similarities and differences from which we can generate hypotheses about their underlying values.

The **social identity dimension** is made up of two main factors: civic identities and self-defined cultural (group) identity. We have also added to this dimension the attitude towards linguistic diversity, which presents remarkably high correlations with the identity factors.

The most striking general result to emerge is that the cluster analysis for each province has differentiated types of citizens who are quite different from one another with respect to some, but not all, factors within as well as between samples. Thus, we obtained four types for Québec and for New Brunswick and five types for Alberta, between which, as we will see later, there is much similarity.

In Québec, one type presents a high average on all factors of the identity dimension, while another type scores low on all factors. The two other types feature contrasting scores between provincial and national identification, one of these represents a high level of identification to Canada and a lower level of identification to Québec and the other presents the opposite profile. Even among these two types, both poles of civic identity are not antagonistic; rather, we find an order of precedence between the two. Both of these types do not distinguish themselves in their level of cultural identification.

Interesting similarities and differences among the three provinces come to light when we consider the New-Brunswick and Alberta data where, in contrast with Québec, there is no separate factor of provincial identification, civic identity being entirely expressed in a single factor that amalgamates Canadian and provincial identities.

Despite this important characteristic, we find in these two provinces a type which presents, like in Québec, the highest score for civic and cultural identity, as well as two types in Alberta and one in New Brunswick featuring the weakest levels of civic and cultural identification. The remaining profiles in these two provinces present moderately high levels of identification.

Thus, one of the interesting general results seems to be the emergence of two similar types in all three provinces, one presenting the lowest social identity levels while the other presents highest levels.

The composition of the factors measuring civic identity in the three provinces also presents an interesting contrast. In New Brunswick, the only items composing this factor measure collective self-esteem whereas, in Québec, items relating to the feeling of resemblance to the other members of the community add themselves to collective self-esteem items. In Alberta, the items measure social resemblance and proximity, but no item measuring collective self-esteem is included in the factor. This result may be an indication of differences in values linked to civic identities.

In Québec, the type with a higher level of provincial identification strongly distinguishes itself through a rather negative attitude towards the use of languages other than French in the public sphere, the items for this factor measuring support for the application of Bill 101. The contrasting type with a higher level of Canadian identification is more favourable to the public use of another language. As could be expected, the majority of Francophones in the sample is to be found in the first type and the majority of Anglophones in the second.

In Québec, the type with a higher level of provincial identification strongly distinguishes itself through a rather negative attitude towards the use of languages other than French in the public sphere.

In New Brunswick, two types present a less positive attitude toward that province's bilingualism policy. They account for 60% of the Anglophones comprised in that sample. Two thirds of Francophones can be found in the two other types that present a favourable attitude towards bilingualism. It thus becomes apparent that the members of linguistic minorities in Quebec and New Brunswick are predominantly in favour of policies that protect the public use of minority languages.

In Alberta, types are highly contrasted in their attitude towards the use of languages other than English. Three types demonstrate tolerance in this regard, while the remaining two strongly endorse the exclusive use of English. The first language of respondents does not distinguish between these types.

Thus, in all three provinces, linguistic policies appear to be a controversial subject that divides citizens, although a little less so in New Brunswick than in the other two provinces.

The **equalitarian dimension** comprises four factors: (1) the inclusion of cultural diversity in the perception of the province's collective identity; (2) the attractiveness of relations with people different from oneself (general unspecified difference); (3) the attitude towards reasonable accommodations; and, (4) the attitude towards the presence of persons of diverse cultural identities in the public sphere (cultural difference).

The comparison reveals that the levels of agreement expressed in Québec and in Alberta are similar, that they oscillate around the mid-point of the scale and that the level increases from the first to the fourth factor. We notice a slightly higher level of agreement with equality standards in New Brunswick, which, of the three provinces, is the one that attracts the least immigrants and includes the smallest population of Neo-Canadians.

In all three provinces, the type that features the highest level of both civic and cultural identification reveals itself as the most clearly pluralistic in its relation to cultural diversity. If we leave aside this particular type and concentrate on the others, we notice that the most significant results in Alberta and Québec occur in relation to the accommodation factor. In Québec, two types express a more negative attitude and the two others demonstrate a more positive attitude. In Alberta, we observe a sharp contrast between two types that score very low and two that score significantly higher. It comes as no surprise that the subject of accommodation is a controversial issue in Quebec and Alberta, since these provinces have been embroiled in intense public debates over cases of accommodation and that nothing of the sort has occurred in New Brunswick.

For the other three factors, the contrasts between types are not very significant in New Brunswick and Québec. A high contrast between types occurs between the two low identity types in Alberta, where one presents higher pluralistic attitudes than the other. From this result, and considering also that the high identity level type has the most pluralistic attitudes, we may infer that the level of collective identity does not appear to be directly associated with the agreement with equality.

It is interesting to note that the two types, which, in Québec and Alberta, present the least positive attitudes towards accommodations, both have positive attitudes towards the presence of a significant number of individuals of diverse cultural identities in the social and public sphere. They can accept the place occupied by cultural diversity where this does not involve exceptional measures that modify the traditional standards of public institutions.

The **participation dimension** includes four factors. Current participation is measured through actual political or civic participation behaviours, both inside and outside of the place of study, in the 12 months prior to filling in the questionnaire. Future participation is a factor that measures the declared intention of investing oneself in political and community activities, opinion and interest groups and charity work in the coming years. Trust in political figures measures the extent to which respondents believe that serving the public interest is the main concern of elected officials. Finally, the fourth factor, Efficiency of participation, measures the respondents' estimation of the degree to which citizen investment in participation can effectively contribute to obtaining the results s/he seeks or desires.

For this dimension, in all three provinces, we find that the type characterized by high identity levels and high pluralistic attitudes also has the highest levels of response for all factors measuring participation, whereas the type of citizens that presents low identity scores also scores the lowest

on the participation measures, the other types always scoring between these two. From a general point of view, this dimension provides the least contrast between profiles; the levels of response falling quite clearly below the middle of the scale and the contrasts between types rarely exceeding one point on a ten-point scale.

In Québec the Current participation factor indicates involvement in the areas of political, community and social life. The level of response, which is clearly below the middle of the scale, must be interpreted as a low level of participative investment in a wide range of activities of political and civic participation, extending much further than school-related activities which might mainly serve socialization purposes.

Three items that make up the Current participation factor in New Brunswick and Alberta refer to participation at the place of study and 2 items measuring out-of-school community involvement complete this factor. A very high level of response of two types in New Brunswick thus mainly indicates a strong participation in student activities at the place of study, which may involve many activities related to the social student life and student cultural activities. Current participation in Alberta is of the same nature, although the levels are not as strong, which could indicate a lesser importance of social life at the place of study.

The same holds true for the declared intentions concerning future participation, where most of the types are consistent in their response level. However, a few do express the intention of making a greater investment in the future than at the present time. Here again, we must take into account the fact that, in Québec and Alberta, the level of response covers a wide range of activities of political and civic participation. As regards the political domain, this relates to a highly active involvement in political life, such as joining a political party, working for elections, and contacting politicians to express one's opinions. The results express the fact that youths in all three provinces intend to occasionally invest themselves in a wide array of activities representing a high level of political and civic participation.

It should be noted that voting in elections is not included in these factors because the level of response to this item is generally quite high and varies very little within and across all samples. Thus, the intention to vote in elections is very widespread among these youths. The interpretation of this level of response must nevertheless take into account the data pertaining to the actual level of voting participation among youths between 18 and 24 years of age. Although our respondents show a strong intention to vote, a recent survey reveals that only 28% of young Canadians within this age group exercise their right to vote (Léger Marketing, La Presse, June 10th 2002).

As can easily be observed, the level of trust towards elected officials scores below the middle of the scale and the various types are not differentiated by this factor. Young citizens appear to share a feeling that is apparently generalised throughout the population, as public opinion polls have also revealed.

On the other hand, as regards the Efficiency of Participation factor, apart from the low identity type that tends to score lower than the others in all three provinces, there is no differentiation between types. It should nevertheless be noted that this factor provides the highest levels of response among the four Participation factors both in Alberta and New Brunswick. We observe a medium size positive correlation in the three samples between the Efficiency factor and the Current and Future Participation factors throughout the sample. Although the most participative respondents are also those who give the highest scores for Efficiency of participation, a high level of confidence in efficacy is only linked to a very moderate level of participation.

In all three provinces, the type that features the highest level of both civic and cultural identification reveals itself as the most clearly pluralistic in its relation to cultural diversity.

The first general observation that follows from the present study is that there are important differences between young citizens within each province, but that those internal differences do not generate an indecipherable diversity, since we can summarize the date in a four type typology, in two cases, and a five type one in the case of Alberta. The second general observation is that studying samples in several provinces does not indefinitely increase the types of citizens. On the contrary, as was shown previously, we find a limited number of types in each province and two types that are clearly comparable across provinces. Even if those two types are not similar on all factors, as only the Quebec sample distinguishes the provincial and Canadian identities, the overall pattern of response remains the same across the three provinces.

If we consider provinces that share similar experiences, a large linguistic diversity or, as is the case in Alberta and Québec, a large immigrant population, the comparison reveals differences between profiles that reflect true controversies. For example, in the case of linguistic diversity, members of the linguistic majority in each province are mainly found in profiles which are characterized by a preference for the use of the majority language in the public sphere. In the case of the attitude towards reasonable accommodations, one profile in Québec and two in Alberta have the less favourable attitude towards accommodations which was strongly expressed in the public opinion, as opposed to other types which appear much more favourable. We have also presented similar aspects across provinces, particularly in the case of participation.

We can thus conclude by proposing that research resolved on studying the diversity of actual forms of citizenship reveals more complexity but can still prove to be fruitful, as it seems improbable that it shall wander into a limitless heterogeneity.