

# What are the gender, class and ethnicity of citizenship? A study of upper secondary school students' views on Citizenship Education in England and Sweden

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**T**he purpose of this article is to examine and compare how the ethnicity, gender and social class conditions of citizenship influence, and are understood by, teachers and secondary school students in England and Sweden. The intention is also to compare how conditions of citizenship are dealt with in social studies for upper secondary school in England and Sweden. The relationship between students' education and real conditions for citizenship is complex and partly differs between, as well as within, the two countries. The present comparative examination and analysis aims to visualize both specific and common conditions of citizenship in England and Sweden. This is to draw attention to how the meaning of frequently used terminology and images in the field of Citizenship Education do not always coincide with teachers' and students' own opinions and perceived meanings. By doing this we hope to contribute some new knowledge regarding one of the most difficult challenges that citizenship education is struggling with, whether the provided knowledge and values prepare today's youth to defend and develop future democratic and just societies. To achieve this, we have conducted a number of interviews with teachers and secondary school students and asked them about their experiences and opinions regarding Citizenship Education and the nature of citizenship. The

following main questions were central to the interviews:

- What knowledge and skills does a citizen need in a democracy and how is the meaning of citizenship connected to gender, class and ethnicity?
- How are personal liberties affected by the citizen's gender, class and ethnicity according to the respondents?
- What are teachers' and students' experiences of Citizenship Education and how does school pay attention to citizens' conditions based on gender, class and ethnicity?

In recent years, both public debate and published research<sup>1</sup> have shown that, in order to understand the real meanings of citizenship, it is necessary to understand and interpret formal citizenship rights and responsibilities from individuals' social and cultural conditions as characterised by gender, ethnicity and social class. During the 2000s, the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) presented recurrent reports that shows how socio-economic background, in combination with foreign background, are crucial for pupils' school results. The reports also show how segregation between schools and residential areas has increased on the basis of residents' socio-economic and ethnic background.<sup>2</sup> This group of students are a part of tomorrow's citizens, which are also likely to remain marginalized even as adults. The links between Swedish school policy, pupils' school results and the democratic development of society at large has been observed and analysed in contemporary Swedish research.<sup>3</sup>

In England, the picture is slightly different with the 7 per cent of

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<sup>1</sup> For example: Leighton, 2012; Shafir, 1998; Sheldrick, 2015. The difference is illustrated by the perception of several respondents that men and women are *formally* entitled to equal pay but, in *reality*, there is a pay imbalance.

<sup>2</sup> Swedish National Agency's (Skolverket) reports from the years 2004, 2012 and 2016.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: The Swedish Governments official investigations (SOU); 2005:112, Englund, 2000; Boström, 2001; Dahlstedt, 2009; Strandbrink and Åkerström, 2010; Larsson, 2013.

the population who experience private education being over-represented in positions of power and influence. In May 2012, the then Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove provided a list of leaders in the arts, sciences, politics, sports, journalism, entertainment and other fields who had all been to independent schools, concluding that

“the sheer scale, the breadth and the depth, of private school dominance of our society points to a deep problem in our country . . . Those who are born poor are more likely to stay poor and those who inherit privilege are more likely to pass on privilege in England than in any comparable county.”<sup>4</sup>

There is significant evidence that socio-economic background, in combination with ethnic background, continue to be highly influential on pupils' school results.<sup>5</sup> Links between national education policy, social class and pupils' school results appear to remain entrenched in England.

When we identify cultural and social conditions as in any way hindering the status of citizenship, we do so from a perspective which does not seek to blame the less powerful for holding particular cultural perceptions but which recognises the barriers a dominant culture sets against those with less power. The insight that tells us it is necessary to comprehend individuals' social and cultural conditions in order to understand and interpret their formal citizenship rights and responsibilities is not, however, particularly recent. Marx wrote over 160 years ago that, “if you assume a particular civil society . . . you will get particular political conditions”<sup>6</sup>, from which it must follow that any society divided on the grounds of class, ethnicity and gender will present political conditions which reflect such divisions. It is also the case that there is likely to be a significant space between *what is* (the real) and *what is perceived* (the formal); just because there is inequality it does not follow that everyone is aware of that

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<sup>4</sup> Gove, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Gillborn, et al, 2012; UK government, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Marx and Engels, 1973, p. 660.

inequality.

## **A theoretical approach to citizenship and how it interacts with gender, class and ethnic background**

In order to clarify the conditions necessary for citizenship in its real meaning (as opposed to the merely formal), we refer to the British sociologist T. H. Marshall's noted lecture in 1949. In Marshall's main thesis regarding Citizenship is that, in Western industrialized countries, it takes three forms:

- i. *Civil Citizenship*, which is represented in equality before the law, freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and other personal liberties;
- ii. *Political Citizenship*, typified by universal and equal suffrage
- iii. *Social Citizenship*, including the right to education, health care, and other conditions for social welfare.<sup>7</sup>

These forms of citizenship share equality as a common principle, which must include social citizenship as a right that involves benefits for all citizens. Marshall defined citizenship as “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community”<sup>8</sup>, in accordance with his forms above. As Yuval-Davis points out, by linking citizenship to membership in a community, Marshall's definition makes it possible to discuss citizenship as potentially simultaneous membership of several collectives, such as neighbourhood, social class, ethnicity, nation or international community.<sup>9</sup> We regard the meanings of civil and political citizenship to be understandable in themselves, while social citizenship requires further definition and clarification. Social citizenship relates to the extent to which people of all socially constructed categories have sufficient conditions and capabilities to be considered as full citizens of any given society. This is not

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<sup>7</sup> Marshall, 1950/1991.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 6.

only in terms of their legal status but has to include their status and experiences in relation to those of other citizens and as seen by those other citizens. It is not enough, for example, to have legislation that grants equal rights with regard to pay or employment; social citizenship requires that people's daily experience is that they do have equality of payment and employment, and that their fellow citizens regard this as natural and proper. What is therefore more significant here is recognition by the 'ordinary person' of the attitudes, accepted practices, existing prejudices etc. which limit people's social citizenship, i.e. the *real* citizenship.

Feminist scholars have criticized Marshall's position for failing to discuss the issues of gender and racial hierarchies within society.<sup>10</sup> While this might be excused by some to be a reflection of Marshall's time and place, we consider that this nonetheless ignores the limitations which are placed on Marshall's position as an approach to be currently applied. We agree with the criticisms of the lack of awareness and consideration of gendered and ethnically imposed hierarchies, and believe that class, ethnic and gender perspectives must all be included in the real meaning of citizenship.<sup>11</sup> In this intersectional approach, sexuality and disability are also important aspects of and influenced by people's conditions, and are therefore also needed for a more complete understanding of the meaning of citizenship. These latter factors were not included in this study and we recognise this as a shortcoming and as aspects of real citizenship to be considered as our research continues to develop.

As we show below,<sup>12</sup> recent research and debate in both countries show how gender, class and ethnicity have great influence on students' conditions and results in school, which generally has

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<sup>10</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> The theoretical approach based on T. H. Marshall's theory of citizenship and Fraser and Gordon's critique of the same is also used in Nielsen, 2015, p. 103-104.

<sup>12</sup> Read the section on "The importance of ethnicity, gender and class for students' school results in a Swedish/English context" below.

shown to also have a significant impact on youngsters' future prospects as adult citizens. In this intersectional approach, we support the view of Yuval-Davis that these aspects in focus should not primarily be seen as perspectives of social differences in an additive way. Instead, we consider them as aspects that, depending on the specific empirical context, interact mutually to constitute the conditions that affect people differently.<sup>13</sup> As an example, a female student of Asian and middle class background in England might not share her experiences and conditions from school with an English middle class girl, nor with an Asian middle class girl in Sweden. In order to avoid getting lost in diffusely relativity reasoning we make use of Yuval-Davis' three analytical levels from which political and social belongings are constructed:

"The first facet concerns social locations; the second relates to people's identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings and the third relates to ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others' belonging/s. These different facets are interrelated, but cannot be reduced to each other."<sup>14</sup>

As the present study focuses on students' conditions and values, citizenship education as a school's mission to educate and prepare the future citizens of society, knowledge is a key issue. A person's knowledge can be formed and influenced by social locations in several ways. For instance the formal school system, based on political decisions, represents in itself a set of values as well as objectives and guidelines for the schooling students are offered. In many Western countries, residential segregation has long been a growing problem both between urban and rural areas as well as between neighbourhoods in cities. The different geographical areas of people's belonging and origin are examples of how social locations have multiplied in pace with globalization. These, often multifaceted, experiences give people different types of knowledge that is more or less valued and

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<sup>13</sup> Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

useful in a certain context. The diverse contexts compose an essential part of the identity and emotional attachments a person has to different groups. For some young people, the school has a crucial importance for the opportunities or limitations they may have later in life. For others, the importance of social and cultural origin overshadows the importance of formal school education. As Yuval-Davis points out, ‘not all belonging/s are as important to people in the same way and to the same extent and emotions, as perceptions, shift in different times and situations and are more or less reflective.’<sup>15</sup> For example, certain identities and affiliations tend to become more important to people the more threatened they become or believe they become. From this follows the third analytical level, that different social locations and belongings are also strongly affected by how these are assessed and valued by one self and by others. It may be a question of whether they are considered as good or bad for a group or person. This analytical level of ethical and political value systems is also related to how categorical boundaries should be drawn in the sense of attitudes and ideologies to be considered as inclusive or exclusive.<sup>16</sup>

The intersectional approach, based on Yuval-Davis research, represents a necessary development of Marshall’s theory of citizenship, one which aims to visualise the complex picture of how citizenship and citizenship education interacts with gender, class and ethnic background in England and Sweden.

### *Citizenship Education provision in the two countries*

Citizenship Education has been a statutory part of England’s National Curriculum for secondary age pupils (12-16) since 2002. Public examination is not compulsory and it is frequently the case that schools do not observe the minimum statutory requirements<sup>17</sup>. It can also be noted that the National Curriculum

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<sup>15</sup> Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> Keating et al, 2010; Leighton, 2012, 2013; Ofsted, 2006, 2010.

for Citizenship has gone through various iterations,<sup>18</sup> which has made it difficult for teachers, particularly non-specialists, to respond to statutory requirements.<sup>19</sup>

There are no compulsory subjects for the research age group (16-18 years) in England's National Curriculum, and Citizenship Education is no longer available for study by the research age-group, so it is as well to be aware of the background education that age-group should have had in the subject. At the time of conducting interviews there was no requirement for Citizenship Education in the primary phase (4-10 years). The National Curriculum for 11-14years provides detailed direction on the content to be taught, with the overarching principles being that

Teaching should develop pupils' understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Pupils should use and apply their knowledge and understanding while developing skills to research and interrogate evidence, debate and evaluate viewpoints, present reasoned arguments and take informed action.<sup>20</sup>

Some new content is required for 14-16 years, with the expectation that a spiral curriculum<sup>21</sup> will enable greater breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding. The instruction here is that:

Teaching should build on the [above] programme of study to deepen pupils' understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Pupils should develop their skills to be able to use a range of research strategies, weigh up evidence, make persuasive arguments and substantiate their conclusions. They should experience and evaluate different ways

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<sup>18</sup> QCA, 2002, 2007, 2010; Department for Education, 2013a.

<sup>19</sup> Keating et al, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> National Curriculum in England, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Bruner, 2009.



that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society.<sup>22</sup>

As Citizenship is no longer available as an examination subject for students aged 16-18, the sample in England were primarily students of Sociology and/or Politics and/or Psychology, with English Literature also widely studied.

Best practise in the teaching of Citizenship Education militates against the use of textbooks as many of the 'facts' and personalities central to the subject change at a pace which outstrips processes of publication. Specialist teachers of Citizenship Education are often encouraged during their pre-service education to ensure that learning is tailored to their pupils' interests and experiences.<sup>23</sup> The report which recommended the introduction of Citizenship Education into England's National Curriculum also offered advice on teaching strategies, advice which has been unevenly adopted.<sup>24</sup> The state school pupils in the sample all attended schools which complied with the statutory curriculum and were taught by specialist teachers. Neither situation was the case at the independent school.

The Swedish school is expected to equip students with the skills and knowledge they need as citizens in a democratic society, which may also be called civic competences. The national curriculum presents frameworks, conditions and goals for the school's mission to promote democracy, fundamental values and norms. In the Swedish school, and unlike the English school system, citizenship education is not represented as a separate school subject; instead it is the community-oriented school subjects<sup>25</sup> that, together with a set of norms and values, are responsible for citizenship education. In the Curriculum for upper secondary school it appears from the first paragraph that

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<sup>22</sup> National Curriculum in England, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Leighton, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Keating et al. 2010.

<sup>25</sup> That is social studies, history, religion and geography.

“Education should impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based.”<sup>26</sup> When it comes to societal rights and obligations the schools fundamental values regarding citizenship education are spelled out as:

It is not in itself sufficient that education imparts knowledge of fundamental democratic values. It must also be carried out using democratic working methods and develop the students’ ability and willingness to take personal responsibility and participate actively in societal life. Opportunities for students to exercise influence over their education and take responsibility for their studies requires that the school clarifies the goals of education, its contents and working forms, as well as the rights and obligations that students have.<sup>27</sup>

Among the community-oriented school subjects, with special responsibility for citizenship education, the contents of the subject Social studies distinguishes itself with the clearest focus on the mission to prepare and train future citizens. The subject is by its nature interdisciplinary and consists mainly from political science, sociology and humanities.<sup>28</sup> In the aim of the subject Social Studies it says for example; “[...] teaching should contribute to creating conditions for active participation in the life of society.”<sup>29</sup> The overall subject content should give students the opportunities to develop the following:

1) Knowledge of democracy and human rights, both individual and collective rights, social issues, social conditions, as well as the function and organization of different societies from local to global levels based on different interpretations and perspectives.

2) Knowledge of the importance of historical

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<sup>26</sup> Skolverket, *Curriculum for the upper secondary school*, 2013, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> It also includes other disciplines from social sciences and humanities.

<sup>29</sup> Skolverket, *Subject Plan in Social studies*, 2011.

conditions and how different ideological, political, economic, social and environmental conditions affect and are affected by individuals, groups and social structures.

3) The ability to analyse social issues and identify causes and consequences using concepts, theories, models and methods from the social sciences.

4) The ability to search for, critically examine and interpret information from different sources and assess their relevance and credibility.

5) The ability to express their knowledge of social studies in various types of presentation.

These different knowledge and skills are taught in courses of three different levels. For all secondary school programmes - both vocational and university preparatory - the first level of 100 credits is compulsory, which means basic knowledge in the subject of social studies. The core content covers points 1-5 above and is for example about how democracy and political systems work at local and national level, and in the EU; human rights; the labour market; group and individual identity; personal finance and methods for critically processing information.<sup>30</sup> It is also compulsory for all programmes to study the first 100 credits in the courses of history and 50 credits of the subject religion.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to these fundamental compulsory courses, it is only the pre-university programmes that offer in-depth education in these subjects. Before the school reform GY2011, all secondary school programmes gave competence to higher education, but as a result of the reform, the (for citizenship education so

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Skolverket, "program structure and degree objectives", 2016.

important) community-oriented compulsory courses at higher levels disappeared from the vocational programmes.<sup>32</sup>

*The importance of ethnicity, gender and class for students' school results in a Swedish context*

In the light of recent years' socio-economic and political changes in Sweden, research has shown that gender, class belonging and ethnic origin *do* have significant impact on the extent to which students succeed in school as well as for their future and general life conditions as adult citizens. Englund described in 1999 how one of the most obvious changes that have taken place in the Swedish school system happened in the 1980s' shift in approach from the 'public good' to the 'private good'. In short, the 'public good' approach derived from a tradition of education where post-war reforms aimed at providing an equal education and citizenship education that was available to all regardless of background. The shift to a 'private good' represented social and political changes with liberal overtones in the 1980' in Sweden as well as in other Western countries. Focus shifted from equality in its former meaning to the individual's/family's needs and freedom of choice for the children's future. According to 'private good' private school alternatives, school capitation allowance and a free choice of school have been reforms that in a fundamental way changed the conditions for school activities.<sup>33</sup> The Swedish school agency presented a report in 2006 in order to illuminate the development of equivalence in schools during the period 1998 – 2004. It appeared from the report that equivalence in Swedish schools has deteriorated during the period covered. One conclusion was that freedom of choice and decentralization reforms in the early 1990s in all probability contributed to this development, although other factors may also have played a

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<sup>32</sup> Students in vocational programmes, however, may within each programme select courses that give general qualifications for higher education. But, unfortunately, this is not so common.

<sup>33</sup> Englund, 1999, pp. 30-32. Swedish school politics are discussed further in Nielsen, 2013 and 2015.

role.<sup>34</sup>

In 2012 a follow up to the 2006 report was presented which provided a longer time perspective. The 2012 report showed that results between schools had increased significantly which, from an international perspective, was a low level that more than doubled since the late 1990s.<sup>35</sup> During the same period of school reforms, which is the last two-three decades, Swedish society has also changed regarding socio-economic conditions shown as widening gaps between rich and poor. For example, the income gap has increased by 31 percent between 1991 and 2010.<sup>36</sup> In the 2012 report the School agency concluded that over the whole period, 1998-2011 there have been no major changes in the importance of the connections between socio-economic background and deteriorating school results. The student groups which have the greatest difficulties to achieve passing grades in school are especially students of immigrant background, combined with poor socio-economic conditions.<sup>37</sup> In the PISA report presented in 2013, it appears that Swedish 15-year-olds' knowledge of mathematics, reading and science continues to deteriorate. This trend appears as the worst of all OECD countries.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to class and ethnicity, school results also depend on gender. A summary of the Swedish school statistics shows that boys, on average, reach 90 % of the girls' achievements. There is also a larger proportion of boys who receive various types of special education. The statistics also show that the differences in results based on gender are not related to ethnicity or social background. Although the proportion among the most low achievers are boys, that does not explain the whole average difference of 90 %.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> National Agency for Education, "Summary", 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Government's spring budget bill, 2012.

<sup>37</sup> National Agency for Education, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> PISA, 2012, Education's report.

<sup>39</sup> SOU, 2010:51, p. 12.

In summary, students' affiliation based on gender, class and ethnicity are of great importance to both the greater disparities and the total deterioration of the results in Swedish schools during the past decades. The causes of these correlations have been analysed and discussed in numerous reports and studies, and is not the primary focus here.

## **The importance of ethnicity, gender and class for students' school results in an English context**

Recent research shows that, to some extent similar to Sweden, social and cultural conditions continue to have a significant impact on students' success in school in England, as well as on their future and general life conditions as adult citizens. However, it is very clear that the effects of gender and ethnicity on examination performance do not show success as a white male prerogative<sup>40</sup> as girls outperform boys in almost all subjects and, within social classes, there is little significant difference in achievement by ethnic groups other than that students of Chinese origin are more likely to gain higher grades.

Girls continue to outperform boys at the age of 16, when school pupils in England sit their public examinations prior to either leaving education for work or continuing in academic or vocation education for at least two further years. Other than in economics, mathematics, and physics, girls achieve higher grades than boys at 16 and 18.<sup>41</sup> Girls out-perform boys in every social class, although middle class boys out-perform working class girls. While it is possible to identify an overall higher level of achievement for girls, grades vary considerably between subjects and such data also have to be considered with regard to entry numbers.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> UK Government, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Social Trends, 2014.

Ethnicity is perceived as having a more complex relationship with education than in Sweden. Pupils of Chinese origin achieved a pass rate of 78.2%, the highest for any ethnic group, and they are joined by Indian, Irish, Bangladeshi and black African pupils in outperforming their white British peers.<sup>43</sup>

Social class is less clearly definable than gender and ethnicity but it remains true that “[s]ocial class remains the strongest predictor of academic achievement”,<sup>44</sup> a situation made more complex by other factors when we consider that “pupils eligible for free school meals, those whose first language is other than English, and pupils with SEN [Special Educational Needs] continue to perform less well than their peers”.<sup>45</sup> In England 12 % of pupils do not have English as a first language and, across the country, over 300 languages are spoken in the homes of school-aged pupils.

While overall examination results in English schools have not shown deteriorated in recent years, it is clear that such results in areas of multiple deprivation continue to fall behind those in more affluent and otherwise less deprived regions.<sup>46</sup> The pupil group which has the greatest difficulties in achieving passing grades is working-class white males, with recent female migrants from the Indian sub-continent also faring particularly poorly. It has been demonstrated<sup>47</sup> that socio-economic deprivation is the single most important factor in educational attainment in England in this period, irrespective of gender or ethnicity. PISA (2015) confirms that immigrant status had no statistically significant impact on examination performance.

It is therefore beyond dispute that students' gender, class and ethnicity are of great importance to the disparities in results in recent decades, with social class being the significantly most

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<sup>43</sup> UK Government, 2016

<sup>44</sup> Perry and Francis, 2015.

<sup>45</sup> UK Government, 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Office of National Statistics, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Gilborn et al, 2012.

substantial factor.

### *Comparative summary*

Based on the summary description of how previous research and reports have understood the importance of ethnicity, gender and class for students' school results in Sweden and England, there follow some reflections. A clear similarity is apparent from investigations in both countries is that girls generally perform better in school than boys. The Swedish school agency showed in a report that students' results had increased between schools in a period of at least thirteen years. The agency concluded that the student groups being over-represented among the declining school results had a combined background of immigrants and poor socio-economic condition.<sup>48</sup> This conclusion shows the importance of not looking at different social differences separately, but in combination, which is to visualise how different aspects mutually interact to constitute the conditions that prove to have great explanatory value in the Swedish school context. However, because this type of survey report is based on statistics, as well as on the questions submitted, it does not appear clearly whether school results differ between different ethnic groups or in combination with the students' gender. The report also raises new questions such as if the social location of the school context – or any other contexts – appears as the most important community to the students when it comes to their identity or valuation of different locations? Comparing the Swedish case to the English, it appears clearly that the English students' ethnic background shows a more complex relationship with school results. Current English research also shows that the student group having the greatest difficulties in achieving passing grades in school is the white male students of working-class background. Also these conclusions raise further questions; how do the students value the importance of their own social class or ethnic background? What other communities or groups do they identify themselves or others with, and, what ethical and political values, do they express? These are some of the questions we

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<sup>48</sup> National Agency for Education, "Summary", 2012.



asked our respondents.

## Methodology

We decided on focus group interviews of senior pupils and individual interviews of teachers, using opportunity samples of schools. As Griffiths demonstrates with her billiard ball analogy<sup>49</sup>, it is extremely unlikely that another researcher (or, if we were to repeat the study, that we) would make the same inquiries of the same sample and get the same answers to be analysed in the same way to produce the same results. It is also highly improbable that, if we had interviewed each other's samples, we would have obtained the same results. Of greater importance than replicability was that there is validity, that what we have identified, analysed and discussed gave an insight into perceptions of 'the Citizen' in both Sweden and England. Focus groups allowed our pupil respondents to feed off each other in offering or challenging ideas and perceptions, while the individual interviews with teachers were directed more to an awareness of school provision and the realities of that professional context. The English students were interviewed in mixed groups and the Swedish students in separated groups according to gender.<sup>50</sup>

We recognise that differences in sample and differences in 'follow up' questions could be seen to create difficulties for consistency of analysis and comparison. However, we interpret those differences as, in themselves, data to be considered and analysed. That teachers and/or students in England and Sweden understand both ethnicity and social class in different ways tells us something

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<sup>49</sup> Griffiths, 1998.

<sup>50</sup> The decision to split the Swedish students into different groups based on gender was a conscious choice by Nielsen. The decision was based on an assumption and from previous experiences that youngsters – and girls in particular – express themselves differently in gender separate groups. However, we do not believe that the various approaches have influenced the results in each country in any way that would have a significant impact on comparisons.

about the different ways in which citizenship identity is constructed in the two countries. As an example, since English is widely spoken internationally, language is seen as a more significant issue in Sweden than in England. Therefore, it makes sense for this to be pursued by the interviewer in one context more than the other. In summary, the variance of emphasis and in perception of what is important is, in itself, an indicator of differences in what constitutes being a citizen. What is perhaps more important for the study's results are some significant differences between the socio-economic contexts the respondents were from as well as their present school context. Students from the Swedish sample group who read vocational programmes were more clearly influenced by both social heritage and study direction than was the case among the English students from working class backgrounds. One possible reason for these differences was that the English students' studies were more theoretically oriented than the Swedish vocational programmes. These differences appeared from their answers and from how the students had acquired their knowledge and positions on various social issues.

In both countries the sub-samples were 26 learners and 4 teachers, not large enough to be representative but certainly large enough to be considered usefully indicative. Although identical in size, they were not identical in composition as all the English sub-sample were in their final two years of schooling, while the Swedish sample included four adult female students of Swedish as a second language. Three of the English schools were state schools with the other coming from the independent<sup>51</sup> sector, while the Swedish sample comprised two vocational oriented secondary schools, one university preparatory secondary school and one adult education school.

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<sup>51</sup> 7% of school student in England attend schools which are wholly independent of the National Curriculum and other state strictures and which charge fees of up to £40,000 annually. State schools have been given increasing autonomy from local authority control but most remain answerable to the Secretary of State for Education; independent schools are not so answerable.

The class, gender and ethnic composition of the English sub-sample was:

Girls	Middle Class Black English = 1
Girls	Middle Class White English = 4
Girls	Working Class White English = 11
Boys	Working Class Asian/English = 1
Boys	Working Class White English = 9

Teachers: 2 male, 2 female. Two of the teachers were of students interviewed while two were not.

The class, gender and ethnic composition of the Swedish sub-sample was:

Girls	Middle Class Swedish = 4
Girls	Middle Class of immigrant background = 3
Girls	Working Class Swedish = 2 + 3 (small farmers)
Girls	Working Class of immigrant background = 3
Boys	Middle Class Swedish = 3
Boys	Middle Class of immigrant background = 2
Boys	Working Class Swedish = 5 + 1 (small farmers)
Female teachers	Middle Class Swedish = 1
Female teachers	Working Class Swedish = 2
Male teacher	Middle Class Swedish = 1

It was found that, when analysing data, definitions of ethnicity vary between the two countries. In England someone of Indian heritage who was born in the UK would be considered to be a British Asian (or, as described above, Asian English); in Sweden that person would be classified of immigrant background.<sup>52</sup>

We collaborated on the design of the interview schedule which addressed general areas regarding the required taught curriculum,

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<sup>52</sup> The classification according to class, gender and ethnicity is based on the respondents' own information and identities. It is possible that official statistics or relevant research in the area had made a different classification. For the present study, we considered that the respondents' own identities constituted the most appropriate basis.

teachers' and students' experiences of citizenship teaching and learning and the experiences of being a citizen. We agreed in advance that the schedule should be a guide rather than a script, allowing respondents the freedom to address those issues they considered most important and allowing the interviewers scope in returning to themes raised in previous interviews.

## Results

The presentation of results from our interviews is based on the themes that have been discussed with the respondents. After each theme there is a brief comparative summary, which is expanded upon in the concluding section of this article. Due to the different techniques used to record the interviews there are significantly fewer verbatim quotations in the presentation of results from England. This provides an unfortunately uneven impression but is unavoidable due to differences in technical support and does not reflect differences in degree of depth or accuracy of recorded responses.

*What knowledge and skills does a citizen need in a democracy and how is the meaning of citizenship connected to gender, class and ethnicity?*

### *England*

The key factors identified by teachers were a need for citizens to be a) media savvy, and b) politically literate in the sense of both understanding the political system and in knowing how to access political processes. There was virtual unanimity amongst the school students that the greatest skill set required of citizens was that which enabled them to get involved, recognising that this had to be preceded by a desire to get involved. For them this was more than watching news or reading newspapers, and had to involve developing the skills required to understand how to interpret media content and how to articulate argument and discussion with others regarding that content and the motives behind its inclusion.

One male teacher expressed the opinion that social class appears to have disappeared from discussion, even though its influence clearly remains. This, he felt, could be most clearly seen in popular TV programmes such as 'Benefits Street' (where the lives of welfare claimants were under constant scrutiny); he believed that these were leading society inexorably towards a 'Hunger Games' mentality<sup>53</sup> reminiscent of Juvenal's 'panem et circenses', (bread and circuses). The media are not only distracting attention away from social inequality and social issues, they are creating entertainment from others' difficulties. This media exploitation of class voyeurism was perceived by him as much stronger than any possible comparable gender or ethnically-based distorting emphasis, in part because class is less openly discussed and because there is a prevailing opposition to – or at least diminution of – gender and ethnically based discrimination (both legally and culturally). None of the other teachers offered class as a significant focus for citizenship, nor was it an aspect raised by students even when explicitly asked. Those teachers and the students considered economic opportunity and cultural attitudes to be more significant than an undefined notion of 'social class'.

All the teachers raised issues of taxation and voting systems as being important for citizens. How taxes are raised and where the expenditure is were deemed useful ways to both politically and economically educate citizens, particularly in allowing teachers to address myths regarding benefit levels without being considered biased in their teaching. As well as the UK's general use of First Past The Post, it was considered important that citizens have some grasp of the principles of proportional representation, not least because various forms of this are used in Scottish Parliamentary, Welsh and Northern Irish Assembly, and European Union elections. All agreed that one regularly

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<sup>53</sup> A popular USA film based on a series of books by Suzanne Collins. Two young people from each district in the fictional country of Panem are selected by lottery to participate in the annual Hunger Games where they try to eliminate their competitors while the citizens are required to watch the televised games.

successful strategy had been to run mock elections in school, exposing learners to Marshall's notions of both Civil and Political Citizenship.

The students were agreed that political involvement was key, and that this was a prerequisite of active citizenship. For the students at state schools [3 of the 4 sample schools] one of the most important pieces of information and understanding they had gleaned regarded the role of pressure groups, a category of activity, which their non-Citizenship peers had not thought of as political. At the independent school the students did not consider their active citizenship, which was – across the school – at a higher level of involvement than in any of the state schools, to be political so much as 'the right thing'; in this their activities were therefore closer to 'worthy acts'<sup>54</sup> than political activity. That none of the students identified issues of taxation to be important underlines the teachers' concern over this omission, while leading one to wonder why the teachers were not themselves addressing this as it has consistently featured in England's National Curriculum. We see here a deficit in regard to Marshall's classifications of Citizenship; Civil and Political in that pupils should be experiencing their rights/obligations and freedoms as citizens – to understand both why they pay tax and how it is spent - and Social, as they would appear not to be given the opportunity to learn about taxation and its social role.

There was little spoken of rights and responsibilities. This did not indicate a lack of perceived importance so much as teachers' belief that their pupils had a very secure, if not always wholly accurate, sense of their rights, and at least one teacher advocated that pupils would benefit from not only knowing about their responsibilities but also acting upon these. The student

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<sup>54</sup> Truly active citizenship is engaging, and requires reflexivity and deliberation. It requires pupils to take action on problems and issues in order to achieve clearly identified outcomes in relation to them. Any event or activity which is planned and developed by teachers or other adults, which does not allow pupils to develop and to learn, is not an example of active citizenship but constitutes – at best – a worthy act, where a short-term good is met at the expense of long-term engagement. Leighton, 2010, 2012.

respondents considered that their rights and responsibilities needed to be made clearer. Despite the cynicism of at least one teacher who stated that students were only interested in exploiting their rights for selfish ends, the students said that they felt they needed to know more about rights as well as responsibilities as they considered that the word is often misused and misunderstood by their generation. One female student explained this with the example of having the right to own a mobile phone not being the same as a right to have it in school. With regard to responsibilities, state school students perceived a lack of opportunity to accept and act upon these in a school setting as they had little freedom to seek or accept responsibilities but had authoritarian expectations placed on them; this was not the perception of the independent school students, who considered that they were gradually given responsibilities in accordance with teachers' perceptions of their developing maturity and ability to accept such responsibilities as were deemed appropriate. What those responsibilities were did not clearly emerge from subsequent discussion.

For the teachers the meaning of citizenship connected to gender, class and ethnicity was unclear. The female teachers perceived gender issues more strongly than the males, with one extending this to consideration of sexuality and other determinants of social identity such as region and age. None suggested that there was a practical way of separating the social reality of any of these factors as people in all three categories simultaneously. For all the students, the meaning of citizenship connected to gender, class and ethnicity was dictated by an individual's sense of belonging to a society. One male student argued that, particularly in the post-Thatcher UK (since they were born) society has become all about individuals and self-motivation and that it was therefore how the individuals saw themselves that created that person's sense of citizenship. There was consensus that gender and ethnicity were issues of greater concern for people like the researcher (old, white, middle class, male) as the students considered themselves beyond categorisation or evaluation in terms of gender and ethnicity. With explicit regard to gender, for example, reference was made to not only Thatcher's political

success at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but also that three significant political parties – the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party were led by women. For them, class remained an issue but more with regard to ‘chavs’,<sup>55</sup> a widely used derogatory term for members of the underclass used to “distinguish the ‘rough’ from the ‘respectable’ working class”<sup>56</sup> and issues of income rather than social class. The interviewer did not offer a definition of class and, while students clearly held their own concepts, these were not aired and examined. The notion put forward that class mattered less than income, opportunity and culture, to which the students generally subscribed, is clearly problematic and begs the question, ‘what is class, if not defined by income, opportunity and culture?’

### *Sweden*

Starting with the open question of what it means to be a citizen, almost all the respondents answered that so-called civil and political citizenship is central. They mentioned, for example, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to vote, etc. The majority of both teachers and students felt that these democratic rights and freedoms should also be considered as obligations; partly in the sense of actively exercise your rights and also the responsibility not to violate or impinge on another person's rights and freedoms. As one female teacher expressed it: “To live in a collective involves that my freedoms extend until they clash with the next person's freedoms. To have rights also include an obligation of how to manage them.”

Teachers and the students with Swedish as a second language emphasized the importance of having sufficient knowledge to be able to exercise their rights. They underlined good language skills, and general civic-knowledge, as two important pre-conditions for active citizenship. Based on the experience that groups of citizens in society lack such knowledge, two male students objected to considering civil and political rights as obligations. One student asked: “How can you see it as an

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<sup>55</sup> Nayak, 2006, p. 813.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.



obligation? In some neighbourhoods, the number of voters is very few, like 50%. Should we despise them because they do not vote?" Both views regarding the importance of or the lack of sufficient knowledge are examples of, albeit indirectly, also paying attention to the importance of social citizenship, that is, the right to education, health care and other prerequisites for prosperity. However, it was only the female students that in a more direct way mentioned social rights as a vital aspect of citizenship. Finally, all the respondents felt that good behaviour and respect for their fellow citizens is an important feature and a responsibility for everyone. This is also connected to the importance of common basic values. One male student at the vocational programme expressed his view as:

S (Student): I believe that everyone has the obligation not to be an asshole!

L (Laila): What do you mean by not being an asshole?

S: You should not be mean to other people.

L: What are your thoughts regarding being a part of a democracy?

S: Go and vote!

L: Go and vote, is a right?

S: It is an obligation.

L: You mean that it is rather a duty than a right to go and vote?

S: Yes! Otherwise you cannot complain. You must vote! It is not a right but an obligation. There are those who can't vote. Therefore, one must do it.

Teachers' and students' opinions were divided when discussing whether there is a norm for citizens based on gender. Two of the teachers, half of the female students and one male student answered clearly that there exists such a male norm, which for example become visible in that men generally have more power and better salaries than women. The remaining respondents' replied that there is no specific norm based on gender. However, several felt that there are specific male and female characteristics and areas of interests in society. When the question was asked whether boys or girls are most interested in social issues a number of respondents answered that it depends on the issues at stake. Some students believed that girls are more interested

because they have worse societal conditions and therefore more reasons to get involved.

There was more evident consistency among the respondents' opinions about the importance of class and ethnicity for the development of citizens' conditions and societal competence. The teachers saw a connection between students' capabilities to reach the necessary knowledge and their parents' level of education and ability to support their children. Necessary knowledge was again identified as language skills and general civic-knowledge, which both could be achieved through education, employment and integration. Most of the students argued in a similar way and identified migrants' difficulties as a lack of language, unemployment and alienation in Swedish society. These obstacles for integration into Swedish society are often class-related because they interact with low incomes, segregation and poor housing conditions. These relationships were made very clear when two male students from a pre-university programme discussed the question, "When is an immigrant perceived as a Swedish citizen?":

S1: The language is of course important, that is, how to speak and write. (He turns to his buddy S2 who has non-Swedish origin): It's really not much difference between us, except that you have a little bit darker beard than me.

S2: There are more differences. Name and such things are also very important. It should not be forgotten.

S1: No, sure it is. He is called Emre and my name is Anton (fictitious names). I mean, you hear right away that there's a difference. I have the advantage of having a Swedish background.

L: Beyond that, is Emre a good example of someone who has become Swedish?

S1: I'm not acquaintance with Emre's family or so, but Emre is a perfect Swede based on the expectations that ... So yes, he is well integrated.

S2: Why am I well integrated? What is it that makes it work for me? That's the problem: If I was born and raised in the suburbs. If I had not been middle class. If I had talked what is

called Rinkeby Swedish (a famous suburb of Stockholm). If I had not been good in school. If I had opinions that are a little more what you relate to the fundamentalists. Had I still been seen as Swedish? Even if I had been born in Sweden?

S1: No!

S2: Probably not! And I'm well aware of it. Therefore, I usually don't talk much about ... Many people who have a different ethnicity knows that people look differently at them, and accordingly, they develop a different behaviour. They do so because they want to fit into a special norm.

Without clearly separating the two aspects, there was a consensus among the respondents that the combination of social class and ethnicity has importance when it comes to whether one is perceived as a fully Swedish citizen or not. The only students who expressly said that class background has a negligible importance in Swedish society were the students who study Swedish as a second language. When they compared class conditions of the Swedish society with conditions in their former homelands, they perceived Sweden as an egalitarian society.

### *Comparative summary*

Regarding the question of what knowledge and skills are considered necessary in a democracy, we found both differences and similarities in the respondents' answers. All respondents agreed on the importance of political knowledge in the sense of both understanding the system and knowing how to get involved and influence on politics. The meaning of these skills were for example such as to have sufficient knowledge to both receive and participate in public debate, the right to be heard and the obligation to vote and knowledge of their civil liberties. When it came to the importance of social rights as a precondition for citizens' knowledge and skills, it was above all the teachers in both countries and a few Swedish students who drew attention to this aspect. In the Swedish context, the importance of adequate language skills were discussed as a key issue both as an important

general question for the integration of immigrants, but also as a tool to be able to participate actively in society.

Respondents in both countries were aware of inequalities based on gender. Whether they explicitly pointed at the subordination of women, which mainly the female respondents did, or "only" pointed at the existence of different conditions between sexes, there was a consensus that men generally live under better conditions than women in society. Not surprisingly, it was foremost the female teachers and students who clearly identified with the gender issue. Despite women's relatively poorer social conditions, none of the respondents claimed that this affected the status of women as citizens, reflecting Yuval-Davis' observation that 'not all belonging/s are as important to people in the same way and to the same extent and emotions, as perceptions, shift in different times and situations and are more or less reflective'.<sup>57</sup> It is possible therefore to both acknowledge the existence of different social conditions and the limitations for female citizens and still judge this as not affecting women's status as citizens.

Among the English respondents, class was considered less significant than income and opportunity, while ethnicity was understood to be a barrier to social acceptance in some spheres but not a barrier to the legal status of citizen. As regards the students' knowledge of democratic rights and freedoms, English teachers have a greater belief in their students' awareness than was the case among the Swedish teachers. These differences could (as mentioned above) be attributed to the different socio-economic contexts that the students originated from. However, there was also a similarity between the English and Swedish students' answers, which can be associated with their self-image and self-confidence. In Sweden, the students in vocational programmes had a rather weak self-confidence, while the pre-university students had good self-confidence as future citizens. The English students seemed to be generally more aware of their rights and freedoms, but students of state schools did not feel

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<sup>57</sup> Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 5.

that they had enough responsibility or freedom of action in school as was the case for students of independent schools.

It is interesting to notice how both teachers and students overlapped in England, putting less emphasis on the importance of class and ethnicity for the real conditions of citizenship than was the case among the Swedish respondents. One possible explanation for this may be that class distinctions in England have been evident for so long that the population has become inured, while Sweden used to be a welfare state with a comparatively small differences in socioeconomic conditions. However, as stated above, the Swedish situation drastically changed in the early 1990s as the income gap increased by 31 percent between 1991 and 2010 and Swedish schools have shown clearly deteriorating results in recent years. On the basis of these drastic changes the general Swedish consciousness is probably more aware of and pays much greater attention to these issues.

These differences in analysis and valuations between the English and Swedish respondents, to refer to Yuval-Davis, is also related to the definition of different categories based on attitudes to the social differences that should be considered to be inclusive or exclusive. Another concrete example is when the Swedish student Anton do not realize the importance of Emre's background in the middle class, but only looks at the importance of ethnic background when he explains why he believes that Emre is well integrated in Sweden. While Emre, with his non-Swedish origin, is able to identify with immigrants being treated differently based on their socio-economic conditions in the suburb, understand the importance of social class.

*How is personal liberties affected by the citizen's gender, class and ethnicity, according to the respondents?*

#### *England*

When asked whether gender affected a citizen's freedoms, teachers' responses were consistent that there were stereotypical

expectations not borne out by reality. They perceived a society which, by statute, clearly prohibited limitations on any group or individual freedoms under any of the three social conditions under consideration here. At the same time there was awareness that legislation and reality do not always coincide, and that women's mean income was lower than that of men and that there were fewer women in significant roles in society. It was clear that the students, across genders and social class, felt that gender equality was a fact of life. They were aware of the inequalities identified by the teachers and that such inequalities represented out-dated attitudes. One female student observed that, as old people die, old attitudes will also die away. Several males spoke of their gender attitudes having arisen from friendship groups including females rather than from school, home or mass media – all of which they considered to be less forward looking and egalitarian.

With regard to ethnicity, teacher perceptions were again consistent as well as similar to their perceptions regarding gender, that legislation prohibits discrimination or unequal treatment but there are none the less differences in income and status. These differences were considered to be more marked than with regard to gender, particularly with reference to recent immigrants, many of whom were not [yet] citizens and who were therefore subject to quite stringent limitations of movement and economic activity in particular. Limitations on more established immigrants were seen by most to derive from their language skills as well as institutional structures which resulted in many working in occupations considerably lower in status and income than those for which they were qualified.

Students' perceptions of a 'typical British person' are discussed below but, in terms of ethnicity, it was clear that they did not have a specific image themselves. All were clear that they considered the UK to be a multi-cultural society and that, while some members of some cultures were less likely to be actively involved in society than others, they were still none the less British. While the students demonstrated awareness of racism and disadvantage, they were both sensitive to it and considered

such conduct to be the behaviour of a minority. The stereotype of the racist Brit held no more truth for them than the racist stereotypes of ethnic minorities sometimes perpetrated by, for example, far right political parties.

Teachers were not aware of discriminatory practices or conduct amongst their students but those in the state schools were acutely aware of overt racism in their schools' localities. These schools were all in urban areas, with one in the parliamentary constituency considered nationally to be the most likely to return an anti-immigration party (UKIP) candidate during the election taking place on the day of the interviews. That the teachers did not live in the immediate area might have lessened their sensitivity to some students' day-to-day experiences.

Social class was considered still to make a difference in attitude and access to political and citizenship involvement, more due to cultural attitudes than to structural inequalities. The teacher at the independent school had not considered class as an issue, while the other teachers considered that perceived poverty was probably more significant than any externally determined hierarchical classification. In common with their teachers, students considered social class to matter in relation to class cultural attitudes as well as to notions of "speaking proper" [*sic*] and how they presented themselves for work and interviews. This, in turn, arose from aspirations for personal progress and, crucially for at least one male student, being able to afford to aspire; "It takes money to dress right, it takes money at home to mean you can go to university and not pay your way. That isn't class, it's income."

### *Sweden*

Both teachers and students expressed that social class has a great importance for citizens' social commitment, which have to do with how confidence and attitudes differ appreciably between classes. A teacher from a vocational programme put it as:

T (Teacher): Yes, I think so. It's important, it's all about self-confidence and ... If we're talking about the middle class, they

realize their own worth: I have a right to know about this!  
They dare to question and ask questions. If you don't have the  
same self-esteem, you don't do it: it's not worth it ... It's so  
much related to your class background and your network.

Most of the respondents agreed that students have different conditions, such as practicing freedom of speech and freedom of religion, depending on their parents' education and socioeconomic status. Some students felt that, depending on class background, children also get different education and language from school, which have to do with housing and school segregation. Some girls from a vocational programme believed that people from lower social classes also have a lower self-confidence; one of the students continues the reasoning by saying of herself:

S: I would never be able to study further. I'm not such a theoretical person. I am not able to do it! But then of course, I'm not gonna get the same education as those who are more theoretical. So, just because I'm more practical, I don't want to be valued lower. I just don't like to sit and read all the time!

All respondents agreed on the importance of gender, class and ethnicity regarding people in possession of power. The importance lies in that they represent certain issues and social groups, and that they are role models with which different groups of citizens might identify. Some males on a vocational programme thought that more people listen to a Swedish man in power than to a woman or a person with a foreign background. However, other students underlined that those in power from a working class background, with disabilities, being women or having a non-Swedish background are important for under-represented groups to voice their experiences and interests. Students of vocational programmes emphasized above all the importance of social class.

Some of the vocational students expressed xenophobic perceptions on marginalized immigrant groups. These students were convinced that immigrants are positively discriminated in



the social security system by receiving higher economic grants and other benefits than Swedes get. Two students discussed the issue:

S1: For example, you may go to an employment service if you are Swedish. You are not entitled to get any training if you haven't been unemployed for at least six months. But a black person, excuse the expression, he will receive training within five minutes. This is the problem...

S2: Do you have statistics on that?

S1: Statistics and statistics ... I don't know. But I have a number of witnesses telling me that's how it is!

There was also a broad consensus that societal groups are not completely equal in reality before the law. This is particularly true on the basis of gender and ethnicity. Some argued that people with immigrant background often were judged harsher than Swedes, by the courts as well as by media and the public. Different attitudes were expressed from some students of a vocational programme. They felt that immigrants who commit crimes should be sent back to their original countries:

S1: I do not think it is right that they end up in a Swedish prison and that we must pay taxes for them.

S2: It is better to spend that money on schools and care for the elderly ... Otherwise, the state spends a lot of money on those who do wrong...

Girls on pre-university programmes believed that women are sentenced harder if they neglect their children and sometimes are judged on the basis of their behaviour when they've been raped. When we discussed civic rights and freedoms, one teacher believed that people with immigrant background often experience worse treatment in their everyday contact with the authorities than Swedes. Some students agreed that there exist an ethnic discrimination regarding immigrants' opportunities to get jobs and housing.

It was mainly females, both teachers and students, who believed that women were disadvantaged in various societal contexts. One student explains: "It has always been men who have the higher positions and it might be hard for them to understand the situation for women." The girls also believe that it is more equitable in their own generation and that it will be better in society when those over fifty years no longer possess the power. They were mostly upset concerning that there are still big differences in payment between men and women.

### *Comparative summary*

There are significant similarities in the responses from England and Sweden, as well as a few notable differences. The disparity between legislation and reality is a common perception, that the law might claim to treat all the same but social reality does not present this as a lived experience. In both countries it is social class which appears to be considered the major obstacle to social mobility and full citizenship rights/participation. In both countries, income level and language are mentioned as significant class markers. However respondents' notion of class is not consistent across the national boundaries. The English students describe different cultures and attitudes on the basis of class, while the Swedish students mention importance of self-esteem and access to equal education. These differences may partially be explained by how the student groups in the two countries differ in their composition: Students from the Swedish vocational programmes respond partly based on their own experiences from a less educated background. The English students express themselves based on their experiences of encounters between different social classes. These differences in response based on the students' class background, rather than national background, constitute a clear example of how different social locations affect students' judgements of their own and others' perceptions and meanings of belonging.

The differences in the composition of response groups were also significant regarding the importance of ethnicity. Students in

both societies perceived ethnicity as a barrier but, in Sweden, some of the students themselves had anti-immigrant beliefs: For instance, they reported preferential treatment for migrants, usually presented anecdotally rather than on the basis of evidence. English students were aware that such perceptions are held in their locality and elsewhere in the country but did not hold such views themselves nor were they aware of evidence to support them.

Perceptions of women's citizenship experiences are common to both countries, although the English students identified and condemned this irrespective of gender whereas in Sweden it was of greater concern to female students. In both countries, the respondents considered that women generally earn less and are under-represented in influential positions in society in the same way as is the case for different minority groups.

*What are teachers' and students' experiences of Citizenship Education and how does school pay attention to citizens' conditions based on gender, class and ethnicity?*

*England*

Non-specialist teachers were concerned that pupils gained some understanding of voting and processes of taxation and expenditure, and – while effort was spent ensuring an understanding of rights – that more could be done with regard to gaining an understanding of citizens' responsibilities. These are all elements of the required National Curriculum but the teachers concerned did not feel competent to address them; non-specialist teaching is a common occurrence in Citizenship Education in England.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Leighton, 2004, 2010; Keating et al, 2010.

The more experienced specialists considered it more important to identify and challenge social inequality and mobility barriers. Social class was perceived as still present but a less significant barrier than in the past; pupils were perceived as class aware, perhaps more sensitive to issues of poverty and income than to sociological definitions of employment class. One female teacher commented on the media exploitation of class voyeurism, particularly in relation to 'reality' TV shows such as Big Brother, while one male teacher expressed the view – subsequently reiterated by one of the female teachers – that parental ignorance or bias in relation to each of class, ethnicity and gender was a greater influence than could be countered by school.

Virtually all students mentioned the need for young people to become involved in society, to know how to listen to and understand news and current affairs rather than be passive recipients of one institutional version of events. They considered it important that schools enable knowledge and understanding of pressure groups, extending the notion of 'political' beyond party definitions and party activities. There was also general agreement that a full understanding of rights and responsibilities would be beneficial as this was an area considered to be confused and confusing, and that one of the reasons for young people's lack of political engagement was that they do not yet have responsibilities nor do many think about what those will be. There was also consensus that much more political education is needed, that the political parties do not engage with young voters who are often ignorant or disinterested.

The central concerns for teachers were not around issues of social differentiation but of the status and provision of their subject. One female teacher described how Citizenship Education was seen in her school as a subject for the less academically able, for example to replace the demanding assessment tasks in history, while a male teacher observed that the subject is not rated by colleagues. Another female teacher commented that there was particular concern rather than opposition in her school at the reintroduction of Citizenship Education as there were cuts elsewhere in the school budget and some of her colleagues felt

this was not the right time to spread expenditure so thinly. Disparity of support amongst parents/carers was also reported, with some very supportive and expressing regret that the Citizenship Education had not been available to them [it was introduced into England's National Curriculum in 2002] while others did not consider it to be 'a real subject'.

All teachers claimed that their schools had strong extra-curricular provision and clear value systems. Activities such as charity work and campaigns, fund-raising, links with schools in less economically developed countries were cited. The teachers in most schools saw their students as politically aware, which was considered not to be the case for those in the independent school. They also considered that gender and ethnicity held little significance for their students' perceptions or expectations, and that attitude rather than social class was a key determinant of civic involvement.

The teachers were unanimously of the opinion that textbooks were of limited value and that it was more helpful to develop resources, which related to students' own perspectives and experiences, referring in particular to images which were aspirational rather than realistic – particularly with reference to gender.

One group of students stressed the need for more substantial development of the individual's sense of and place in society. They were aware of Margaret Thatcher's alleged dictum that "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families" proposed during a speech in Bruges in 1988; this was an attack on a perceived entitlement culture but became popularly understood as an advocacy of absolute individuality, an advocacy of individualism and selfishness which the students did not interpret as representative of their local community but perhaps of the country at large. Two white working class female pupils made a point about which there was again general agreement:

F1 "Citizenship is active"

F2 “Yeah. Citizenship is the active part; a citizen is just someone who lives somewhere”.

Paradoxically, this is very close to what Mrs Thatcher might have meant<sup>59</sup>. With regard to gender and Citizenship Education, it was stated that:

S10 (male): elected representatives have generally always [*sic*] been male. Women might feel excluded. Plaid Cymru, SNP, Greens have women leaders and are left leaning parties. They have grown as outsiders in their gender, region, and politics. The media portrayal of them is minimal and vindictive.

One group of pupils who has experienced Citizenship Education in their earlier secondary schooling considered that their school provision of Citizenship Education was far better than in other schools as it was a compulsory subject throughout, with an optional course for the public examinations for pupils at the ages of 16. The impression they had of other schools was of weak provision and ignorant peers. One female in this group stated that “people at other schools just laugh at the subject.” This view was reflected in the responses of those students who did not have compulsory Citizenship Education – a combination of uninformed opinion and disparaging remarks.

There was a consistent theme that teachers and academics are out of touch (ever thus and probably correct). This final point arose when one male student suggested that the fixation on social differences is a generational one – that the National Curriculum is decided upon “by people like you (middle-aged, white, male researcher). We don’t worry about these things; we’re not racist, we’re not sexist.” He and his fellow students argued that there were more important things to worry about than constructions such as class, ethnicity and gender, and that education should focus on what matters now rather than what used to matter.

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<sup>59</sup> See Woman’s Own magazine interview transcript at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>.

### *Sweden*

The teachers said that they adapt their teaching in different ways to each student group on the basis of what knowledge teachers believe that their students may need in the future. It was particularly evident among the teachers at the vocational programmes. Their teaching had focus on everyday-related and practical skills such as dealing with the authorities, to influence on working life and the local environment, strengthen the students' self-confidence and the right of everyone to express themselves and to be heard.

A teacher working on a vehicle technical programme believes that the objectives of the school policy documents are a bit too theoretical for his students. Instead he highlights the importance of linking citizenship education to the students' career choices and everyday life as young adults. The skills involved in writing a CV and how to contact authorities are important.

Another teacher from a pre-university programme underlined that since she had taught citizenship education to her students for three years, as in contrast to the vocational programme's one-year courses, it provides her a significant opportunity to teach both at the basic and at a more advanced level. She was also the only teacher who claimed to have sufficient time for her teaching. The other three teachers felt that lack of time is a decisive reason for their limitations in Citizenship Education. As it also has emerged earlier from the interviews, all the teachers stressed the importance of language skills for the students to orient themselves and get involved in the community. However, the meaning of language skills differed depending on which programme the students follow. Students who are newly arrived are trying to assimilate the basic Swedish language while students in an academic preparatory programme listens to radio programmes such as "philosophical room"<sup>60</sup> and discuss the meaning of various abstract concepts.

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<sup>60</sup> A programme on Swedish radio where classical philosophical topics are discussed.

The students' experiences and views on Citizenship Education differed according to gender and on which programme they studied. The students at the vocational programmes felt that they were limited and only got a superficial knowledge of how society works. They described that they essentially got factual knowledge about Parliament, voting procedures and the EU. Some of the girls on a vocational programme expressed a wish to develop more in-depth knowledge for their future. Some of the guys on the same programme felt that such knowledge was unnecessary and that they instead would devote themselves to more useful everyday skills for adult life; such as social rights, contacts with authorities, insurance companies, etc. All the students wanted more education of the so-called everyday knowledge, however, vocational students also valued everyday knowledge higher than more general knowledge of society's various decision-making bodies, general politics, administrations and functions.

On the contrary, the students at the pre-university programme described how their knowledge gradually was deepened during the three years they have studied social studies. The girls also discussed the importance of language from a class perspective. One girl says that the less educated have a more childish way of expressing themselves, which means that you do not listen to them as much. Some male students in a vocational programme confirmed this in a way when they expressed an indifference towards whether the school should expand the teaching about citizens' rights and obligations:

S1: An additional lesson on society ... Everyone had ... I do not know what. Not a joy exactly [...] If you want to be heard, you may have to learn how to do it.

L: Don't you want to be heard?

S1: I don't know. If no one listens, it doesn't matter after all.

L: But you have told me some interesting things today.

S2: Yes, but that is because you want to listen. One want to be heard by those who listen.

The female students of Swedish as a second language experienced Citizenship Education very differently depending on where they



had studied. Their experiences ranged from SFI (Basic language courses in Swedish for immigrants) to university courses on a more advanced level. All women with non-Swedish background shared the experience that they have received information and teaching that does not always match their needs. They felt that immigrants often are treated as a homogeneous group who all have the same needs. However, when they compared with teaching in their countries of origin they were quite happy with the Swedish education.

All of the interviewed teachers and most of the students shared the experience that Citizenship Education seldom paid attention to social conditions according to class, ethnicity and gender. Those who were most satisfied with the teaching of these issues were students at the university preparatory programme. However, the majority of respondents felt that education is inadequate and needed to be developed. According to some teachers and students the reason for this inadequacy was because class, ethnicity and gender are difficult and sometimes controversial issues to deal with in the classroom

In addition to reasons such as the lack of time and experience for dealing with these issues other reasons were mentioned. On the basis of sexes, the students expressed different attitudes against inadequate education. The girls at both programmes believed that this is important knowledge and should be made available to all, while some of the male students believed that the issues were important but doubted whether they needed to expand their own knowledge.

When I finally asked the students if there was something they would like to add, something we have not paid attention during the interview, they suggested some slightly different viewpoints. Some girls in a vocational programme felt that homosexuals were subjected to prejudices in a similar way as immigrants. A couple of male students at the pre-university programme said that some problems are forgotten: "We talk about social class, but there are also disabled who are mentally and physically ... It is the first time we learn about this in twelve years. We talk about their

difficulties and that society is not adapted for them." The girls at a university preparatory programme mentioned environmental issues as very important. Issues that is not given sufficient attention. A student clarified: "We do have a responsibility to future generations, you know."

### *Comparative summary*

It has appeared from the interviews that the students and teachers had some similar experiences from Citizenship Education in general, but the differences seemed to be more between the two countries when it came to paying attention to conditions based on class, gender and ethnicity. An apparent similarity, however, was that virtually all respondents were keen to develop and expand Citizenship Education. Within the teacher groups of both countries they believed that inadequate teaching arose from the lack of time, resources, and that they did not feel fully competent for the task. Among the Swedish teachers this uncertainty was especially regarding issues of class, gender and ethnicity, which may be perceived as controversial to discuss in the classroom. Another similarity was that the more qualified teachers in England and the teachers on academic programmes in Sweden drew attention to issues of social inequality to a greater extent than the non-specialist and vocational teachers did.

Among the English teachers the central concerns were about the academic status and provision of the school subject 'Citizenship Education'. With cuts in education expenditure, Citizenship Education was not considered a priority. In Sweden - where Citizenship Education is not a separate subject - the content is vague and teachers' interpretations of the assignment differ distinctively between the different schools and programmes.

One similarity that emerged between the two countries' student groups was that the students who read Citizenship on academic programmes in Sweden and England valued the importance of citizenship education for their further studies and adult life significantly higher than what was the case for other student

groups. This was reflected even in that teachers in these programmes perceived their students as more politically aware than was the case for the Independent School in England and vocational programmes in Sweden.

When we asked students about the extent to which the school pays attention to citizens' conditions based on gender, class and ethnicity, the answers partly differed. The English students and students on the Swedish academic programme thought that the school challenged stereotypes – primarily regarding gender and ethnicity. Even if the importance of class was not as prominent, these students were aware of differences in income and that there were significant socioeconomic inequities in society. The Swedish students on vocational programmes highlighted the importance of social class more, both regarding their own identity and conditions as well as conditions of class society in general. It was also in these programmes that some of the students expressed xenophobic ideas. As it has appeared already from above, both the Swedish teachers and students considered social class as a more important aspect for citizens' conditions than what was the case among the English respondents. This interesting difference will be further discussed below.

## **Concluding analysis and discussion**

One of the most interesting results of the study is how the respondents of the two countries answered on the importance of class for citizenship in its real meaning. In the Swedish context, attention was paid particularly to how the combination of class and ethnicity interact and make it difficult for exposed societal groups to gain the real meaning of citizenship. This was valid both concerning the necessary preconditions from school as well as citizenship conditions in general. The English respondents - both teachers and students - were well aware of how both ethnicity and income contribute to unequal social conditions. However, most of the English respondents claimed that social class is not of any particular importance today, but rather an aspect of the past.

These differences in attitudes and opinions about social class are quite remarkable given that Sweden in the post-war period has been well known for the Swedish welfare state, while the UK has continued to clearly be a class society. Even today, the student group, which has the greatest difficulties in achieving passing grades in English school, is white young men from the working class. We need to do a brief historical review and refer to previous research for a reasonable analysis. In the 1980s' social and political changes with liberal overtones in England and Sweden, as well as in other Western countries, brought a shift in focus from the 'public good' to the 'private good'.<sup>61</sup> As stated above, these societal changes were also reflected in the Swedish school policies over the past two-three decades. The curriculum prior to when this liberalization and individualization began was written in a leftist social climate with demands for greater equality. One of the primary school purposes was described as "to prepare all children and young people, regardless of their place of residence and other external conditions, real access to equal educational opportunities".<sup>62</sup> The curriculum was clearly problem-oriented and aimed to "encourage students to debate and question the prevailing conditions".<sup>63</sup> Swedish research has shown how the increased liberalization in the 1980s and 90s brought the needs of the individual and freedom of choice before everyone's right to an equal education. Based on this view, private school options, school voucher and free school choice have been reforms that have fundamentally changed the conditions for the Swedish school.<sup>64</sup> Boström expresses his concern over this development as: "Democracy will be equal to that citizens choose between different options (in various markets) as well as to think freely - but what is beyond that has

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<sup>61</sup> Englund, 1999, McSmith, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Lgr 69, p. 11. For an historical perspective on the Swedish school system, see Englund, 1986; Nielsen, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>64</sup> Englund, 1999; Boström, 2001; Dahlstedt, 2009; Nielsen, 2015.

nothing to do with democracy. What kind of citizens will people become with such beliefs?"<sup>65</sup>

In the English school context, the development has been different due to an earlier and more dominant emergence of new right neo-liberalism. Until 1988 there was no national curriculum and the inspection regime for schools was largely advisory and encouraging. Since then the curriculum has become increasingly proscriptive and knowledge based<sup>66</sup> and the inspection process increasingly severe and homogenising, discouraging the creativity, innovation and teacher autonomy, which marked the 1960s and 1970s. There has also been a dismantling of local accountability of schools through legislation that has created 'academies' funded jointly by central government and 'sponsoring' private businesses, and 'free schools' established by parents and funded by central government. In questioning this policy, Miller observes that "The government is responsible for providing education, and passing responsibility of this to parents and private interests raises serious questions about the government's motives."<sup>67</sup>

Trying to understand the consequences of these developments for the school's various actors, empirical studies like this are useful. Based on respondents' experiences and opinions, the Swedish study has shown clear differences between university preparatory and vocational students' self-image - and the image of others - in terms of both conditions in school and the prospects for adult life as citizens. In revisiting Marshalls' ideas about the need of social citizenship, we are led to consider the last decades of liberalization of school as changes that depleted social citizenship and entailed greater demands and responsibilities for the individual. This kind of change always hits the resource-poor hardest, who in the Swedish school context have been identified as students with a combination of foreign and poorer socio-

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<sup>65</sup> Boström, 2001, p. 42.

<sup>66</sup> What constitutes useful and appropriate knowledge being also strictly proscribed.

<sup>67</sup> Miller, 2011, p. 170.

economic backgrounds. While in England socio-economic background outweighs all other factors, although ethnicity – particularly amongst recent immigrant populations – remains important. However, it would be an oversimplification to identify students who experience difficulties in school as solely resource-weak groups of foreign origin. In this study, those pupils who identify themselves as working class in the Swedish context were students on vocational programmes. Although this group of students has relatively good socio-economic prospects,<sup>68</sup> they give expression for both lower self-confidence and interest regarding citizenship education and of societal engagement than was the case among the university preparatory students. Even the teachers at vocational programmes felt that their students find it difficult to receive social related theoretical education. Although the composition of the student groups we interviewed clearly differed in some respects,<sup>69</sup> we saw an interesting similarity between Sweden and England. In a similar way as the Swedish vocational students, the English students at the independent school also showed lower interest in citizenship education for adult life than was the case among the English (and Swedish) students who studied citizenship at a higher level. We may perceive the similarity regarding students' more negative attitudes to citizenship education as an expression of their social background - or social location to refer to Yuval-Davis - which have a relatively larger impact on how these students identify themselves and how they judge their own and others' belonging, than what school teaching may offer. Another way to put it is that students from more resource-rich home environments probably have a stronger identification and emotional attachment for the goals and ideals that citizenship education represents than is the case for more resource-poor pupils.

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<sup>68</sup> The percentage of unemployed among foreign-born was in 2015 of 15.5 percent, which is 11 percentage points higher than for those born in Sweden (4.5 percent). Central Bureau of Statistics (SCB), 2015.

<sup>69</sup> As stated above, the Swedish student groups were more heterogeneous (based on pre-university or vocational programme) than the English student groups with a theoretical focus on their studies.

The interesting and important issue of students' identification with and understanding of social class is an area that we intend to continue working with in our future research.

It was clear from all respondents' answers how they referred to ethnicity as a social hierarchy; however, students' attitudes to the importance of ethnicity for Citizenship differed both between the two countries and within Sweden. All the English students and most of the Swedish students expressed great understanding and support for a multicultural society. They were aware that anti-immigrant views existed among political groupings and some social groups, but did not consider ethnicity as a barrier to citizenship in its real meaning. As stated above, the Swedish respondents claimed that ethnicity combined with social class clearly affects the conditions of citizenship. In addition, among the Swedish vocational students, some anti-immigrant ideas were expressed. That such xenophobic attitudes get strongholds amongst community groups with lower education is not exclusive to Sweden. According to Yuval-Davis, certain identities and affiliations tend to become stronger to people the more threatened they become or believe they become.<sup>70</sup> The Swedish sociologist Sernhede has studied the Swedish suburbs and marginalized groups. Based on international research he describes how the last decades of growing racism and xenophobia in many European countries can be understood in the light of the general uncertainty that the disintegration of the traditional forms of national identity entailed. Another factor, he points out, is the competitive situation that has arisen between the traditional working class and immigrant groups. The contradictions can partly be explained by that the two groups compete for similar low-skilled jobs.<sup>71</sup> Similar findings are offered by Tippett et al<sup>72</sup>, with similar explanations, while there is a wealth of evidence of the growth of xenophobic youth conduct throughout Europe.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Yuval-Davis, 2011, p. 5-6.

<sup>71</sup> Sernhede, 2007, p. 30-31.

<sup>72</sup> Tippett, Wolke and Platt, 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Licata and Klein, 2002; Ziebert and van der Tuin, 2008; Worger 2012.

These differences in how the students looked at the importance of ethnicity as a social hierarchy may probably also be explained historically. England has been established as a multicultural society for longer than the Swedish society. In Sweden, it was only in the 1990s, and to an even greater extent during the recent year's major refugee flows, as Swedish society has shown difficulties in receiving and integrating these groups.<sup>74</sup> Again, such difficulties are more related to socio-economic difficulties than to ethnicity. In the British context, different ethnic groups are more established and are not perceived as a homogenous group of refugees. It is rather the case that different ethnic identities more prominent and known as a part of English society. These differences between how the two countries have developed in relation to immigrant groups can of course also be explained by Britain's past as a colonial power. Britain's colonial contacts have enabled emigration to a greater extent than has been the case for a country like Sweden, where contacts with non-European cultures were relatively more limited in the past.

When we discussed how equal citizens are before the law, we also got quite similar answers. Most respondents - both students and teachers - felt that formally we are all equal before the law, but in reality, we are different doomed both in court and by the common man, which, inter alia, is based on ethnicity, class and gender. Some of the students in both countries assured the interviewers that gender equality would probably improve when generation 50+ has handed over power to the younger generations. However, it was pointed out that especially with regard to wages and important positions in society, it is still men who make the most money, and hold the greatest power.

In Sweden it was above all the female students and teachers who drew attention to the importance of gender for citizens' conditions, but the English students identified this irrespective of their own gender. These different attitudes towards gender between the two countries may possibly be explained by the different socio-economic context that the students originated

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<sup>74</sup> Migrationsverket, 2016.



from. The political awareness and involvement in general appeared to be more evenly distributed among the English students, who were more homogeneous group and their studies theoretically oriented, than was the case among the Swedish respondents who were split between vocational and pre-university programmes. The result shows that female Swedish students seem to be less influenced by their social background when it comes to attitudes toward gender and citizenship education in general than was the case among male students. This is perhaps not surprising given that investigations in both countries shows that girls - regardless of class and ethnicity - generally performs better results in school than boys.<sup>75</sup> In a report from the Swedish National Agency for Education in 2006, it appears that in addition to that girls out-perform boys, girls tend to a greater extent to choose pre-university programs. The report also shows that the gender gap both in terms of school achievement and educational choice is greatest in the vocational programmes.<sup>76</sup>

However, these differences, based on gender are in not exclusive to Sweden. The tendency that girls show better school results and increase their participation in education is an international trend, including in England as noted above. Still, there is little research done on the reasons behind these gender-differences.<sup>77</sup> What questions raised in school research is obviously affected by factors such as the public debate and by internationalization. Sometimes the term "travelling discourses" is used, which refers to how e.g. discussion on boys' underachievement travelled from the Anglo-Saxon research and policies to the Nordic countries. The discourse presents boys failure as caused by inadequate pedagogical efforts and the feminization of school. Nyström indicate that the risk is that gender-stereotypes will be cemented and that more complex interpretations, of what is happening in the school, is ignored. Interpretations that could have been made possible from an intersectional perspective based on different

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<sup>75</sup> SOU 2010:51, p. 12.; Joseph Rowntree Trust, 2012; Social Trends, 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Skolverket, 2006, p. 47-55.

<sup>77</sup> Nyström, 2010, p. 8-9.

social hierarchies and focusing on the specific context, time and place. What is further problematic is the implicit assumption that there are only two genders that exist, and that the normal order of society is heterosexual. We agree with Nyström's analysis and will deepen and develop our intersectional approach further in future studies.<sup>78</sup>

Based on the students' and teachers' experiences of the contents of Citizenship Education, the differences were greater in Sweden than was the case in England. This may be explained in that Citizenship Education has existed in England since 2002 and is relatively well established in comparison with Sweden where the school subject of Citizenship Education does not exist. In Sweden there is a shared responsibility for citizenship education and a special responsibility is on the community-oriented subjects. Furthermore, the policy documents, goals and guidelines are more clearly formulated in England, while in Sweden there is a greater space for interpretation.<sup>79</sup> The Swedish teachers use this space of interpretation to adapt their teaching to the current student groups, which have had the consequence that the contents of Citizenship Education in Sweden differ greatly between schools.<sup>80</sup>

When we asked about the extent to which the teaching recognizes the importance of social conditions based on class, gender and ethnicity the responses differed slightly. The students' experiences in England were that stereotypical notions of ethnicity and gender were challenged in school. Given the imagined limited importance of class, the aspect was not given any greater attention in their education. In the Swedish context the contents of education were more dependent on the access of time and the teachers' experience in the area. Actually, the teachers in both countries mentioned limited time and resources as main reasons to not being able to develop their teaching as they wished.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 22-23.

<sup>79</sup> School Inspection, 2011, p. 1-2.

<sup>80</sup> National Agency for Education, "Summary", 2012.

Finally, to return to our starting point of T.H. Marshall's (1950) classifications of Citizenship – Civil, Political and Social – our findings indicate some degree of consistency within and between the two countries. While in England students appear to want more depth of analysis and greater potential for social action, the students in Sweden differed more in their experiences according to the programme they studied. There is otherwise agreement that Civil and Political Citizenship appear to be present but that Social Citizenship is haphazard at best. As it has been stated in this article, with references to official statistics, investigations and a range of current research data, women and members of minority ethnic groups are perceived to be less enabled than men and members of the host community. While social class is also understood to be a factor in inequality, we have shown that this term is constructed differently in each country, as well as, in different contexts within the two countries. We have, through our intersectional approach, with the support of Yval-Davis' theories, wanted to show how the various social hierarchies - gender, class and ethnicity - cannot be considered in an additive way, but instead, depending on the empirical context as mutually interacting aspects that create conditions that affect people differently.

During the interviews, the respondents mentioned other areas - than class, gender and ethnicity - as important for citizens' real conditions. These were for example the importance of sexuality, (dis)ability, age, urban / rural and religion. These are examples of origins and identities that would be interesting to investigate in future studies. Also the relation between national, European and global identity are today important factors which influence people's lives. As has already been indicated from the results of this study, the countries' history and traditions of citizenship and Citizenship Education provide a significant impact on the state of affairs today. A more clearly historical perspective would certainly contribute to a deeper understanding of today's conditions. An historical perspective would also contribute to preparedness for the future. How teachers and students

understand and wish for the future would be an interesting subject for further research.

If our responses are considered reliable, it is now time to take stock of approaches to Citizenship Education in the two countries that form the focus of our study, and beyond. In particular, educators need to listen to what the pupils/students perceive to be reality, to take account of their visions of now and the future rather than imposing educators' views from the past. There appear to be significant benefits in the specialist teaching of citizenship throughout the secondary age-groups of a subject known as citizenship rather than leaving non-specialists to do their best with vague guidance and no curriculum time allocated. We do not argue that students should write their own curriculum but they should at least have an influence on it, in the spirit of Freire's<sup>81</sup> awareness that learners bring their own experiences to their learning. Nor do we argue that such approaches will remedy all social ills. At this juncture we feel we have only scratched the surface of young people's perceptions of being a citizen; with more understanding of those perceptions, educators and young learners can collaborate to produce a more fulfilling, relevant and effective curriculum.

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<sup>81</sup> Freire, 2002

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